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New Eastern Europe

RELIGION, POLITICS AND POWER

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ON RUSSIA

Luke Harding Leviathan killed Boris Nemtsov | **Sergei Sokolov** Putin is a tactitian, not a strategist

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The Centre was established in Gdańsk on November 8th 2007. Its new building was opened in 2014 on the anniversary of the August Accords signed in Gdańsk between the worker's union "Solidarność" and communist authorities in 1980. The Centre is meant to be an agora, a space for people and ideas that build and develop a civic society, a meeting place for people who hold the world's future dear. The mission of the Centre is to commemorate, maintain and popularise the heritage and message of the Solidarity movement and the anti-communist democratic opposition in Poland and throughout the world. Through its activities the Centre wants to inspire new cultural, civic, trade union, local government, national and European initiatives with a universal dimension.

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The Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe in Wrocław

The College of Eastern Europe is a non-profit, non-governmental foundation founded on February 9th 2001 by Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, a former head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and a democratic activist. The foundation deals with cooperation between the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. The aims if its charters are to carry out educational, cultural and publishing activities, and to develop programmes which enhance the transformation in the countries of Eastern Europe. The organisation has its headquarters in Wrocław, Poland, a city in western Poland, perfectly situated in the centre of Europe and with a deep understanding of both Western and Eastern Europe.

Dear Reader,

In May 2015 the heads of European states will gather in the capital of Latvia to once again discuss the future of Europe's (and Russia's) near neighbourhood, namely the region which we refer to as the "New Eastern Europe". In the context of the tensions that have been taking place, the stakes could not be higher. It is very clear that there are still significant obstacles towards achieving peace, security and prosperity in the region whose societies themselves remain torn on the future of their states.

These divisions are manifested in different spheres of life, public and private. Concentrating mainly on religion in Ukraine, this issue highlights the new dynamics in church-society relations. Our authors point to the moral legitimacy of the Kyiv Patriarchate of Ukraine's Orthodox Church in the post-EuroMaidan reality. Analysing the issue of spirituality in other countries of the post-Soviet space, such topics are discussed as: Orthodox and non-Orthodox identity in Russia, attitudes towards Christians in Azerbaijan and an increasing presence of ISIS in Central Asia.

Specifically on Russia and the recent assassination of Boris Nemtsov, we present two perspectives of the oppositionist's final fate. They include: a reflection by British journalist Luke Harding, who himself experienced repressions from the Russian authorities, and an interview with Sergei Sokolov, an editor with *Novaya Gazeta*, an independent Russian newspaper considered one of the few critical voices of Russian politics.

As we wrote in our March-April issue, the editorial team of this magazine remains committed to providing you with deep analyses and different perspectives of the developments in our region. We speak through the many voices of our authors whose works we often diligently translate into English. We do this driven by a belief that the region of Eastern Europe matters to a global audience.

We also remain reassured, especially by you – our readers – that this work is valued. However, with a significant reduction in the budget that we have been experiencing this year, it is becoming quite clear that without additional support we may not be able to continue our work in the format that you have come to know. Please consider a donation to support our cause by visiting: www.neweasterneurope.eu/donate.

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Leviathan Killed Boris Nemtsov

LUKE HARDING

At 11:30 PM on Friday February 27th 2015, Boris Nemtsov, an outspoken Russian opposition leader, was shot in the back. The assassin fired off six shots; four of the bullets struck him, one in the heart; and he died instantly. The only explanation not being given in Moscow for Nemtsov's is the blindingly obvious one: that Nemtsov was murdered for his opposition activities and, specifically, for his very public criticism of Vladimir Putin's secret war in Ukraine.

In the months since Boris Nemtsov was murdered in February 2015, the Kremlin has floated numerous explanations for his death. Vladimir Putin has called his killing a "provocation" – a strange word. What Putin refers to here is that whoever murdered Nemtsov did so to discredit the state. Since the state is the primary victim here, the state cannot be responsible, this logic runs.

Others have blamed Islamist extremists or Ukrainian fascists. Putin's ally Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya's thuggish president, accused "western spy agencies", an old favourite. The muckraking website Lifenews.ru, which has close links to the FSB, Putin's former spy agency, pointed the finger at Nemtsov's colourful love life. At the time of his murder, he was walking past the Kremlin with a young Ukrainian model, it noted.

The only explanation not being given in Moscow for Nemtsov's killing late on the evening of Friday February 27th 2015 is the blindingly obvious one: that he was

murdered for his opposition activities and, specifically, for his very public criticism of Putin's secret war in Ukraine in which at least 6,000 people have been killed so far, and which – according to his friends – he had been about to expose.

On the margins

Boris Nemtsov had been one of the few Russian liberals brave enough to denounce Putin's extensive undercover military support for the separatist rebels in Ukraine. He described the way Putin had annexed Crimea, using masked special forces, as "illegal", though he recognised that a majority of Crimeans wanted to join Russia. In his final interview, on the day of his murder, he denounced Russia's president as a "pathological liar".

In the interview with the liberal radio station Echo of Moscow, Nemtsov seemed in good spirits and was in terrific form. He attacked the Kremlin's "dead-end" politics and mishandling of the economy. This was nothing new for Nemtsov, however, his criticism of the Russian state was longstanding. Since being forced out of Russian parliamentary politics a decade ago, Nemtsov had founded several anti-Putin movements. With state media under the Kremlin's thumb, though, Nemtsov was banned from TV and he found himself on the margins.

What changed was the war in Ukraine and the unleashing of a wave of nationalist hysteria and hatred on the Russian airwaves. State TV regularly branded Nemtsov as a member of the "fifth column". After his murder, NTV quietly shelved another anti-Nemtsov hatchet job, entitled *Anatomy of a Protest*, due to be screened the weekend of his death. By 2015 most other Russian opposition leaders were in exile (the former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the ex-chess champion Garry Kasparov) or in jail (the anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny).

All of this made Nemtsov especially vulnerable. Moreover, Nemtsov said he had "documentary" proof that undercover Russian soldiers were fighting and dying in eastern Ukraine. It was an assertion borne out by a steady flow of coffins returning in the dead of night from the war zone in Donetsk and Luhansk. According to his friend Ilya Yashin, Nemtsov was preparing an explosive essay on the subject.

Nemtsov had written dissenting pamphlets before. One of them, titled *Putin: A Reckoning*, accused Russia's president and his circle of massive personal corruption. Another targeted Yuri Luzhkov, Moscow's former mayor who was later removed from office. But this new one went to the heart of the Kremlin's big lie. In the hours after his murder, police seized Nemtsov's hard drives. There seems little prospect his last polemic will now ever be published.

Yashin says that Nemtsov had scribbled a note for his aide Olga Shorina, which read: "Some paratroopers from Ivanovo have got in touch with me. Seventeen were killed; they did not give them their money, but for now they are frightened to talk." Yashin followed up the lead and went to Ivanovo, but found relatives there too scared to talk.

"Nemtsov was a Russian patriot, but he also loved Ukraine, the people and the language," Yashin said. "The war Putin started was traumatic for him, and he wanted to end it."

A chilling story

In the meantime, the Kremlin has undertaken an old-fashioned cover-up. The week after Nemtsov's murder, the authorities implausibly announced that the CCTV cameras next to the spot where he was shot dead "were not working". The politician had had a late dinner with his girlfriend, Ukrainian Anna Duritskaya, in GUM, an upmarket shopping centre. They strolled together across the cobbles of Red Square, then walked past the Kremlin. They started crossing a bridge over the Moscow River. It was 11:30 PM.

According to Duritskaya, someone emerged from a stairwell immediately behind them. Nemtsov was shot in the back. The assassin fired off six shots; four of the bullets struck him, one in the heart; and he died instantly. The killer then escaped in a waiting white car, driven by an accomplice. The car disappeared into the night. Duritskaya told the liberal TV channel Rain she was unable to see the person who fired the fatal shots. Investigators recovered the 9mm bullets, but they did not find a murder weapon.

It seems extraordinary that a former deputy prime minister could have been murdered right outside the Kremlin walls, with the shooter apparently able to drive off.

The location, though, told its own chilling story: an opponent of Putin lying dead in the street, under the walls of Russian power and next to the country's most famous landmark, St Basil's Cathedral. The visual scene was perfect for television. It seems extraordinary that a former deputy prime minister could have been murdered here, outside the Russian equivalent of the White House or the Houses of Parliament, with the shooter apparently able to drive off.

Officials initially released one carefully curated CCTV shot taken from far away. A snowplough obscures the moment when Nemtsov is shot. Like all major oppo-

Photo: Dhārmikatva (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

On the Sunday after the Nemtsov killing, tens of thousands of mourners filed past the spot where the oppositionist was gunned down. Some held banners that read: "Je suis Nemtsov"; others carried placards which named the "four bullets" that cut him down as Russia's four state TV channels.

sition figures, Nemtsov was under surveillance by the FSB, the successor agency to the KGB. The FSB expends enormous effort on keeping track of its targets. On this occasion, however, an organisation known for its resources and unlimited manpower seemed to have lost track of him.

What happened next was predictable and darkly ridiculous. Investigators arrested a Chechen named Zaur Dadayev, the deputy commander of Chechnya's north battalion. Dadayev has close links with Ramzan Kadyrov. According to police, Dadyev confessed to shooting Nemtsov. Taking to Instagram, Kadyrov then provided a "motive": Dadayev had been "shocked" by Nemtsov's support for the Charlie Hebdo journalists gunned down in Paris on January 7th 2015 over the publication of caricatures of the prophet Mumammad.

Four other suspects were rounded up. Another suspect, Beslan Shavanov, allegedly "blew himself up" when police tried to capture him in the Chechen capital Grozny, officials indicated. Shavanov was a member of the north battalion as well. The suspects were paraded in front of journalists in Moscow, a display of swift justice. Dadayev, however, promptly recanted his confession and said he had been

beaten in custody. Human rights groups recorded bruises and cuts on the arms and legs of the others accused.

Kadyrov, meanwhile, described Dadayev as a "patriot" who had only wanted to serve his country. The alleged Chechen plot – real, or half-real, invented – fuelled a further wave of speculation about what was going on at the top of the Kremlin. For ten days in March Vladimir Putin vanished. Was there, as some suggested, a struggle going on between hard-lined factions inside Russian power who wanted to rein in Kadyrov, Putin's protégé-turned-out-of-control-monster? Was Sergei Ivanov trying to unseat Putin in a palace coup?

Atmosphere of hysteria and hatred

As usual in the impenetrable shadow world of Kremlin politics, there were no empirical answers. Putin reappeared and laughed his disappearance off with a joke: "Without gossip, life would be boring." Aides said he had been suffering from a cold. The investigation into Nemtsov's murder increasingly began to resemble the "probe" into the killing of Anna Politkovskya in 2006. There were suspects – or better, fall guys – but no real evidence, no motive, and a lingering sense that those who ordered the murder would escape justice once more.

In the impenetrable shadow world of Kremlin politics, there are no empirical answers.

Certainly, Nemtsov himself had no doubts about who might want him dead. In his final months, Nemtsov voiced growing fears that he might be killed. In one of his last interviews, with the *Financial Times*, he said Putin was distinctly capable of murder, saying of him: "He is a totally amoral human being. Totally amoral. He is a Leviathan." Nemtsov went on: "Putin is very dangerous. He is more dangerous than the Soviets were. In the Soviet Union, there was at least a system, and decisions were taken by the politburo. Decisions about war, decisions to kill people, were not taken by Brezhnev alone, or by Andropov either, but that is how it works now."

We will probably never know who killed Boris Nemtsov. The Kremlin says it is not to blame. Despite this denial, it is entirely possible that the state ordered Nemtsov's appalling murder, employing a Chechen criminal group as a deniable cover. As many of Nemtsov's friends have pointed out, Putin deliberately fostered an atmosphere of hysteria and hatred. It is this that allowed Nemtsov to be killed, and so the moral responsibility rests with him, they say. At the start of the investigation Putin said he was taking matters under his personal control. This does

not exactly inspire confidence, and led the satirical British magazine *Private Eye* to run a photo of Putin with the statement as a speech bubble. The president is giving a large wink.

Instead, the Kremlin's actions since Nemtsov's murder appear designed to confuse and bamboozle the Russian public. The numerous "versions" of Nemtsov's murder – from love tiff to Charlie Hebdo-inspired Islamists to "provocation" – are part of a sophisticated postmodern media strategy, with its roots in KGB operational doctrine. How is one supposed to know which version is actually true?

In fact, the aim is to blur what is true with what is not, to the point that the truth disappears. RT (formerly Russia Today), the Kremlin propaganda channel, uses the same methods for western audiences. Its boss, Margarita Simonyan, argues that there is no such thing as truth, merely narrative. Russia's narrative is just as valid as the "western narrative", she argues. In this cynical relativist world of swirling competing versions, nothing is really true. And yet someone shot and killed Boris Nemtsov. He was alive. Now he is dead.

Such disinformation methods have been used in previous cases where enemies of the Russian state have mysteriously wound up dead. It is a long list. In October 2006 a gunman murdered Politkovskaya in the stairwell of her Moscow apartment building. In the wake of her killing, Putin dismissed her as pretty much "insignificant" inside Russia, and "merely famous in the West". After Nemtsov's death, Dmitry Peskov, Putin's press spokesman, echoed this. He suggested similarly that Nemtsov was a marginal figure, "scarcely more important than your average citizen".

Three weeks after Politkovskaya's murder, two assassins from Moscow bumped off another well-known critic of Putin's, Alexander Litvinenko. In January 2015, a public inquiry into Litvinenko's 2006 murder opened at the high court in London. Here, at least, the British police were able to obtain a mountain of evidence: CCTV footage showing Litvinenko at the Mayfair murder scene; call records from the two suspects, Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitry Kovtun; witnesses who were in a hotel bar when Litvinenko swallowed half a cup of radioactive green tea.

The inquiry chairman, Sir Robert Owen, will announce his findings by the end of 2015. He has already indicated that there is a "prima facie case" that this is a Russian state killing. The evidence backs up this interpretation. Lugovoi and Kovtun poisoned Litvinenko with polonium-210, a rare isotope made in a nuclear reactor. Once identified, it is easy to trace. Scotland Yard found a trail of polonium from Moscow to London: on plane seats, hotel rooms, on the shisha pipe (price £9) that Lugovoi smoked in a Moroccan bar. Two former KGB agents allegedly killed Litvinenko, then, using the equivalent of a mini-nuclear bomb.

As with Nemtsov, Putin has denied any involvement. In the meantime, Lugovoi has prospered. He became a deputy in Russia's state duma for the ultra-nationalist

Liberal-Democrats. He has produced his own versions of Litvinenko's killing, blaming it on MI6, Tony Blair and the late oligarch Boris Berezovsky. In late February he popped up on Russia's state Rossiya TV channel to share his theories about the Nemtsov murder. While the inquiry heard damning evidence in London, Putin awarded Lugovoi a state honour "for services to the motherland."

Disturbing pattern

During my four years in Russia as the *Guardian*'s bureau chief I covered other similar killings. Stanislav Markelov, a human rights lawyer, was shot dead in 2009 close to the gold-domed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Murdered with him was Anastasia Barburova, a 25-year-old journalist with the opposition newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. By the time I got to the scene, Markelov's body had been removed. Vermillion splashes of blood were visible on the white snow. There were few clues. Two neo-Nazis were eventually convicted of their murders.

At the trial of a group of Chechens accused of Politkovskaya's murder I met Natalia Estemirova, a friend of the murdered journalist, who worked for the human rights organisation Memorial. Estemirova lived in Grozny, Chechnya, and documented human rights abuses by both Islamist rebels and security forces under Kadyrov's command. In the summer of 2009, gunmen abducted her from her home and drove her to the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia. They marched her off the road into the forest and shot her five times in the head and chest.

Estemirova's killers have never been caught. Several Chechens were eventually convicted of Politkovskaya's murder, but the person who organised the hit was never captured and no plausible motive for her murder was ever given. In the absence of dispassionate investigation, a proper legal process, or even official regret, the suspicion of state complicity remains. What one can say with certainty is that troublesome critics of the Kremlin have an uncanny habit in Putin's Russia of ending up dead.

What one can say with certainty is that troublesome critics of the Kremlin have an uncanny habit of ending up dead.

Then there is Sergei Magnitsky. Magnitsky was a Russian lawyer who uncovered a 280 million US dollar fraud by interior minister officials and a Moscow tax office. These same officials put Magnitsky in jail. They demanded he withdraw his testimony against them. He refused. So they denied him access to a doctor and he grew seriously ill. In November 2009 riot police burst into his cell and beat him to death. The Kremlin subsequently put Magnitsky

on trial, even though he was already dead, after western countries sanctioned the corrupt officials involved.

On the Sunday after the Nemtsov killing, tens of thousands of mourners filed past the spot where the oppositionist was gunned down. Some held banners that read: "Je suis Nemtsov"; others carried placards which named the "four bullets" that cut him down as Russia's four state TV channels. In London, protesters held a vigil outside the Russian embassy, with flowers and candles. I asked one Russian friend who she thought was responsible for Nemtsov's death. Her reply was simple and sad. "Leviathan killed him," she said.

In late March masked men smashed up the homemade memorial to Nemtsov in the dead of night. This, more than anything, reveals the Kremlin's real attitude towards Nemtsov – a brave man who spoke truth to power and paid the ultimate price. The following day ordinary Muscovites returned. They came with flowers, candles, banners, and photos of the opposition leader. So long as they keep coming Russia still has hope.

Luke Harding is a British journalist with the *Guardian* and author of the book *Mafia State: How one reporter became an enemy of the brutal new Russia*. From 2007 until 2011 he was the *Guardian*'s Moscow correspondent. He is currently based in London.

There is no Room for Optimism

An interview with Sergei Sokolov, Russian journalist and deputy editor with *Novaya Gazeta*. Interviewer: Mateusz Dobrek

MATEUSZ DOBREK: Following the murder of Boris Nemtsov, what can we now expect from Vladimir Putin?

SERGEI SOKOLOV: I do not share the views of some oppositionists who, right after the assassination took place, began directing blame at Putin. It is absurd. They said the same when Anna Politkovskaya was murdered. Why, when something like that happens in Moscow, does it immediately mean that Putin is running around the town with a gun? It makes no sense. The problem is that an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance has been created. In my opinion these people thought that they could help the government and were impulsively driven by that atmosphere. It was clearly a Chechen-style assassination, the proceedings prove it. There were many cases of the opponents of the Chechen leadership being killed. In fact, there was a list with four names on it. Four people were about to be assassinated. Besides Nemtsov, there was Kseniya Sobchak, Alexei Venediktov and Mikhail Khodorkovsky. As it usually happens in the case of Chechen assassinations, there was a tender for two or three groups. They came to Moscow and those, who succeeded first, got the money. Because Chechens never take much time to prepare themselves for a crime, they were quickly captured. To be honest, I do not remember any case when the executors were caught as fast after such a well-known contract killing.

So you have no doubt that Zaur Dadayev and Anzor Gubashev are guilty? It has been stated earlier that Dadayev had an alibi.

As far as I can tell that they are guilty. They do not have any alibis and they pleaded guilty.

Some mentioned that Ramzan Kadyrov could force his people to plead guilty.

For what? It is not enough to plead guilty. All the confessions need to add up.

There is an investigation, expert analysis and the crime scene is checked. If the alleged offender was not close to the crime scene, then he is released. The question of the organisers of the plot is a different issue. We will encounter some problems to establish who they really were. The alleged organiser now is in Chechnya under protection and nobody has access to him.

Aren't you surprised that the murder happened two days before a protest march which was organised by Nemtsov?

It is yet another myth that exists in the heads of the oppositionists – that every killing has to be an accurate hit against a certain cause. If we analyse other, non-Chechen assassinations, it could indeed be the case. I think that Dadayev and Gubashev were not even aware that this march was about to take place. It was the same with Politkovskaya. She was killed on October 7th 2006, the birthday of Vladimir Putin. It has been said that it was a gift for Putin, which is just absurd. Politkovskaya's murderers made their first attempt on October 3rd but did not succeed. These people do not follow current political events.

If they were not caught, would they have gone after other people on the hit list?

Yes, they would have done it, or others still might.

You mentioned this was a contract killing with multiple tenders. Is it possible that there are other groups of people now in Moscow waiting for the right moment to assassinate Sobchak or Venediktov?

There are probably a few groups in Moscow. Some left because the issue was getting so much media attention. And this is why Kseniya Sobchak left, she was advised by the police to do so.

Last year, the Polish government called off preparations for the "Polish Year in Russia". What could the Polish government do to make the current political situation in the region less destructive for Polish-Russian relations?

I think that such cultural events should not be cancelled. It was not about the co-operation with the state but with the society. Government officials do not need to be invited to all the events. That would show Polish attitudes towards the Russian government. But the problem is not only with Polish-Russian relations but also in Russia's relations with Europe. In spite of the sanctions introduced by the EU, horizontal relations should be cultivated: meetings between journalists and housewives' leagues, student exchanges etc. When officials isolate themselves from one another, I see the logic in that. But if the whole nation becomes isolated and is additionally pushed into further isolation by Russian propaganda, then it is a scary thing. If you do not speak with someone who has different views you will never be able to change your own way of thinking.

In Russia, we often hear the opinion that not only are the Russian media full of

Photo courtesy of Sergei Sokolov

Sergei Sokolov, a Russian journalist and editor with *Novaya Gazeta*

propaganda but so are the western media with their anti-Russian propaganda. As a reader of the western press, how would you comment on this?

We face two problems here. The first is that the western media proved to be unable to firmly stand up to the lies of Russian propaganda. They were based on illusions for a long time. While, RT (formerly Russia Today) provides an avalanche of lies swamping the entire world, western journalists appear not able to stop it by presenting facts. Secondly, the views of Europe's extreme left and extreme right are surprisingly unanimous in this matter. These parties are chess pieces in Putin's game. They try to shake the views of societies, parliaments or even the European Parliament. It is not a coincidence that Marine Le Pen got significant loans, nor that Hungarian radicals have good relations with Russia, nor that rather shady, extreme right-wing groups visited St Petersburg recently. It has all been planned on purpose. This is how the consciousness of Europeans has been shaken.

What's more, the economic sanctions have affected Europe itself. I think that it is time now to focus more on some nuances of Russian politics. I read the American and European press and there is basically one way to approach these issues. Journalists cite the same people from the opposition, people like Andrey Illarionov or Ilya Yashin who have quite specific views that are not shared by people in Russia, not even by the opposition.

You have been observing events in Ukraine. What do you think about the actions undertaken by the Ukrainian parliament? Is there any chances that Ukraine would finally become independent from Russia?

A lot depends on Ukraine itself. I think Ukraine's leadership is not shouldering the responsibility. They have also provoked the situation in eastern Ukraine. I am not defending the military action. Instead of implementing real reforms, or anti-corruption laws, some to Ukrainian politicians started to discuss a bill on the status of the Russian language. The project failed but I do not understand why they even pro-

posed it. And instead of real reforms in the army or economy, a few oligarchs came together and started to divide the economy between each other again. I am afraid that, by acting this way, Petro Poroshenko may transform himself into a new version of Viktor Yanukovych. Ukraine's western partners will complain that their help is being wasted.

Do you think there is any line that Putin would not cross? In Ukraine or the Baltic states, for example?

Putin is not a strategist. He is a tactician. This line can move depending on what his opponents allow him to do. In 2008 nobody, even in Russia, could imagine that the decision to send troops abroad would be made. Then we saw how Putin's line moved further. Later came the annexation of Crimea and then Donbas. The more inaction there is in the West, the further this line goes. Putin has totally revanchist intentions. He wants to rebuild the state in the borders he remembers from the time when he worked in the KGB.

To what extent does the contemporary economic situation in Russia affect Putin's tactics? Assuming that oil prices increase, could it change Russia's policies?

In that case, Russia's foreign policy would be even more aggressive because, apparently, Putin likes this type of policymaking. If the situation continues to be like this for the next five years, when general strikes break out all around the country and people realise they do not have anything left to eat, then Russia's foreign policy will probably change. But Putin is now in a very comfortable position, he has driven people to hysteria. Thanks to that hysteria, the society does not see the real problems that are piling up. He hopes that the world's economic situation will improve and that calmer times will return. However, it is unlikely that he will abandon the project which is called: Russia – The Third Rome. I think he, and his people, have had this idea in mind since the they came to power, but they simply did not have the means to make it happen.

There were around 50,000 people who came to Nemtsov's funeral march. How far is the continuation of his opposition activities possible after his death? Nemtsov claimed it was necessary for the opposition to win in local elections first, then to try to make headway in Moscow and central elections. Is this strategy still possible?

Nemtsov was a unique politician in this environment. He worked in local governments. He was a governor, a member of the government, the State Duma and the opposition. Unlike any others, he had a variety of political experience. There is also Mikhail Kasyanov who served as prime minister but he never tried to work outside Moscow.

Nemtsov was right when he claimed that in order to build a solid opposition it is necessary to start on the local level. The Kremlin created its counter-strategy to this after Nemtsov became a deputy to the Yaroslavl regional parliament and

Oleg Shein ran for mayor of Astrakhan and almost won in 2012. This and other similar cases forced the authorities to change the law on direct elections. It means that Nemtsov's strategy was right so the government started to fight with it.

Another problem is that Russian opposition is divided. Even inside the Republican Party of Russia, PARNAS, a Nemtsov party, there were serious internal conflicts. Yabloko also has problems with communicating with the others. They all argue with each other all the time. As long as they argue, they lose elections and people are murdered; or people like Ilya Ponomarev are prosecuted, while others, like Garry Kasparov or Sergei Guriev, are forced to leave Russia. The opposition circle has been shrinking and they cannot work together as they used to. There are no new faces on the political scene. To be honest, the masses got simply bored with the opposition. I remember the huge demonstrations in Moscow in 2011 when people greeted and listened to writers, musicians or journalists like Boris Akunin or Leonid Parfyonov. Yet after so many years in opposition without any success, and the inability of the opposition to stop arguing, the people simply were unimpressed with these "achievements".

The situation is complicated because there is no real opposition now in Russia. When a new public figure appears, he is immediately prosecuted under criminal charges. I do not see a good climate for the appearance of new politicians. To put it simply – if Putin went crazy and agreed on holding round table talks with the opposition, as happened in Poland, he would not have anyone to sit at the table with.

Putin disappeared for ten days in March 2015. We heard different theories such as, for example, that Sergey Ivanov, the Kremlin's Chief of Staff, would replace Dmitry Medvedev and some other rumours. Can we expect any changes within the Kremlin's political circle?

You have to understand that nobody knows what's inside Putin's mind. He listens to a tight group of people and makes decisions on his own. I do not know why he did disappeared for ten days and I will speculate, it would be merely conjecture guess. There is a thick wall that separates the president from all the others.

Are there any groups within Putin's circle that could argue with each other and lead to a change in Russia?

They all argue all the time. In the government, in Putin's administration and in the FSB as well. But it does not lead to any change. Putin may dismiss somebody sometimes, but it does not change the configuration of power. There are, of course, people in the political elite who understand that Putin puts Russia in a very difficult situation. But the desire to maintaining your position and not put your career at risk is very strong. How long is the political elite going to bear this madness? I do not know. Experiences of Russian history teach us that the elite may sleep for a very long time.

There is not much optimism in other words…

There is no room for optimism in the foreseeable future.

What are the plans of *Novaya Gazeta*'s editorial team? Is it true that the paper version is going to disappear?

That is what we said. Now we have to look at different opportunities to make everything stay as it is. It is true that an independent press practically does not exist any more in Russia and has been facing very difficult times recently. The media market does not exist in fact. All these propagandist papers get enormous support and we cannot compete with them.

Are you afraid that you could be called a "foreign agent"?

I am not afraid. I think about my readers and I suppose that the people who read my newspaper would accept it with calmness. They know such a label with reference to *Novaya Gazeta* is absurd. There will always be an online version and some opportunities. I hope we will survive. We have experienced harsher times.

Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski

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If Europe is from Venus, then Russia is from Mars

DOMINIK P. JANKOWSKI

The military is still a key pillar of Russia's foreign policy. Its armed forces, which suffered years of neglect after the Soviet collapse, still cast a shadow of global power. For many in the West, the Russian-Ukrainian war has become a strategic long-term game changer with Russia's belligerent foreign policy creating an opportunity for the European Union to set its priorities and to finally anchor its Common Security and Defence Policy to confront the new challenge.

In 2003 American scholar Robert Kagan wrote an essay titled *Of Paradise and Power* which was supposed to reveal the mounting discrepancies between Europe and the United States. The publication, primarily known for its infamous comparison that "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus", ironically depicted the features of a European approach to solving problems. "Europeans insist they approach problems with greater nuance and sophistication. They try to influence others subtly and indirectly. They are more patient when solutions do not come quickly. They generally favour peaceful responses to problems. They are quicker to appeal to international law, international conventions and international opinion to adjudicate disputes. They try to use commercial and economic ties to bind nations together. They often emphasise process over result, believing that ultimately process can become substance."

Despite an obvious exaggeration and oversimplification that this description offers, it contains a grain of truth. Twelve years later, European policy that is being

made in regards to the Russian aggression towards Ukraine is based on the same premise: there is no military solution to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Wakeup call

Undisputedly there is a missing element in Robert Kagan's essay: Russia. For those who wonder why, I recommend the 2002 US National Security Strategy which provides a background to the strategic climate which dominated Washington, DC after September 11th 2001. This reads as follows: "Russia's top leaders have a realistic assessment of their country's current weakness and the policies – internal and external – needed to reverse those weaknesses. They understand, increasingly, that Cold War approaches do not serve their national interests and that Russian and American strategic interests overlap in many areas."

Interestingly enough, Russia – a world power which back then had just brought the Second Chechen War to an end – was perceived neither as a likely rival nor a long-term threat. However, in practice Russia has never renounced its "Martian" citizenship which was founded on direct and clandestine military interventions in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, challenging evolution of the military doctrine and modernisation of its armed forces. There is no doubt that if Europe is from Venus than Russia definitely is from Mars.

For many in the West the Russian-Ukrainian war has become a wakeup call or a strategic long-term game changer. Russia has invaded, occupied, and attempted to annex Crimea – a portion of Ukraine's sovereign territory – where it has systematically persecuted ethnic minorities and others who oppose the occupation. It has provided a considerable amount of weapons, materiel, trained personnel and financial support to armed separatists operating in eastern Ukraine where it instigated a conflict that is still raging until today. Russian-backed separatists shot down a commercial airliner, killing all 283 passengers and 15 crew members on board. Thus far the war has left more than 5,700 dead and nearly 1.5 million displaced. How could it happen that for so many, this war came as a surprise?

In fact, since 1989 – when Soviet troops experienced a major defeat in a decade-long war in Afghanistan – Russia has directly taken part or indirectly fuelled nine wars and conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, including: the Nagorno-Karabakh war (1988–1994), the South Ossetia war (1991–1992), the Transnistria war (1992), the Abkhazia war (1992–1993), the First Chechen War (1994–1996), the Second Chechen War (1999–2000), the counter-terrorism operation in Northern Caucasus (2000–2009; in practice still ongoing), the Russian-Georgian war (2008) and finally the Russian-Ukrainian war (2014 – ongoing).

Russia's understanding of the use of force has significantly evolved and matured in the last 25 years. At first it was still predominantly based on the old paradigm of industrial war which derived from a conflict between states and was based on the manoeuvre of forces en masse and the support of a state's manpower. Yet, for Russia the basic premise of industrial war, namely the sequence peace-crisis-war-resolution, became strategically and militarily, as well as financially, unattainable in the last decade of the 20th century. Over time, decision-makers in Moscow understood that only a new paradigm – which in military strategy is often described as war amongst the people – could become a long-term cure allowing Russia's hegemonic vision to remain sustainable. Those nine wars and conflicts have at least one common feature: they all are based on the concept of a continuous crisscrossing between confrontation and conflict. Indeed, in those cases there is no predefined sequence (war-peace). Moreover, peace is often neither its starting nor ending point.

Russia's understanding of the use of force has significantly evolved and matured in the last 25 years.

Therefore, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus are marked with protracted conflicts which, as defined by British General Rupert Smith in his book *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern War*, could be characterised by six major trends. First, one fights for other ends than in the past and therefore the goals of war go beyond clearly measurable objectives. Second, the conflicts become timeless, since one starts to seek a condition which must be maintained until an agreement on a definitive outcome is reached. Third, many conflicts have been fought in a way so as not to lose forces, as opposed to fighting by using force at any cost to achieve the goal. Fourth, on many occasions new applications are found for old weapons. In fact, the Russian model of hybrid warfare constitutes a perfect exemplification of this process. Fifth, the sides mostly are (or in many cases pretend to be) non-state. Finally, one fights amongst the people, a fact currently amplified by the central role of the media in every conflict zone. In fact, these six trends reveal a new reality of war, also known to and exploited by the Russians, which no longer consists of a single massive event of military decision that delivers a conclusive political result.

Military doctrine

The character of war cannot be fully understood without a proper doctrinal basis. The state's military doctrine possesses a normative and often a juridical

quality that should be binding on relevant state agencies. Doctrine is supposed to represent an official view about the character of contemporary war, the threats as well as what policies the government and the armed forces will implement to confront those dangers and challenges.

In Russian military tradition – since Tsarist times – doctrine has played a particularly important role. Russia's military doctrine has always been more abstract and has been more political than its western equivalents. As a result, the Russian doctrine is strongly associated with a political-strategic aspect. In fact, this distinctive connection has been evident in the most recent military doctrine, signed by Vladimir Putin in December 2014. Bearing in mind the current state of international affairs, especially the Russian-Ukrainian war and the western response to it, it comes as no surprise that the three main issues listed as threats for Russia are related to NATO (enhancement of capabilities, global reach, enlargement which brings NATO's infrastructure closer to Russia's borders), the US (ballistic missile defence, strategic non-nuclear systems) and Ukraine (toppling of the legitimate government and the subsequent imposition of a regime hostile to Russian interests). Moreover, the Russian illegal occupation of Crimea gave a new urgency to emphasising the threats to territorial integrity and foreign claims to parts of Russia outlined in the doctrine.

Indeed, to gain insight into Russia's security policy, a thorough analysis of the development of the Russian military doctrine is essential. The first attempt to formalise Russia's military doctrine following the collapse of the Soviet Union came in 1993. The underlying principles of this document reflected the need to resolve internal political, economic and social problems and thereby maintain domestic and international political stability while Russia consolidated itself. As such, it was the first iteration of a territorially defensive, as opposed to an expansionist strategy; a theme which would become prominent in later revisions of the doctrine (2000, 2010, 2014). In fact, during the 1990s, the Russian political and military leadership realised that the security apparatus would be increasingly exposed to domestic and regional armed conflicts. This shift from global to internal conflicts was also reflected in changes in the perception of the use of military force. The emphasis changed from external large-scale warfare (i.e. industrial war) to operations within the Commonwealth of Independent States and joint operations of the Russian armed forces in internal conflicts (i.e. war amongst the people).

In April 2000 Putin signed a new military doctrine which extended the list of factors destabilising Russia and underlined the threats emanating from extremist national-ethnic and religious separatism, the weakening of existing mechanisms of international security as well as an unlawful application of military force under the pretext of "humanitarian intervention". Other Russian concerns included NATO's new Strategic Concept of 1999 and its enlargement with new member states in the east, adjacent to Russia's borders. Moreover, the doctrine rejected a leading role for any institution in international politics other than the United Nations Security Council.

Furthermore, the military doctrine underlined that a suppression of the rights of Russian citizens abroad is a threat to national security. Finally, the document permitted the use of nuclear weapons to counter aggression. It allowed for the use of nuclear arms to repel a conventional attack as well, under certain, yet not specified, critical circumstances for national security. By comparison, Soviet doctrine had reserved nuclear weapons for use only in retaliation for a nuclear attack. This new Russian stance was not unexpected, since the ongoing decline in conventional strength had to be compensated with emphasis on the nuclear deterrent.

Through its military doctrine, Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to an attack against itself or against its allies.

Signed into law in February 2010 the doctrine lowered the nuclear threshold even further by introducing an undercover provision on the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons. Indeed, Russia retained the right to use nuclear weapons in response to

an attack by weapons of mass destruction against itself or against its allies, but also against an attack with conventional weapons when the very existence of the state was under threat. Moreover, a desire to endow NATO's force potential with global functions and to move its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders together with a build-up of foreign troops on territories of states contiguous with Russia and its allies were perceived as one of the main external military threats. Yet, Moscow needed such an adversarial perception to justify some crucial aspects of its foreign and security policy, especially the forceful protection of Russians abroad which included an operational use of force outside Russia's borders. Therefore, it cannot be denied that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict could come as a surprise only to those who turned a blind eye to the development of Russia's military doctrine.

Modernisation

The military remains a key pillar of Russia's foreign policy. The armed forces suffered years of neglect after the Soviet collapse, but still cast a shadow of global power. In fact, the Russian military is in the midst of a historic overhaul with significant consequences for Eurasian politics and security. In 2008 Russia's then-defence minister, Anatoly Serdyukov, launched a long-term colossal project of comprehensive military reforms, whose objectives his successor, Sergey Shoygu, has also upheld since his November 2012 appointment. The Russian armed forces have already accomplished the organisational transition from mass mobilisation army to a modern combat force. According to strategic documents, the reforms are necessary to bring a Cold War-era military into the 21st century. However, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has only confirmed that the armed forces will enable Moscow to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy relying on force to coerce its weaker neighbours. Russia achieves this goal by permanently stationing its troops in the region: in Armenia (3,300), Abkhazia and South Ossetia (7,000), Transnistria (1,500), Kyrgyzstan (500), Tajikistan (5,000) and Crimea (20,000).

The structural reorganisation of the armed forces started with the replacement of cumbersome divisions – intended for an industrial war – by smaller more rapidly deployable brigades. Moreover, the military command structure has been thoroughly revamped enabling joint operations. In a second step, new structures have been systematically tested and practiced. In fact, this was one of the main focuses of the military activities in 2013 and 2014. In addition to the scheduled exercises of the normal training cycle, the Russian Defence Ministry concentrated in particular on a series of unscheduled, snap, large-scale drills. These included three of the largest manoeuvres of the post-Soviet era.

The success of any reform project, however, largely depends on there being sufficient financial resources. According to the Swedish think tank, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Russian military budget equalled 31.1 billion US dollars in 2000. In 2013 it amounted to $84.8 billion – an astonishing 272 per cent increase. In 2015 Russian military spending is set to grow by another 33 per cent which will lead to Russia's highest defence budget ever, roughly 4.2 per cent of its GDP.

Alongside the structural and budgetary changes, upgrading equipment has been another core element of Russia's military reforms. In 2008 only ten per cent of weapons systems satisfied modern standards; that share is on track to increase to 70 per cent by 2020. By then, Russia foresees a massive acquisition programme which includes: 600 aircrafts, 1,100 helicopters, approximately 100 vessels (comprising 25 corvettes, 15 frigates and 24 submarines), 2,300 tanks, 2,000 artillery pieces, 120 Iskander-M launchers as well as new air defence units (approximately 400 S-400 Triumph and 100 S-500 Triumphator-M systems).

Setting priorities

In March 2015 Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, ignited a fierce debate about the role of the EU in deterring Russia's aggressive foreign and security policy. He proposed that the EU establish an army which, according to him, would convey a clear message to Russia that Europe is serious about defending its values. In reality this proposal again symbolises how the European elite are, indeed, from Venus. The idea of an EU-wide army – which has been floated since 1950 when the French Prime Minister René Pleven proposed the establishment of a European Defence Community – cannot be treated as a silver bullet to the challenges of European security. In practical terms an EU army would duplicate and potentially weaken the existing NATO structures as well as require a fundamental reshaping of the political decision-making processes – hardly imaginable in the current state of EU affairs.

An EU-wide army would weaken existing NATO structures as well as require a fundamental reshaping of the political decision-making processes – hardly imaginable in the current state of EU affairs.

Nevertheless, the belligerent Russian foreign policy which relies on military power offers a chance to set priorities in the EU and to anchor its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in a broader set of

policies and instruments to confront the Russian challenge. In this context, three recommendations for Europe emerge.

Firstly, the EU should improve its strategic and practical co-operation with NATO. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has confirmed that the Alliance will remain the principal vehicle of transatlantic military strength and a primary source of long-term measures countering Russia's military threats. Since the September 2014 Summit in Wales NATO has been implementing the Readiness Action Plan which provides a comprehensive package of instruments to respond to changes in the security environment in and near Europe. The two pillars of the Readiness Action Plan, the assurance and adaptation measures, include a continuous air, land and maritime presence in the eastern part of the Alliance on a rotational basis as well as an enhancement of NATO's military posture and readiness levels. Given the fact that the Alliance's plan is already more concrete and robust, the EU and NATO should search for additional synergies as they have no interest in accommodating a revisionist power in their eastern neighbourhood. That is why both the EU and NATO should aim at orchestrating their response to Russian hybrid warfare model, being a combination of predominantly military and – to a lesser extent – non-military components. Enhanced strategic communications, coordinated exercises and prioritising of cybersecurity could constitute a starting point.

Secondly, the EU member states should renew their financial commitment to defence. Between 1985 and 1989 Western European states spent on average 3.1 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on their armed forces. Data contained in "The Military Balance 2014" indicate that Europe collectively now spends only about 1.4 per cent of GDP on defence. This is the second lowest proportion of GDP in the world invested by a region in military. In fact, only Latin America spends appreciably less as a proportion of GDP. Yet mistakes should not be made: the world will neither be safer, nor more just, if Europe disarms. On the contrary, future generations of European citizens would likely face an international environment less amenable to both their socio-economic and security needs. Therefore, the EU should not exclude a creation of a defence pledge on its own. In fact, it could be based on an innovative formula going beyond a single indicator based on a GDP target.

Finally, the EU should remain operationally engaged. Missions and operations are a powerhouse of the CSDP. The EU should continue to focus its security efforts on its neighbourhood, yet, rebalance the operational presence and boost its engagement in Eastern Europe. Currently, there are only three ongoing EU missions on the eastern flank. To put that into context, the EU presently conducts eight civilian missions and four military operations in Africa and the Middle East. Therefore, the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (since 2005),

the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (since 2008) and the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine (since 2014) should be perceived only as an overture to a larger European operational presence in Eastern Europe.

If Europe chooses to remain an inhabitant of Venus, it should not implicitly believe that every conflict can be solved by peaceful means. Zealots more easily lose sight of the big picture. Europe cannot forget that freedom is not static, nor is it necessarily benign. In practice, freedom constantly evolves and in doing so generates new requirements and abolishes old constraints. Ironically, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict may yet prove to be the source of Europe's salvation.

Europe cannot forget that freedom is not static, nor is it necessarily benign.

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The Fifth Kharkiv

TATIANA ZHURZHENKO

Since 2014 Kharkiv has gone back to the old notion of being a city on the geopolitical frontier. Kharkiv finds itself just 40 kilometres from the Russian border and just 200 kilometres from the unstable border with the separatist controlled territory of Donbas, where the truce is still very fragile. Having survived the "Russian spring" it demonstrates a new pro-Ukrainian consensus which emerged in response to the serious threat of internal destabilisation and Russian invasion.

In February 2015, I am back in Kharkiv, my home town where I grew up and lived half of my life. My last visit was more than two years ago, when Kharkiv was still a sleepy, apolitical provincial town, mentioned, if at all, in western media due to Yulia Tymoshenko's imprisonment in the local hospital. The dramatic events of the last year I experienced mainly via social networks. With the downfall of Viktor Yanukovych's regime and the beginning of the so-called "Russian spring", as violence on the streets of Kharkiv began escalating, I could hardly sleep for weeks. Watching on YouTube the Russian tri-coloured flag hoisted on the roof of the Kharkiv regional administration and the pogrom-like scenes of the public humiliation of EuroMaidan activists by an aggressive pro-Russian mob, I was overwhelmed by despair and anger.

In late spring and summer, however, the city seemed to overcome the fever of pro-Russian riots. The Ukrainian Security Service succeeded in weakening the separatist movement. Bridges, fences and walls were painted yellow and blue; never before had Kharkiv seen so many Ukrainian flags. Dozens of volunteer initiatives mushroomed in the city supporting the Ukrainian army and the newly born National Guard, helping out in the local military hospital and caring for refugees from Donbas. Being proud of my city I felt a new, strong bond to it.

Right place, right time

Arriving in Kharkiv this time, one year after the victory of the EuroMaidan, I am stunned to find hardly any evidence of these changes. The city welcomes me with cold rain, and the wet Ukrainian flags that faded over the winter look rather sad. Most of them carry black ribbons as we are in the midst of the next military disaster, Debaltseve. The hryvnia is in free fall and prices are rising every day. Grey, tired and depressed people on public transport speak about news from the front and their hopes for peace. On the streets, young men in military uniform are commonplace. One of the men, no older than my son who is 20, buys a new sim card for his cell phone. I try to get a read from his face – is he on his way "there" or just back?

Maybe it is just my imagination, but it seems you now hear less Russian pop music in the local taxis. Music by "Okean Elzy", the most popular Ukrainian rock band and an icon of the EuroMaidan, plays in a small shop where I buy a fashionable travel bag decorated with national symbols (and made in Kharkiv!). Ukrainian rock music also plays in a coffee shop run by students, exactly the same type of place you can find on every European university campus.

On February 20th, the anniversary of the EuroMaidan massacre, Kharkiv pro-Ukrainian activists announce a gathering to mourn those who died a year earlier. At six in the evening around one hundred people gather near the Taras Shevchenko monument, the traditional meeting place of the Kharkiv EuroMaidan. Large black and white photos of three Kharkovites from the "Heavenly Hundred" are surrounded by a sea of candles. There are a lot of young people with Ukrainian flags around their shoulders, but there are older people too. Serhiy Zhadan, a prominent Ukrainian writer from Kharkiv, reads his latest poems about the war in Donbas and I suddenly have the feeling of being in the right place at the right time.

Ukrainian and EU flags hover over Kharkiv's square, but the banners of the Kharkiv-based Azov Battalion are also there, a sobering reminder that the world is never black and white.

People sing the Ukrainian anthem, and joining them I realise that this is the first time in my life that I do it on a Kharkiv street. The Ukrainian and even EU flags hover over the square, but the banners of the Kharkiv-based Azov Battalion are also there, with its controversial far right symbol, a sobering reminder that the world is never black and white. However, nobody here seems to be concerned with these silent guys in black balaclavas, just the opposite – after last year's experience of violent clashes between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian protesters they are seen

as protectors. The people I talk to, including the local public officials, recognise the contribution of the Azov Battalion to the military fight against the pro-Russian forces in Donbas and dismiss criticism of far right ideology and symbols as a luxury of exaggerated political correctness. I am uneasy with this position, but to be honest: where would Kharkiv be today without them?

Cultural capital

Yuriy Shevelyov, a famous Kharkiv born Ukrainian linguist and literary critic and professor at Harvard and Columbia Universities, in 1948 wrote an essay on "The Fourth Kharkiv". According to Shevelyov, the First Kharkiv was a patriarchal Cossack settlement of the 17th and 18th centuries. The second one was a provincial town of the 19th century, in the Russian empire. The Third Kharkiv, of which he himself was a part of, was the capital of Ukrainian modernism and urbanism of the 1920s, a city of Ukrainian renaissance and cosmopolitan cultural experiments which broke with its provinciality and backwardness and opened itself to the world. This is the Kharkiv murdered by Stalin's terror. Shevelyov's Fourth Kharkiv is a post-war Soviet city, back to its provincial status with no memory of the cultural achievements of the 1920s. This Kharkiv Shevelyov did not experience himself – after staying in the city under Nazi occupation and working for a local Ukrainian newspaper, he left for Lviv and later went to Germany before the Soviets returned. The essay written on the train to Munich comprises also his vision of the future, a Fifth Kharkiv – a Ukrainian and a European city which is to resume its role of a cultural capital.

Shevelyov lived long enough to re-visit Ukraine as a professor emeritus in the early 1990s and saw his native city struggling with the challenges of independence and Soviet heritage. He could have, however, hardly imagined the role his very name was going to play in the recent political battles. Viktoria Sklyarova, a Kharkiv journalist and one of the coordinators of the EuroMaidan, tells me the details of the scandal I know from the Ukrainian media. The initiative to memorialise Yuriy Shevelyov in his home city emerged after Oksana Zabuzhko, a famous Ukrainian writer, came to Kharkiv in February 2011 to present her correspondence with the Ukrainian American linguist. Sklyarova and her friends raised the issue on Kharkiv radio and TV and Shevelyov's essays were published by the Kharkiv Historical Philological Association. In the summer of 2011 the city authorities gave permission to install a memorial plaque at the house where Shevelyov had lived. However, after the plaque, designed by a talented Kharkiv artist, had been officially revealed on September 5th 2013, the head of the regional administration, Mikhail Dobkin,

accused Shevelyov of being a Nazi collaborator calling him (and those who came to the opening) "fascist scum".

The Kharkiv "Antifascist committee", previously not particularly well known for its activities, initiated a revision of the mayor's decision. On September 25th 2013 the city council made the decision to dismantle the plaque and the same day three "unidentified individuals" appeared with hammers and axes and, in broad daylight, smashed it to pieces. Prominent Ukrainian intellectuals immediately appealed to Kharkiv authorities in support of the Shevelyov case.

Ideological roots

The fight for the memory of Yuriy Shevelyov became a prelude to the anti-Yanukovych protests in Ukraine and consolidated the Kharkiv EuroMaidan. Shevelyov's vision of the Fifth Kharkiv as a Ukrainian and European cultural capital inspired the protesters. Eventually, the pro-Ukrainian activists won the legal battle. The plaque was restored but has not been put in place yet – given the current level of political emotions in the city it would hardly survive a week.

This recent conflict, which added to political polarisation in the city, is deeply rooted in the 20th century collective memory of Kharkiv and the Soviet mythology of the Second World War which stigmatises any form of Ukrainian nationalism as "fascism" and reduces any form of anti-Soviet activity to "collaboration with the Nazis". During the last year this anti-fascist discourse proved to be an especially powerful instrument for anti-Ukrainian mobilisation. The attack on the memory of Shevelyov in Kharkiv helps us understand the ideological roots of the so-called Russian spring – the pro-Russian revolt against the government in Kyiv denounced as a "fascist junta".

Kharkiv's division is deeply rooted in Soviet mythology of the Second World War which stigmatises any form of Ukrainian nationalism as "fascism".

Meanwhile, for most of us who have friends and relatives in the Russian-annexed Crimea and separatist-controlled Donbas such words as "occupation" and "collaboration" are not just abstract ideological labels coming from the Soviet black-and-white approach to history. An old friend of mine, a sociologist from Kharkiv, recently confessed that she cannot help imagining her colleagues taking sides if Kharkiv becomes Russian. Kharkiv's traumatic memory of Nazi occupation, the spectre of an existential choice between collaboration, resistance and survival, which had remained for a long time in the shadow of the heroic myth of the Great Patriotic War, has come to the fore with the "Russian spring".

Dialogues

Since the end of the Soviet era Kharkiv has always preferred to see itself as a bourgeois city. Kharkiv is historically a merchant town. One could often hear that "people here know how to do business, negotiate and solve conflicts" or that "nationalism is not for us". Some would say "we are rather entrepreneurs, pragmatic and tolerant to cultural differences". The Maidan in Kyiv, some added later, is for the jobless and lazy, but Kharkiv is different as it appreciates stability. Since last year, with the violent clashes and explosions on the streets, what happened to this narrative of a tolerant city and its culture of negotiation? Is it a useful myth or a dangerous illusion?

One day I meet Alena Kopina, a sociologist working at the Kharkiv Center for Local Democracy. Since September 2014 she has been running the so-called "Dialogues" – moderated discussions between activists and representatives of different, often antagonised political forces. This initiative aims to lower the political polarisation in the city. The Kharkiv EuroMaidan and the Anti-Maidan (now presenting itself as "opposition") – political opponents recently divided by a police chain on the main square – now meet in one room and engage in an open discussion (though without journalists present) which ends with some tea and coffee. I am allowed to take part in one of the dialogues and indeed surprised to discover several notorious figures, such as one of the female leaders of the Kharkiv Anti-Maidan from the Party of Regions, a local Communist from "Trudova Kharkivshchyna" who a year ago appealed to Putin to bring order to Ukraine, and a well known pro-Russian activist who has been campaigning against "linguistic discrimination" and "Ukrainianisation" for many years (he comes with his private bodyguard). In the room are also some EuroMaidan leaders, a member of the Kharkiv Human Rights Group, and some local volunteers working with refugees.

The theme of today's meeting is reconciliation. It is an especially difficult moment for such a discussion as just a couple of days ago the pro-Ukrainian march celebrating the anniversary of the EuroMaidan victory was bombed, allegedly by the so-called "Kharkiv Partisans", a pro-Russian underground group. The explosion killed two people – a policemen from a small town sent to Kharkiv over the weekend as reinforcement of public security and a fifty-year-old physicist named Ihor Tolmachyov, one of the Euromaidan leaders. The next day two more who were wounded died in the hospital, both teenagers. This was not the first violent attack that targeted pro-Ukrainian events and activists, though it was the first one with human casualties. Every such episode leads to repressions against the "opposition", while the "opposition" accuses the Ukrainian Security Service of staging terror to create a pretext for further repressions.

Photo: Tatiana Zhurzhenko

The Lenin monument on Svobody Square in Kharkiv was toppled in September 2014. All that remains is an empty plinth, wrapped in green plastic fencing with a triumphant Ukrainian flag at the top and a sign that reads: "Dear Kharkivites, please pardon the construction underway".

It is difficult to talk about reconciliation when doctors are still fighting for the lives of the wounded from the last terror attack. And yet people in the room give it a try even if they mostly shout at each other and seem not to listen at all. How can we stop the spiral of violence in the city? Are there non-violent solutions to the political conflict? What are the common concerns which we all share despite all our differences?

"Stop the war!" someone suggests from the opposition. "But can we protect Kharkiv if we stop fighting separatism in Donbas?" asks a pro-Ukrainian activist. "Kharkiv must stay peaceful, there should be no 'Kharkiv People's Republic' here" he proposes instead. "Kharkiv is our common home, we must be able to live here together." "But which Kharkiv? A Ukrainian one?" The opposition is not so sure. "Respect for the law, access to the media, an end to political repressions!" demands the opposition.

"These were exactly our claims under Yanukovych, where were you at that time?" notes a lady from the Kharkiv Human Rights Group. "Let's focus on the economy, that's something which concerns everybody," comes another suggestion. "I don't

give a damn for this oligarchic economy until we nationalise it" a communist says, who later gets up and leaves the room.

Most of the people stay for a cup of tea and I talk to Alena, the moderator, who looks very tired. What have her efforts to keep some discipline and lead the discussion achieved? There seems to be no visible outcome. It is a tough job, all the more as she has to withhold her personal position. A one hour discussion is preceded by weeks of preparation, establishing contacts and building trust. She must appear absolutely neutral and therefore cannot afford to participate in political events. This morning, she went, however, to mourn the victims of the explosion. Nobody can be neutral in today's Kharkiv.

Gate to Russia

As political boundaries have wandered across Eastern Europe, Kharkiv has changed its location several times in the last three centuries. An outpost of Muscovy at its steppe frontier, it was later incorporated into the core of the Russian empire. A stronghold of the Bolsheviks in Ukraine, the city became the centre of a Ukrainian cultural renaissance and of official Ukrainianisation politics, just to be transformed into the Soviet heartland after the Second World War. In 1991, Kharkiv became a borderland city again, facing once more a peripheral status and suffering from broken economic ties with Moscow. The concept of borderland identity which allows for playing with post-modern values such as hybridity, bilingiusm and cultural ambivalence was re-invented and politically exploited by the local elite from the end of the 1990s when Kharkiv was proclaimed the "capital" of Ukrainian-Russian cooperation, and a Euro-region with the neighbouring Russian Belgorod was created. Kharkiv's political and business elite interpreted its borderland status in positive terms – as a gate to Russia, a city which thinks about economic profits and not about ideologies.

The Orange Revolution of 2004 split the local elite and the first cracks in this comfortable ambivalence appeared. Ten years later, with the "Russian spring" in 2014 Kharkiv is back to the old notion of borderlands as a contested territory, a geopolitical frontier and even a military frontline. Kharkiv finds itself just 40 kilometres from the Russian border which is still not demarcated, let alone secured in military terms. No less significantly, Kharkiv is just 200 kilometres from the unstable border with the separatist controlled territory of Donbas, where the truce is still very fragile. Kharkiv is a de facto frontline city. Having survived the "Russian spring" it demonstrates a new pro-Ukrainian

Kharkiv is de facto a frontline city.

consensus which emerged in response to the serious threats of internal destabilisation and Russian invasion.

This consensus is, however, fragile and not irreversible. Kharkiv's Soviet era industries which survived the recession of the early 1990s and until recently worked for the Russian military industrial complex have now sent their workers on unpaid leave. Kharkiv's service sector, which had flourished due to the proximity of the huge Russian market, is also suffering. In the October 2014 parliamentary elections Kharkiv emerged as a stronghold of the Oppositional Block, the former Party of Regions. A recent opinion poll shows that despite the city's proximity to the military conflict, only 6.9 per cent in Khrakiv see this conflict as a war of Russia with Ukraine (compared to 39.6 per cent nationwide), while 38.1 per cent of the Kharkovites, similar to the majority of Russians, consider it a US-Russian conflict (compared to 12.1 per cent nationwide). According to another survey the Kharkiv region remains one of the strongholds of pro-Russian sympathies, along with Donetsk and Luhansk: 79.9 per cent of Kharkovites have a positive attitude toward Russia and 70.2 per cent to the Russian leadership. They prefer not to notice Russian aggression and blame Kyiv for the conflict. Probably the most striking demonstration of the power of this silent majority is the remaining high rating of the notorious Kharkiv mayor Gennadiy Kernes, who preserves his ambivalent position between Kyiv and Moscow. While a new generation of public activists has emerged during the last year, they are mostly too young, divided and inexperienced to challenge Kharkiv's Byzantine world of big business and corrupted politics.

The Lenin monument on Svobody Square, which for the EuroMaidan protesters had embodied the neo-Soviet rule of the Party of Regions, was toppled in September 2014. The empty plinth, wrapped in green plastic fencing with a triumphant Ukrainian flag at the top, carries a display saying "Dear Kharkivites, please pardon the construction underway". As there are no signs of construction, the text appears confusing for tourists. For Ukrainians, who have lived under the "construction of communism" and later under "nation-building", this is just a reminder that temporary problems usually become permanent. Only for a minority of visionaries is this windy place the construction site of a new Ukrainian and European Kharkiv. NEE

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The Ties that Bind

ANATOLIY BABINSKYI

The social transformations that have been taking place in Ukraine since late 2013 have greatly affected inter-church relations. The Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate, which actively supported the EuroMaidan, emerged from the revolution with a strong moral ascendancy and enhanced its own reputation in the society. For the Moscow Patriarchate, these events turned out to be somewhat of a disaster. Only some priests supported the protests and the activities of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine are openly criticised by the society today.

Other than Ukraine there is no other country in the world with multiple Orthodox jurisdictions that have hostile relations with each other and are unable to reach a mutual understanding. The only similar example that comes to mind is the case of the Former Yugoslav Republics of Macedonia (FYROM) and Montenegro where, as in Ukraine, the Orthodox Churches sought to obtain the status of autocephaly (the Orthodox equivalent of ecclesiastic "independence") from the central Church in Belgrade. However, in this case there were only two competing groups: one which aspired to remain under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the other of which sought independence.

In contrast, in Ukraine today there are three Orthodox communities that cannot reach an agreement regarding the future development of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. They include the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate (about 12,700 religious communities) and two independent groups: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (about 4,700 com-

munities) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (about 1,200 communities). This situation generates numerous conflicts in Ukrainian society as the disputes between the churches affect both interpersonal relations and the political process. The conflict intensifies in particular at a time of complex social and political upheavals, as happened in the early 1990s when Ukraine gained independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, or during social and political transformations such as at the time of the Orange Revolution (2004) and the Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014).

Common civilisational space

The strong connection between Orthodoxy and ethnic, national and political (as well as geopolitical) identity has led not only to internal conflicts between people of different identities, but also interstate controversies. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) remained one of the most powerful cultural and political links between Kyiv and Moscow. Although the Moscow Patriarchate recognises the existence of the state of Ukraine as a separate political entity, it continues to regard Ukrainian society as part of the common civilisational space – the "Russian world". For this reason, any aspirations of ecclesiastical independence from Moscow are treated as unacceptable. In turn, the part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that insists not only on its right to be independent also stresses that the Ukrainian Orthodox tradition is substantially different from the Russian one. Unlike the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church functions as a community of mutually recognised independent, mostly nation-based, churches. Autocephaly, or ecclesiastical independence of individual churches, is a significant part of Orthodox tradition. However, so far the debate about the limits of such independence and the procedure of how it is obtained remains open in the Orthodox world.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church remained one of the most powerful cultural and political links to Moscow.

The controversy surrounding the issue of whether the Ukrainian and Russian ecclesiastic cultures are identical and how they differ is important not only in regards to what the Ukrainian Church should look like, but also whether the existence of an autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church makes sense at all. Since the church institutions emerged on the territory of modern Ukraine, the territories to the north of Kyiv (today forming parts of Belarus and western Russia) were under

the jurisdiction of the Kyivan Metropolitan. Christianity played a significant role in Kievan Rus' and was a part of the rapid development of literature, art, architecture, music and legal culture on these territories.

Byzantium, being at its peak in the tenth century, was a good example for Kievan Rus' to follow. In addition, the influence of the Balkan peoples played a big part in the development of Kyivan Christianity as well. Clearly, the Late Medieval Kievan Rus' was very different from what we now understand as a state – a politically and culturally integrated entity. Internal conflicts between the independent principalities led to a disintegration process which was completed by the Mongol devastation of Kyiv in 1240. In its aftermath, the Orthodox Metropolitan escaped to Vladimir-on-Klyazma and later moved to Moscow.

From the 14th century onwards the territories which eventually became Ukraine and the European part of Russia began to split apart. Today's central and western Ukraine were for many centuries part of the Lithuanian and Polish states and subsequently the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. These processes deeply influenced the ecclesiastical culture and the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox cultures of Kyiv and Moscow gradually splintered during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Turbulent rebirth

The institutionalisation of two separate ecclesiastical traditions started to take place only with the beginning of the modern era – when Orthodoxy underwent a turbulent rebirth in the Ukrainian territories. This was induced by the Union with Rome, concluded by a part of the Kyivan Metropolitan (today: the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church) as well as the influence of the Catholic Revival. Consequently, in the 16th and 17th centuries Ukrainian Orthodoxy acquired special features that distinguished it from Russian Orthodoxy. First and foremost was its flexibility – the ability to reform and an openness to western culture, primarily in relation to education. At that time Metropolitan Petro Mohyla, a student of Western European universities, founded the Kyiv academy, which was modelled on Jesuit education. Remarkably, many books published in Kyiv at that time were forbidden by Moscow.

Metropolitan Petro Mohyla conducted large scale reforms in the Kyivan Metropolitan with relative ease, while similar attempts at reform in Moscow were met with strong resistance and eventually the Raskol (schism). During the Baroque era numerous examples of original ecclesiastical architecture, music and fine art, philosophy and theology emerged on the Ukrainian territories. This ecclesiastical culture was substantially different than from that which was prevailing in the

Patriarch Filaret, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate, was not afraid to criticise Viktor Yanukovych for the use of force against the protesters and the number of his supporters increased across the country.

Photo: Håkan Henriksson (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

During the EuroMaidan Revolution, the clergy of all Christian denominations, as well as Jewish rabbis and Muslim clerics, sought to minister to the protesters' spiritual needs. They held ecumenical prayers, set up "ecclesial tents" where priests and pastors heard confessions and gave spiritual and psychological consolation as well as offering physical help.

Photo: Wojciech Kozmic

The role of churches has been pivotal in the processes taking place in the post-EuroMaidan Ukraine, especially when it comes to rediscovering the value of a national and spiritual identity.

Photo: Wojciech Kozmic

Moscow state. Notably, the Kyivan Metropolitan remained under the jurisdiction of the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople at that time, whereas the Metropolitan in Moscow existed independently. Moscow declared independence from the Greek Church in 1448. This act was approved by the Greek Patriarchate in 1589 and the see in Moscow was raised to the rank of Patriarchate.

After the Hetman (head) of the early modern Ukrainian state (Cossack) entered into a political union with the Russian tsar in 1654, Kyivan and Moscovite ecclesiastical cultures began to unify. The political union was followed by the church union. Although the Ukrainian Orthodox leaders opposed consolidation with the Moscow Patriarchate, this act was nevertheless concluded in 1686.

The opportunity to re-establish a separate Ukrainian Orthodox Church only presented itself again in the 20th century. During this century, Ukrainian Orthodoxy made three attempts to proclaim autocephaly: in 1917–1934, 1942–1944 and 1989. The first two failed due to the unfavourable political situation. All three attempts to proclaim autocephaly were made simultaneously with efforts aimed at political independence from Russia. Since Ukrainian independence failed in the first two instances, so did the church's undertakings to gain autocephaly. The first real chance to proclaim autocephaly came realistically only after 1989 with the prospective dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Outlaws

The emergence of an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the early 1990s was strongly tied to Ukraine's political geography. The pro-Ukrainian movement had always held strong positions in the west of the country, which was also reflected in ecclesiastic matters. The autocephaly also gained most supporters in the western regions and thus the first autocephalous communities emerged there. This process was reinforced by the fact that the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church – during the Soviet period a symbol of resistance and struggle against the Soviet Union – emerged from the underground. It was a heavy blow for Moscow as one third of all parishes under the Moscow Patriarchate were located in three western Ukrainian oblasts (all of these communities were Greek-Catholic before 1946 when the Greek-Catholic Church was forcibly united with Russian Orthodox Church by Stalin).

The emergence of an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the early 1990s was strongly tied to Ukraine's political geography.

In order to constrain this process across Ukraine, a decision to broaden the scope of autonomy of the Ukrainian part of the Russian Church was adopted. While remaining under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Ukrainian part of the Russian Orthodox Church was re-named the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The major argument against the autocephalous movement was the "non-canonical" character of the religious organisations that sought independence from Moscow. Since each autocephalous Orthodox church had to be recognised by other autocephalous churches, those declaring independence from the Russian Church became "outlawed", i.e. outside canonical law. It was through this argument that the Moscow Patriarchate could retain most of the ecclesiastical communities, priests and bishops under its jurisdiction. And the entities that sought legitimate autocephalous status, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), are to this day treated as non-representative institutions in the Orthodox world.

The problem was further complicated by the fact that in spite of pursuing the same goals, these two entities could not reach an understanding. However, the controversy is rooted in interpersonal conflicts (the UAOC itself suffers from internal strife and thus rapidly becomes marginalised). But today we see that the union agreement could be reached and this process is supported by both communities and the political authorities. At first the Ukrainian political elite supported the autocephalous movement (in particular, Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of independent Ukraine, supported the Kyiv Patriarchate), but this did not last long. The subsequent president, Leonid Kuchma, did not want to sour relations with Moscow and therefore supported the Moscow Patriarchate Church.

The majority of lower ranking officials also supported an ecclesiastical relationship with Moscow. Yet there were always conflicts between the communities of the Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates, particularly during the first years of Ukraine's independence when each church developed its own structure. The debate on the ideological level remains active to the present day. Prior to the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, Ukrainian sociologists noted a consistently friendly attitude towards Russians and Russia among the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians. This changed dramatically after military activities were launched in the eastern regions of Ukraine.

Mental dependence

During the course of 24 years of independence each church has evolved in its own way. From the beginning the autocephalous movement had little chance for

substantial progress, as none of its leaders were capable of competing with the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine. Thus, the first leaders of the autocephalous movement looked to the Ukrainian diaspora: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada, which was unable to ensure normal development of the church in Ukraine. The situation changed when one of the greatest bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, Filaret (Denysenko), joined the autocephalous movement. He managed to turn it into a viable and powerful structure due to his remarkable organisational talent and influence. Hence, it is not an exaggeration to say that the current level of development of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate should be credited to him. The church, however, had to start from point zero since a substantial part of facilities, monasteries and educational institutions remained with the Moscow Patriarchate.

Interestingly, the Kyiv Patriarchate remains mentally dependent on the Moscow Patriarchate since virtually all of the spiritual leaders of the autocephalous movement – bishops and priests – received education in Russian theological schools. Based on this experience, Patriarch Filaret created a church in Ukraine which is modelled on the Moscow Patriarchate in Russia. Hence, when it comes to the structure, the church is tempted to become the "state Church" of Ukraine, which is the case of the Moscow Patriarchate in Russia. A key difference here is the interpretation of Ukrainian nationality. The leadership of the Russian Church treats Ukrainians as a sub-ethnicity of the "Russian people" whereas the Kyiv Patriarchate considers Ukrainian nationality to be self-contained. The rationale for having an independent church is therefore based on this factor ("Independent state – independent church" is the permanent motto of the autocephalous movement). Yet, even the styles of clothing worn by hierarchs of the Kyiv and Moscow Patriarchates are the same, and the Bible used in the UOC KP was translated from Russian by Patriarch Filaret. Theological education offered by UOC KP institutions is modelled on Russian theology, although the studies are in Ukrainian.

Filaret has managed to turn the autocephalous movement into a viable and powerful structure due to his remarkable organisational talent and influence.

All this indicates that mental independence is much more difficult to achieve than to proclaim autocephaly. At the lower level, one of the main features that distinguishes the Kyiv Patriarchate from the Moscow Patriarchate is that the church service is in Ukrainian as opposed to the Church Slavonic language, which is used in all churches of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church

of the Moscow Patriarchate also uses this liturgical language based on its Russian pronunciation and only occasionally uses Ukrainian in the western regions.

Convergence of churches

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) has taken its own path of development during the years of independence. In the 1990s the concept of a Ukrainian identity, as opposed to the imperial and Soviet paradigm of a common three-part identity of Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, was difficult to understand for many people in the central and mostly eastern parts of Ukraine. However, over time the Ukrainian society has become more self-aware of its own identity, history, culture and religious traditions. Thus, a large group of believers, priests and bishops within the UOC (MP) emphasise their distinctiveness from the Moscow Patriarchate. At some point, the emergence of such a "pro-Ukrainian" group became a threat to the UOC KP since the latter declares its distinction based on nationality. Nevertheless, a significant convergence between the UOC KP and the UOC (MP) could be observed from 2004 to 2010. The gradual change in the mentality of the UOC (MP) was to a great extent caused by the Orange Revolution when, for the first time and on a large scale, opinions were openly expressed that Ukraine should pursue a pro-European, and not a pro-Russian, path of development.

The leadership of the UOC (MP) was particularly affected by the fact that the revolution was largely supported in those regions that were under the strong influence of the Moscow Patriarchate, that is in central and western Ukraine. This was also a signal for Moscow that church loyalty does not necessarily mean political loyalty. In addition, this "Ukrainianisation" process was discreetly supported by the previous Metropolitan of Kyiv under the Moscow Patriarchate – Vladimir (Sabodan). His support was criticised by the most pro-Russian representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine and Russia, who always had quite strong positions in Ukraine.

Upon the passing of Vladimir (Sabodan), the pro-Ukrainian movement within the UOC (MP) became orphaned. The new head of the UOC (MP), a loyal pupil of the Moscow religious school and monastery tradition, is strongly committed to the leadership of the Russian Church. On a side note, it is also worth pointing out that the leaders of the UOC (MP) have been silent about the annexation of Crimea by Russia, as well as Russia's extensive support of the pro-Russian separatists in the east of Ukraine.

It should also be mentioned that Ukrainian society is to a large extent secularised and the number of active believers in both churches is far from what is offi-

cially declared. However, the truth is that Ukrainians also treat church identity as something that is closely related to their national identity. The most recent polls show that 74 per cent of Ukrainians claim that they are Orthodox. Therefore, even those who are not active members of any of these churches often state their adherence to a particular church exclusively based on their national identity. Accordingly, the opinion surveys constantly reveal that the number of believers of the Kyiv Patriarchate (38 per cent) is significantly higher than that of the Moscow Patriarchate (20 per cent), even though the latter has more registered communities (39 per cent claim that they are "simply Orthodox" without signifying a jurisdiction). These numbers are, nonetheless, quite questionable as it is most likely that the number of active parishioners in both churches is more or less equal. In western Ukraine where the UOC KP clearly has more parishes (the region as a whole is more religious), they are also larger. Conversely, in the east, which is dominated by the Moscow Patriarchate, the parishes are small.

Demand for unification

The social transformations that have been taking place in Ukraine since late 2013 have greatly affected inter-church relations. The Kyiv Patriarchate, which actively supported the protest movement (its central monastery, the Mikhailovsky Monastery in Kyiv, first sheltered the protesters from police, and later was transformed into a field hospital for casualties), emerged from these events with a strong moral ascendancy and enhanced its own reputation among the Ukrainian society. Patriarch Filaret was not afraid to criticise Viktor Yanukovych for the use of force against the protesters and the number of his supporters increased across the country.

For the Moscow Patriarchate, as in 2004, these events turned out to be somewhat of a disaster. Only some priests supported the protests. Yet, as in 2004, a large number of ordinary believers from this church participated in the protests. Not surprisingly, today the activities of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine are openly criticised by the society. In this context, the public demands unification of the churches and a stop to inter-religious tensions within the state.

The Moscow Patriarchate actively attempts to stay neutral in the conflict, although it must also be stated that many of the UOC (MP) believers and priests express more and more disappointment with the church leaders. Seemingly, the latter, in the face of unconcealed Russian aggression against Ukraine, have no courage to take the side of Ukrainian society and try to keep neutral. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow is heavily criticised, as he de facto supported Russian aggression against Ukraine which, for many people affiliated with this church, conflicts with their

patriotic feelings towards Ukraine. As a result, the Kyiv Patriarchate, despite lacking canonical legitimacy in the Orthodox world, has gained a moral legitimacy in the society. This means that the problems of Ukrainian Orthodoxy cannot be resolved in the future without taking into account the position of this church.

As a result of the conflict with Russia, the Kyiv Patriarchate, despite lacking canonical legitimacy in the Orthodox world, has gained a moral legitimacy among the society.

The greatest expectations for such a solution today are placed on Bartholomew I, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who is considered to be "first among equals" in the Orthodox world and thus can act as an arbitrator in resolving the situation. The Ukrainian Orthodox Churches in the diaspora under his jurisdiction have also tried to get involved in this process. Those believers, priests and bishops who now feel very uncomfortable remaining under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, but do not wish to follow the path of the self-proclaimed Kyiv Patriarchate, also hope for Bartholomew's intervention. It remains unknown whether the Patriarch of the former imperial capital, the New Rome, will dare to go against the Patriarch of the "third Rome" (Moscow). All previous attempts of such interventions in Ukrainian matters were blocked by Moscow. Would this time be any different?

Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

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Encouraging Theological Reflection

Interview with Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Interviewer: Giacomo Manca

GIACOMO MANCA: On many occasions Pope Francis spoke about the tragedy of a "war between Christians" mentioning the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Could you briefly explain to which extent the different Orthodox churches and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church are involved in the conflict?

BISHOP BRIAN FARRELL: When Pope Francis spoke of "war between Christians", it was from an ecumenical, not political, point of view. He evoked the scandal of Christians, who have all been baptised with the same baptism in Christ, fighting one another. It is indeed a war between Christians, but absolutely not a war between the Churches. In this struggle political beliefs often transcend ecclesial affiliation, and the victims of this tragic conflict are both Orthodox and Catholics.

But the truth also is that many politicians use the Church as their means in conflict. Don't we see that happening in Eastern Europe today?

Your question deals with two aspects: that of the relationship of churches with power, and that of the relationship of churches with the nation. With regard to political power, the churches must always resist the danger of being manipulated by such power. This manipulation can occur when churches seek the protection of state power and embrace its objectives. But beyond the question of power, the churches should also question their relationship with the nation. Almost all the churches in Ukraine – including the one that depends on the Moscow Patriarchate – are called "Ukrainian". It seems to me that this should encourage a theological reflection on the relationship between church and nation.

Ukrainian Catholic bishops have recently come to Rome to report to Pope Francis about the war that is taking place in their

country. Critics said that the Pope's choice of words suggested that the Holy See views the current crisis in eastern Ukraine as a civil war, despite Russia's clear involvement. Could you explain to me why the Vatican has such a stance in this regard?

Ukraine is a complex country, where regional identities are very marked, and go back centuries. Election results over more than twenty years show a clear difference between the regions of East and West. It therefore seems undeniable that some of the current crisis is due to internal reasons. But it is also true that there are negative external influences affecting the stability of the country.

Ukraine is also a multi-religious country where religious organisations have different, and not always friendly, relations with each other. While the Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Greek-Catholic Church have good relations, they both oppose the Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate which is engaged with the Catholic Church in ecumenical dialogue. At the same time, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate accuses the Patriarchate of Kyiv for being close to the Kyiv government and under its influences. What is the state of relations of the Catholic Church with the separate Orthodox Churches in Ukraine?

The only Orthodox Church in Ukraine recognised by all other Orthodox Churches is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which has an autonomous status within the Moscow Patriarchate. This is not an issue involving just the Moscow Patriarchate, but the whole of Orthodoxy. The Catholic Church in Ukraine has civil relations with the "Patriarchate of Kyiv", which is not recognised by any Orthodox Church in the world. In effect, you cannot simply ignore a reality, which brings together millions of faithful and possibly some contact on the local pastoral level, but not inter-Church relations. This situation may evolve differently one day, but it is not up to the Catholic Church to decide who is Orthodox and who is not. We hope that the envisaged Pan-Orthodox Council will seek a solution to this situation.

I understand that today the Catholic Church in Ukraine finds itself in a truly complex situation, especially in regards to the position of the Orthodox Church. I am curious, however, what this means for the relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches? Are we faced with a stalemate in ecumenism or would you rather say that the current crisis offers a possibility to improve dialogue and create a road map towards Christian unity?

Theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches of the Byzantine tradition as a whole continues its work. This dialogue focuses on the relationship between primacy and synodality at various levels of the Church, especially at the universal level. Certainly this question, which represents the most difficult issue in relations between our Churches, will not be solved in a few years because it raises the question of the role of the

Photo Courtesy of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity / Bishop Brian Farrell

Bishop of Rome in the communion of all the Churches. The Joint International Commission met in Amman in September 2014 and is expected to meet again in 2017. We hope that a document may be issued at that time. Progress in our relations is evident with regard to the "dialogue of charity", in ever increasing friendship and collaboration, and for example in the continuing succession of meetings between the Holy Father and the heads of Churches. In 2014 alone there were three meetings with Patriarch Bartholomew.

This suggests that many positive changes are taking place when it comes to building friendly relations. What can we expect to take place in the next few years? What I have particularly in mind is the next meeting of the Joint International Commission…

The International Joint Commission is an example of theological dialogue, which is part of what Blessed Pope Paul VI called the "dialogue of truth". But this "dialogue of truth" or theological ecumenism, cannot make progress without the "dialogue of charity", and without other forms of ecumenism, especially spiritual ecumenism and practical ecumenism. Regarding spiritual ecumenism, much work has yet to be undertaken regarding the "purification of memory" between the churches. This is quite clear in the relations between the Ukrainian Greek Catholics and the Russian Orthodox, as also between Catholic Croatians and Orthodox Serbians, and even in the West, where the "purification of memory" between Catholics and Protestants is also necessary in some cases.

To my understanding the "purification of memory" is the concept that is also of key importance in regards to the relations between Greek Catholics and Orthodox. However, we also know that in the past the Orthodox Church would often suggest that the Greek Catholic Church was the Catholic Church's strategy to partially convert their believers. And the Orthodox Churches claimed that the main obstacles to the theological dialogue between the Catholic and the Orthodox churches was Uniatism and hence opted for the dialogue to be suspended. What could be done in this regard?

In 1993 The Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches published an important paper titled "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the present search for full communion". We need to make a distinction between the historical events that led to "Uniatism", which is not the method proposed today by the Catholic Church in the search for unity, and the existence of the Eastern Catholic churches themselves. These churches not only have the right to exist, but have a vital role to play in the reconciliation between Catholics and Orthodox. More generally, it seems to me that these churches also raise the question of the role of the Bishop of Rome in the communion of the churches.

Pope Benedict XVI has been well recognised for a strong commitment in promoting Christian unity with the Orthodox Churches. Has Pope Francis brought any innovation or change to this dialogue?

Pope Francis has made ecumenism a priority of his pontificate. He often speaks of ecumenism as a "path" that begins with an encounter, with contact. We hope that this "culture of encounter" will spread to all levels of the Church. The concern of Pope Francis for "synodality" within the Catholic Church itself is also a promising path to reconciliation with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. Pope Francis is also very sensitive to the ecumenism of the martyrs, the "ecumenism of blood", which has tragically acquired a new relevance today, and affects every Church. NEE

Bishop Brian Farrell is the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity at the Vatican.

Giacomo Manca is a contributing editor with *New Eastern Europe*.

Ukraine's Spiritual Awaking

MARYANA HNYP

One of the consequences of the EuroMaidan Revolution was bringing to light the role that religion and church organisations play in Ukraine. In this context, Ukrainian spiritual leaders have been faced with the important task of uniting the society, or at least not dividing it any further.

The so-called "Ukrainian crisis" which began with the EuroMaidan Revolution and continues with the ongoing war in the east, can be regarded as Ukraine's third attempt since the country re-gained its independence in 1991 to root out Soviet authoritarian structures (the previous one being the 2004 Orange Revolution). Unlike any of Ukraine's previous protests, however, the events that were initiated by last year's revolution in Kyiv have contributed to the breaking down of the clichéd image of Ukraine as a nation divided between its eastern and western halves, Russian and Ukrainian speakers, or Orthodox and the Greek Catholics.

Instead, what we can say about today's Ukraine is that the political divisions are related to people's adherence to different value systems. Ukrainian society is thus divided between those who mourn the loss of the paternalistic Soviet system and those who want to work for the prosperity of an independent state and are driven by values cherished in the West.

Serious questions

The ongoing conflict between post-EuroMaidan Ukraine and the Russian Federation will undoubtedly have some long-lasting consequences in terms of the political, social and cultural transformation of both countries. In Ukraine, the change that has resulted from the Revolution of Dignity can already be seen in the rise of a new civil society, something that has been lagging for years in many post-

Soviet states. This Ukrainian social rebirth is based on such principles as respect for human dignity, protection of human rights and a strong belief in the rule of law. And while it is obvious that Ukrainians will need many years to learn, develop and strengthen, there are many signs indicating that they have already became a transformed nation. Characteristically, the role of churches has been pivotal in this process, especially when it comes to rediscovering the value of national and spiritual identity.

The events that unfolded over the last year have also brought to the fore some complexities related to the position of different religious denominations and the roles different churches play in Ukraine. They have also sparked reflection regarding some serious questions that the churches themselves have been trying to answer throughout the last 24 years of the country's independence. This politically and economically uneasy context has placed an important task before the spiritual leaders as to how to unite the society, or at least not to divide it any further.

The dramatic events that unfolded over the last year have brought to the fore the complexity of the religious situation in Ukraine.

The question of what the role, if any, the church(es) should play in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has captured the attention of many in intellectual and religious circles. In the discussion on the responsibility of the religious organisations in the transformation of civil society and protection of fundamental human rights, opinions have been offered and a few attempts have already been initiated suggesting that a theology around the Revolution of Dignity should be attempted. These views, however, have been questioned by the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate which claims that taking part (or sides) in the revolutionary movement is sinful and should be condemned.

The Constitution of Ukraine stipulates that the church is separate from the state. This, however, does not mean that it is separate from society. On the contrary, with the continuous presence of priests at the EuroMaidan where prayers were said daily and with the unprecedented level of co-operation between various Christian denominations as well as non-Christian religious communities that has been observed since the protests took place, the revolution has been given a spiritual and moral dimension that goes beyond politics. Consequently, the churches, by becoming a unique element of the rebirth of the national and religious awareness of Ukrainians, have also contributed to the emergence of "a new transformed nation" in this post-Soviet country.

As a matter of fact, Ukraine is the only state among the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe that enjoys such a high level of religious freedom and diversity.

There is no one dominant church that the society, or a majority of citizens, associate themselves with. Unlike Russia, Ukraine is open to spiritual life and religious pluralism. In 2011 there were about 34,000 churches and religious organisations registered throughout the country. The spectrum of these organisations includes: three major Orthodox jurisdictions (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church [of the Moscow Patriarchate], the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church), the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Armenian ecclesial community, as well as a variety of Protestant Churches gathering Lutherans, Calvinists, Baptists, Pentecostals and Adventists.

Peacekeepers

During the EuroMaidan Revolution, the clergy of all Christian denominations, as well as Jewish rabbis and Muslim clerics, sought to minister to the protesters' spiritual needs. They held ecumenical prayers, set up "ecclesial tents" where priests and pastors heard confessions and gave spiritual and psychological consolation as well as offering physical help. Many monasteries and church buildings were also turned into field hospitals, providing basic medical assistance and shelter for protesters injured during brutal clashes with the police.

Among the organisations that have played a special role is the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations (AUCCRO), which is a unique body representing the 18 largest Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities and over 90 percent of religious adherents countrywide. The organisation is currently chaired by Filaret, the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate. The AUCCRO's role of protecting universal human values and building peace has become particularly discernible since the unfolding of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. In its statements and actions, this inter-religious council has reaffirmed its devotion to European values embodied primarily in respect for human dignity, support for peoples' initiatives, protection of their citizen rights, rule of law and other fundamental convictions of free democratic societies. Also, in order to overcome aggression and establish peace in Ukraine, the council has shown that its activities go far beyond the expected role of a representative of the faithful of various religious denominations. Whenever possible the AUCCRO calls to unite the efforts of Ukrainian society, all branches of its government, its political parties and civil organistations.

During the EuroMaidan the AUCCRO issued its first major joint statement on December 10th 2013. It conveyed four main points: the government should listen

to the people; violence is unacceptable; Ukraine is an indivisible state; and dialogue is the only legitimate path. Since then the organisation has consistently defended not only the religious freedom of Ukrainians, but has also supported peaceful protests against the use of force and punishment. It has also strongly condemned any attempt to divide Ukraine and stressed the importance of preserving religious peace in the country. In late October 2014, in response to the Russian aggression and war in the east, it encouraged Ukrainians of different religious denominations to support and defend their homeland as well as called for the organisation of humanitarian aid for the war-torn communities.

The priest's duty is to be with the faithful

Since the outbreak of the EuroMaidan Revolution, the Kremlin propaganda machine has infiltrated all areas of life and culture in Ukraine, including religion. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), for example, came under attack as early as January 2014. The Head of the UGCC Major Archbishop Sviatoslav (Shevchuk) received at that time a letter from the ministry of culture which was threatening the organisation with the revocation of its legal status in response to the UGCC's support of the EuroMaidan movement and the assistance it had offered to the opposition. The gravity of this charge is best explained when we take into consideration the fact that the UGCC was the largest resistance body to the Soviet Union and was declared illegal between 1945 to 1989, with all of its bishops imprisoned.

During the press conference sponsored by *Ukrainski Novyny* (Ukrainian News) on January 13th 2014, Major Archbishop Shevchuk restated that while the church was not a participant in the political process, it could not stand by when its faithful were asking for spiritual care: "The Church reserves the right to assess the situation in the country [and provide aid] if there are violations of human rights and of the principles of public morality flowing from God's law and reflected in the social teaching of the Church." In his opinion, the priest's duty is to be with the faithful, which clearly is connected with the mission of the church: "Our Church has always been true to this mission that Christ entrusted us with and will remain so for the future, in spite of any threats."

On Friday, January 17th 2014, at the request of the Ukrainian ministry of culture, Major Archbishop Shevchuk met with the minister of culture, Leonid Novokhatko, who retracted the earlier statements and denied any planned "legal action" against the church, even praising it for its "peacekeeping role". For his part, Archbishop Shevchuk said that he hoped the public authorities, particularly those whose task

is to serve the Ukrainian people and to ensure their right to religious freedom, have the wisdom not to transfer the socio-political crisis to the religious context.

Orthodox politics and political Orthodoxy

As stated before, the EuroMaidan Revolution and the armed conflict that has unfolded in the eastern parts of Ukraine have become turning points for the Ukrainian society. The change has taken place on different levels and profoundly penetrated the life of the ecclesial communities. Their choice to actively engage with society during and after the revolution emphasises the values that different religions recognise as Ukrainian. At the same time, the military aggression of one "Orthodox country" against another has rendered the ambiguous discourse of a single "Orthodox civilisation" meaningless.

In Ukraine there are three jurisdictions of the Orthodox Churches. The largest among them, in terms of the number of registered communities, is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. For purposes of distinguishing this institution from the other churches in Ukraine the abbreviation MP is used, which, however, is not part of the church's official name (UOC [MP]). The second largest registered religious community in Ukraine is gathered within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP), which is then followed by the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). Both, the UOC KP and UOAC have irregular canonical statuses and are not formally recognised as "canonical" Orthodox Churches by the Ecumenical Orthodox Churches.

The aggression of one Orthodox country against another rendered any ambiguous discourse of an "Orthodox civilisation" meaningless.

While there is no theological difference separating these Orthodox Churches, there are major cultural and political factors that contribute to the large distance between them. From the very beginning of the EuroMaidan Revolution, both the UOC KP and the UOAC repeatedly reaffirmed that the church is an inseparable part of civil society and therefore takes the responsibility of being with the people who stand up for their dignity and the protection of their rights. The UOC (MP), on the other hand, did not issue a single open statement or appeal during the revolution, nor the subsequent acts of aggression, such as the annexation of Crimea or the war in eastern Ukraine. Neither did it condemn the acts of terrorism throughout Ukraine, nor supported the pro-European choice of the people. The decision of the UOC (MP)

Metropolitan Onufriy (Berezovsky) was rather to wait out the hard times than to take on an active role in the conflict.

The strong connection of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with the Moscow Patriarchate has caused many people to negatively associate this ecclesial community with Vladimir Putin's agenda. This sentiment became particularly recognised in the context of the silence, or the claimed "neutrality", of Moscow's Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev) who restrained from protesting against the Russian invasion of Ukraine and issued numerous controversial anti-Ukrainian statements. By doing so, the Patriarch clearly demonstrated the extent to which the Russian Orthodox Church is dependent on the Kremlin. As a result of these and other events the UOC (MP) has started to experience an internal split among its followers into those whose pro-Russian views and sentiments have been weakened and those who have become even more radical in their pro-Russian political ideology.

Nonetheless, the sudden increase of anti-Russian sentiment that characterises a significant part of the faithful and some clergy of the UOC (MP) has brought about changes for this church itself. As a matter of fact, many members of the UOC (MP) have become followers of the Kyiv Patriarchate, and a few parishes have changed their subordination, in compliance with Ukrainian law that recognises the religious communities (and not church organisations) as legal subjects. Some of its clergy members have blessed and backed the volunteer battalions fighting in the eastern parts of the country, while many local churches no longer mention the name of the Moscow Patriarch in the liturgy. The fact that many people have started seeing the "canonical" status of the church (including the validity of the sacraments) as rather insignificant in comparison to its national, political and ethical orientation, might eventually force the UOC (MP) to counter the ideology of political Orthodoxy and start identifying itself more strongly with the Ukrainian state and nation.

It would be naïve, however, to expect that the UOC (MP) would change its attitude suddenly and univocally support the pro-western policies of the Kyiv government. Such a stance would not be taken not only because it could suggest that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is following the Kyiv Patriarchate Church, which would be unacceptable for the Moscow Patriarchate, but also because a great part of its believers, particularly on the territories of eastern Ukraine, openly oppose the new government in Kyiv, supporting religious and socio-political separatism. For them, democracy is a threat to the pseudo-ecclesial ambiguity of the *Russkiy mir* (Russian World) – an idea promoting the greatness and uniqueness of the Russian civilisation, embodied in Orthodoxy. This new political ideology – or rather mythology – gives rise to a new theology of politics, with its own moral standards and a phantom image of Catholicism as a threat to the Ukrainian identity and authenticity.

Redrawing the map of Orthodoxy

The greatest challenge, and at the same time a near-impossible task, of the UOC (MP) today is to ensure the peaceful co-existence of its two polarised groups of faithful and ease the generational tensions while continuing to disregard the UOC KP and maintaining close ties with the Russian Orthodox Church. The truth, however, is that Church leaders have very little room to manoeuvre. A move in any of the directions, either towards Russia, as would be expected by the older generation who believe that Ukraine has become a victim of the "Fascist-US aggression", or towards the West, as a growing majority of younger Ukrainians desire, causes problems for the Church, leaving it at a somewhat of a standstill.

Importantly, despite the whirlpool of the political conflict, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople proclaimed 2014 to be the "Year of Orthodoxy" in Ukraine. This proclamation was made primarily to overcome the country's internal divisions, resolve the matter of "canonical territory" and rejuvenate the social and moral teachings of the church with regard to the current context. Not surprisingly, feeling the constant danger of losing a large part of its flock, and subsequently influence, the Moscow Patriarchate has become extremely cautious in regards to the "Ukrainian issue". This is especially true with calls being made for the establishment of an independent church that would unite all Orthodox churches in Ukraine. If relations between Russia and Ukraine continue to deteriorate, it is very likely that the Patriarchate of Constantinople will eventually agree to recognise such a separate institution. Should this idea be realised, a united Ukrainian Church could significantly redraw the map of Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe and open the door to closer and more effective dialogue between the Christian churches.

The constant danger of losing a large part of its flock has forced the Moscow Patriarchate to be extremely cautious regarding the "Ukrainian issue".

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How Mikveh became Vodokhreshcha

ANNA CHEBOTARIOVA

Most of the post-war generations in Ukraine had little to no direct contact with Jews. The attitudes of Ukrainian society towards the Jewish people and Jewish heritage were hence based on secondary sources. In addition, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the need to manifest a new Ukrainian identity emerged, which also contributed to an ambivalence towards the memory of different ethnic communities, especially the Jews.

During the Second World War the territory of modern Ukraine became one of the largest killing fields in Europe, resulting in millions of civilian victims, including one to two million Jews. The war brought ethnic cleansing, repression, deportations and resulted in entire populations being annihilated or forcefully resettled. Those who "replaced" them were often deportees too, finding themselves in unfamiliar environments, surrounded by traces of the "vanished others". The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 fostered, in Pierre Nora's terms, an ideological decolonisation of collective memory. However, when it comes to remembering those "erased" communities, new challenges and obstacles emerge such as guilt, competitive victimisation, and resentment, but primarily the ethnocentric approach of young states. Characteristically, the identity-building in post-communist Eastern Europe often implies an avoidance of the "dark spots" in their own history and a reluctance to admit that the "grandfathers" were not only war heroes and victims, but also perpetrators or collaborators of bloody crimes.

The topic of state memory politics and dominant historical discourses in post-Soviet Ukraine has already been somewhat covered in academic and scholarly

writings. However, many other questions have not yet been addressed regarding popular perceptions of local and national history as well as the place of "the vanished others" (Jews, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Crimean Tatars etc.) who once lived on Ukrainian soil. After the Holocaust, most of the post-war generations in Ukraine had little to no direct contact with the Jewish community. The forced movement of populations and several decades of totalitarian Soviet ideology heavily affected the transmission of local post-memory. Therefore attitudes towards Ukraine's Jewish heritage were obtained from secondary sources: literature, schoolbooks, the mass media, family stories, museums, etc.

Spectrum of emotions

More often than not, the only source of knowledge for the inhabitants of former Jewish towns (*shtetls*), who grew up in the shadow of semi-ruined synagogues and dilapidated cemeteries, were precisely the vanishing material traces of their pre-Second World War inhabitants. At the same time, the fragmented knowledge of the history of the Jewish people and their towns and cities that is observed in Ukraine today cannot be reduced only to either philosemitism or antisemitism. Between these two extremes there is a whole spectrum of emotions and attitudes – such as fear, curiosity, envy, shame, admiration, suspicion or simple indifference.

As Patrick Dubois – a French priest who travelled extensively across Ukraine and Belarus in the early 2000s to locate and document sites of Jewish mass graves – recalls: "We went from one village to another asking ordinary poor people, who 70 years ago were forced to dig graves for their Jewish neighbours. When we asked them why they have not spoken out about this horror earlier, their answer was that nobody had asked."

Many scholars agree that there was little to no place for the memory of Jewish victims in the Soviet narrative on the Second World War. At the same time, observations point to the lack of interest towards the eyewitnesses' memories of the Holocaust in Ukrainian society not only during Soviet times, but also after the Soviet Union's collapse. The need to manifest a new Ukrainian national narrative that accompanied the de-Sovietisation process resulted in ambivalence towards the memory of different ethnic communities in Ukraine. This is, however, not to say that the echoes of Soviet policies are no longer very strong. Quite the contrary. With diverse, contradictive and regionally divided collective memories and constant political perturbations, Ukrainian *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (a German term that describes the processes of dealing with the difficult heritage of the past

which became a key term in the study of post-Nazi German literature and memory culture) continues to be a long and painful process.

The research of a German scholar, Wilfred Jilge, shows that most school textbooks published in Ukraine since the mid-1990s barely mention Jewish history in Ukraine, while the Holocaust is not connected to Ukraine's "national history" in any way. In some textbooks the Holocaust is presented as taking place in different European countries, but not in Ukraine. Thus, Jilge concludes that the limited information about the local context of the Holocaust has led to a series of paradoxical consequences: the exclusion of not only the Ukrainians' involvements in the Holocaust but also that of the "Righteous Among Nations" who risked their lives to save their Jewish neighbours. Such an ethnic bias in history writing and teaching results in neglecting and externalising the history of Jews and other minorities. Another mechanism that needs to be pointed out is "competitive victimhood". In other words, focusing on one's own suffering and affirming that one's own group has been victimised more than others reinforces national identity which also means that the question of a group's responsibility for others' suffering is obscured.

In most Ukrainian textbooks published since the mid-1990s, the Jewish history of Ukraine is barely mentioned and the Holocaust is not connected to its "national history" in any way.

Substitutive memory

It would be wrong to assert that today's Ukrainians have no knowledge about the history and annihilation of the Jewish community that once inhabited Ukraine's territory. According to a nationwide survey titled "Region, nation and beyond" which was carried out in February 2013, only 1.5 per cent of Ukrainians have never heard of the Holocaust, 68 per cent think it was a rather or very important event in the history of Ukraine and 70.2 per cent agree that during the Second World War the Jews became victims of genocide (to compare, only 33 per cent think the same about the Roma people). At the same time, as in-depth interviews reveal, the awareness of local Jewish history is very limited and fragmented, even in places with a rich Jewish past. As a result, today's Ukrainians tend to replenish these "voids" in the frames of their own personal experience and cultural background. This is a phenomenon that I call "substitutive memory". At best it results in linguistic and cultural "domestication" of Jewish spaces and cultural practices. In this way *ohel* becomes "jevreiskakaplychka" (Jewish chapel), *tsaddik* becomes "tsaryk" (a prince),

and *mikveh*becomes "vodokhreshcha" (baptism). This phenomenon is well reflected in an interview with one of the inhabitants of Vyzhnytsia who said*:

"…And at one time lived here their famous high priest, the Sadiq, the holy man who worked miracles, like Jesus Christ … that is why all these people come to honour the place where he lived, where he studied, and a river where he was baptised." (Male, 48, electrician, Vyzhnytsia)

This seemingly harmless tendency leads to the emergence of historical myths and false beliefs. Thus a shared narrative, encountered in many interviews, points to the conviction that Jews disappeared from Ukrainian towns and cities because they "all left for Israel". While respondents acknowledged that historically the presence of the Jewish community was significant, the lack of awareness of the local context and the scale of the Holocaust are substituted by their personal experience of post-war Jewish neighbours migrating in the 1990s. Another similar example is the belief that the Jews were actually annihilated by the Soviets. This shows how the history of one's own group victimisation can be expanded to explain the disappearance of "others", all in order to emphasise the cruelty of perpetrators.

Quite noticeably, the "us-them" dichotomy is very strongly manifested in the narrations of local Jewish history. This also applies to the attitudes towards Jewish heritage and the attempts to shift the responsibility of taking care of it solely to the absent Jewish community. In collective memory studies such a tendency is often referred to as the "pillarisation of memory" – a belief that each population group is the custodian of its "own" heritage. At times this belief also has strong antisemitic roots, as for example in cases where the idea of omnipotence or unlimited wealth of the Jews is stressed. Just consider what one respondent told the author during an interview:

"You know, I do not understand the question of how we can help Jewish heritage. All financial flows are in their hands, all the power, and we are simple witnesses. If only they want, they will build in Lviv the largest synagogue in the world – and it will be covered with gold –anything they want." (Male, 65, pensioner, Lviv)

Born shortly after the war in a small Galician town, this man had hardly any contact with the Jewish community. Antisemitic prejudice and stereotypes were transmitted to him through family and social frameworks, unlike knowledge of local Jewish history. Unfortunately, the durability of such antisemitic stereotypes in post-Holocaust societies has not been addressed enough, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. It has gotten to the point that at times antisemitism becomes

* Vyzhnytsia is a former shtetl in the Bukovina region, one of the centres for Hasidic pilgrimages. This town is particularly famous for the river, in which Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, and other local tsaddikim are believed to have taken the mikveh (ritual bath).

a strategy of "blaming in order not to be blamed" and avoiding the question of a given nation's own responsibility – both for the "disappearance" of the Jews and the dilapidated state of their heritage.

Bipolar heritage

The aforementioned notwithstanding, the new approaches to the past that are focused on addressing one's own national "skeletons in the closet", accepting "others" and promoting cultural diversity that can be observed in Europe and across the globe have also influenced the construction of collective memory in Ukraine. Another important contributor to the shaping of new attitudes towards Jewish heritage in post-Soviet Ukraine is tourism. Especially tourism that is religiously and genealogically oriented. However, what also needs to be said is that in this case demand has preceded supply. As a result we have an observable commercialisation of a multicultural heritage which is mostly aimed at foreign visitors and not local inhabitants who, in turn, are expected to identify with Ukrainian heritage.

Sometimes antisemitism becomes a strategy of "blaming in order not to be blamed".

As a researcher, I had a similar experience. While interviewing "memory entrepreneurs" in former shtetls, which generally are the local guides, historians or museum workers, I had to be very careful not to "hint" that I am particularly interested in Jewish heritage as this might have completely changed my interlocutors' narrative on local history. This phenomenon has been described as bipolar or a double heritage approach, meaning two different public heritages are presented in parallel, one for external and the other for internal consumption. This tendency is quite typical for post-colonial countries engaged simultaneously in local nation-building and attempts to position themselves within global economic and social systems.

The above-mentioned trends certainly have their own idiosyncrasies. Many different factors shape local variations of collective memory – such as the post-war presence of the Jewish community, a visibility of material traces of the Jewish past, heritage tourism, homo/heterogeneity of local societies, activity of "memory entrepreneurs" etc. In addition, as we have just experienced in Ukraine, collective memory with its fluidity and dynamics is subject to constant changes. There is no doubt that the events of 2013–2015 (the EuroMaidan Revolution, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the ongoing military conflict in eastern Ukraine) have become ultimate turning points in the history of this young state. Without any doubt, these dramatic processes have definitely influenced identity construction

and interpretations of what it means to be "Ukrainian". For the moment it is still difficult to say, however, what impact these events will have on the general perception of Ukrainian history in general and Jewish history in Ukraine in particular.

In my opinion, two contradictory tendencies can be observed. On the one hand, the active engagement of Ukrainian Jews and the representatives of other minorities in the EuroMaidan movement forced discussions on a more open and inclusive understanding of the Ukrainian nation, which is more of a political entity than an ethnic community. At the same time, strong emotional and symbolic references have been made to the role of nationalist organisations in Ukrainian identity, such as the Organisation for Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) or the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), who were presented as heroic fighters for Ukrainian independence and the "forerunners and inspirers" for both the EuroMaidan protestors and the Ukrainian soldiers in Donbas. In a way, their legacy has been established in such way that it is perceived as unquestionable. Consequently, a critical approach to the role that Ukrainian nationalists played in the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing that took place during the Second World War is often seen as anti-Ukrainian or even part of Kremlin propaganda. The passing of the so-called "decommunisation laws" on April 9th 2015, including the one on the "Legal status and commemorating the memory of the fighters for Ukrainian independence in the 20th century" mirrors this tendency. Written and adopted without a wider public discussion, this bill establishes a pantheon of military and political organisation – as diverse as OUN, UPA as well as Ukrainian dissidents. The public denial of the legitimacy of their struggle is proclaimed unlawful. The ambiguity of formulations, attempts to consolidate a single version of the past as well as the methods and timing of such an initiative has been a subject of concern and heated debates among historians in Ukraine and abroad. In my opinion, such an approach will only further complicate the already difficult process of coming to terms with Ukraine's past.

The EuroMaidan forced discussions on a more open and inclusive understanding of the Ukrainian nation.

Data for this essay were drawn from the project titled "Region, nation and beyond: interdisciplinary and intercultural reconceptualization of Ukraine", conducted jointly by the St-Gallen University (Switzerland) and the Lviv Center for Urban History (Ukraine) in 2012-2015. More information on the project can be found here: http://www.lvivcenter.org/en/researchprojects/stgallenproject/

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EUROPE
WITH A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

An international conference which will be held in Gdańsk on 14–15 May 2015 at the European Solidarity Centre

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- **New Ukraine/New Europe** | panel discussion on:
  - The book of Mykola Riabczuk Ukraine. Post-colonial syndrome
  - Essays by Leonidas Donskis published under the title Power, memory and imagination
- **Europe without Europeans? The condition of political community** | panel discussion
- **Europe in a time of war in the East. What have we learned and are still learning from the Ukrainian revolution?** | panel discussion
- **Europe with a view to the future** | speech of Donald Tusk
- **Liberal democracy in Poland – an attempt to diagnosis** | seminar

Panelists

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EUROPE
WITH A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

Gdańsk on 14–15 May 2015 at the European Solidarity Centre

Jacek Kołtan, PhD
deputy director of ECS
Department of Social Thought

During this year's edition of the „Europe with a View to the Future" conference we would like to reflect on the current condition of the European project. The disturbing political situation that we are witnessing, raises the question as to the real effects of previous attempts to build a political community of interests. The image of Europe as a place where different cultural traditions creatively come together is also now under examination. The brutal events in both the West and the East of Europe show that it is time to seriously reflect on how to protect the peaceful European project from the threat of armed conflict.

Dear Visitors,

It is a great joy to welcome you at the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk. The ECS began in 2007 and has been very active since then, although our new building opened only very recently, 30–31 August 2014. The building stands in the birthplace of Solidarity, Poland's greatest civic success: the nearby BHP Hall is where the shipyard workers signed an agreement with the communist regime in August 1980, while the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers of 1970 commemorates those who shed their blood for freedom.

The ECS is a modern cultural institution that preserves the memory of the triumph of Solidarity. As a museum, it commemorates the Solidarity revolution and the fall of communism in Europe. But it is also an education centre, a research centre, an archive, library and media library. Last but not least, it is a public space, a meeting place for citizens who feel responsible for the development of democracy: a place where solidarity and citizenship are practised.

We believe that even today we can draw civic energy from the experience of the Polish road to freedom, while a spring of ideas to invigorate Europe still flows from the heritage of Solidarity. I believe that each and every one of you will find a place for yourself at the ECS.

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The exhibition is a narrative, with visitors immersing themselves in the history told by objects, documents, manuscripts, photographs, video footage and interactive installations.

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In five booths and a video room you can see and hear archive footage, audio materials, interviews, documentaries and more.

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Central Asia's Emerging Threat?

EIMEAR O'CASEY

The rise in recruitment to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria across Central Asia is a real problem. However, equally problematic is the way in which the threat of terrorism is exploited by authoritarian regimes in the region to gain resources and support from western states, causing a dilemma in how to effectively support these countries in efforts to stem the spread of Islamist radicalisation.

A proliferation of militants on Afghanistan's Turkmen border; a spate of arrests of Islamist extremists from banned groups in the rural regions of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; thwarted terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan; an explosion in the number of young Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik men and women travelling to Syria to fight for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS): these are some of the headline trends prompting a surge in attention on the role of Islam and Islamism in Central Asia. In a region which is traditionally understood to espouse moderate Islam and whose governments have acted as allies to western efforts to fight insurgents in Afghanistan for the last 13 years, these trends have prompted a flurry of fear over how and why this region's religious, and thereby security, landscape is changing.

Since Islam arrived in the region in the seventh century, Central Asians (referring here to the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) have primarily practiced Hanafi Sunnism, considered to be among the religion's most liberal branches. The legacy of the Soviet Union has ensured that it has remained overwhelmingly moderate. While social

conservatism is pervasive, this does not stem so much from religious doctrine as from a lack of urbanisation, poor development and isolation from globalisation.

Jihadist spill over

Religious moderation has also been maintained by the region's vehemently secular post-Soviet governments, all of whom with varying degrees of authoritarianism supervise or limit Islam's place in society; radical or extremist groups have traditionally posed only a peripheral threat. The main militant Islamist organisation in Central Asia, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), has had a presence in the region since the late 1990s, but in the last ten years it has almost exclusively concentrated its activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

However, there has been growing concern about the potential development of radical Islamist terrorism in Central Asia since the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the early 2010s announced its plans to withdraw from Afghanistan. The international community and regional governments were fearful of a jihadist spillover into Central Asia once the NATO forces departed. While direct evidence of such a spillover has yet to manifest itself (ISAF formerly withdrew from combat operations in December 2014), security studies widely cite a general escalation in the number of Islamist extremism or terrorism-related incidents in the region since 2010. Details about the perpetrators and their aims are invariably scant, but examples include 42 men who were sentenced to prison terms of between six and twelve years for creating a terrorist group and preparing to carry out explosions in Kazakhstan in April 2012. More recently, in 2014, 23 men were arrested and then tried in Tajikistan for their allegiance to a banned extremist group, and the Uzbek authorities reported that they had thwarted an ISIS attack from Afghanistan planned for the spring of 2015.

There has been growing concern about the development of Islamist terrorism in Central Asia since NATO announced its plans to withdraw from Afghanistan.

The main complicating factor in getting to grips with this issue is the long-standing tendency of governments in the region to contort and exaggerate the Islamist threat for political ends. Chiefly, many of the region's long-serving presidents have tarred dissidents and opposition parties with the Islamist extremist, or even terrorist, brush as an efficient means of justifying their marginalisation, if not obliteration, from the political sphere.

Probably the most notable case is the Andijan massacre of 2005 in which Uzbek authorities opened fire on hundreds of protestors whom they deemed to be led by IMU militants, but which the international community widely described as a peaceful demonstration of local residents requesting the release of a number of businessmen who had been charged with extremism. A more recent example is the successful marginalisation in Tajikistan of the region's only registered Islamic political party, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), during the March 2015 parliamentary elections. The authorities systematically discredited the IRP, which represents itself as espousing moderate Islam, throughout the pre-election period by indirectly associating it with ISIS's activities in Iraq and the growing number of revelations of alleged extremist Islamist groups and preachers in Tajikistan. Coupled with intimidation and trumped-up charges against the party's senior personnel in an election campaign highly criticised by international observers, this resulted in the IRP's failure to win any seats in the parliament for the first time since independence.

Where convenient, regional leaders have also used public religious institutions to advance their political goals. During the same recent elections in Tajikistan, for example, one independent newspaper published an investigative piece which exposed how imams across the country had received a template for the sermon to be given on the eve of the election. The template came from sources in the government. Without naming any specific parties, the draft sermon highlighted the importance of backing the mainstream, non-Islamist status-quo (in other words the ruling authorities) to prevent radicalisation and instability (in other words the IRP).

Ticking time bomb

This exploitation of the Islamist threat to maintain authoritarianism is not only unjust but also counterproductive. Those falsely accused of extremism are clearly vulnerable to developing resentment and discontent which may lead to their becoming attracted to those very militant movements to which they originally had no link. Open Democracy, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Chatham House are among the international think tanks to have vehemently challenged the so-called received wisdom that a growth in Islamism in the region is a ticking time bomb. Key factors cited as mitigating any development of a radicalism threat in Central Asia comparable to that in Afghanistan are: the Soviet secular legacy in which religious identity is secondary to national identity; the fact that incidents of religious violence to date have been isolated and sporadic; a lack of evidence of a correlation between radicalisation and poor socio-economic factors

(discussed below); and a low level of awareness of global Islam among the population. Open Democracy published a call by two British academics in December 2014 for western governments to cease all security co-operation with the Tajik and Uzbek governments – co-operation which they deemed misplaced and ineffective given the absence of a sufficiently mobilised radical movement to counter.

The establishment of ISIS in 2014 added a new dimension to the Islamist question in the region. Evidence of groups of Central Asians working as militants for ISIS in Syria has been circulating since late 2014 making up the least disputed aspect of the Central Asian Islamic puzzle. In November 2014 a YouTube video showing Kazakh ISIS fighters, including some children, calling on their countrymen and women to join them in Syria was one of the most alarming signals of this emerging problem. Similar videos, this time showing Tajik men fighting alongside ISIS in Syria, emerged in March 2015, and the Kyrgyz authorities arrested a group of men accused of entering the country to recruit ISIS jihadists, some of whom were claimed to be plotting terror attacks in Uzbekistan.

The establishment of ISIS in 2014 added a new dimension to the Islamist question in the region.

Here, too, however, there is considerable uncertainty and conflicting information. Reliable figures for the number of Central Asian ISIS fighters have been few and far between. Those that have emerged have been seized upon by media and official sources alike. Most widely cited is the figure of between 2,000 and 4,000 recruits from across the five Central Asian states published in a paper by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in January 2015. Academics at the British foreign policy research centre Chatham House have challenged the evidence for that number and complained that it is no more than "guesswork". Further evidence of the discrepancies emerged in February 2015 when the Tajik minister of the interior reported that over 200 Tajik migrant labourers in Russia had gone to work for ISIS in Syria; a UK-based academic tracking ISIS online recruitment put the figure at 67.

What is driving this trend? In a region which lacks employment opportunities, the most obvious explanation for young peoples' interest in joining ISIS would be material need. ISIS is reported to offer salaries of several thousand US dollars per month. Compare this with an average monthly income of less than $200 in Tajikistan, for example, and it looks like an obvious driver.

Some studies have found that migrant workers with vulnerable economic circumstances are among the chief targets of ISIS recruitment. However, other field work suggests motivations are vastly more varied. ICG attributes much of the interest to ideological commitment, rather than socio-economic difficulties. A Bulgarian researcher concluded a study in Kyrgyzstan in January 2015 in which she

spoke to both ISIS militant returnees and their families. It revealed a patchwork of backgrounds and interests. Contrary to popular expectations, most recruits were secondary- or tertiary-level educated and had a wide range of levels of religiosity and varying economic circumstances. Their expressed motivation for joining ranged from fighting the infidels, to military heroism, to defending the weak from President al-Assad in Syria. The only factor which unified those recruits studied was a love of sport and the fact that they were radicalised outside Central Asia.

While the absence of a clear profile for jihadist recruits poses difficulties for those trying to tackle the root causes of the problem, it may also be encouraging: if the only common factor among recruits is that they were recruited outside the region, this suggests that any radicalisation infrastructure existing within the country is not comprehensive enough to mount a domestic Islamist threat.

The threat next door

A separate, but equally disputed, issue is the threat of an Islamist incursion into the territory of a Central Asian nation from neighbouring Afghanistan. Indications that the region's governments are increasingly concerned about this have also been mounting since late 2014. In early 2015 Turkmenistan undertook its first ever mobilisation of its military reservists to the Afghan border. In the same period, Tajikistan carried out large military exercises involving 50,000 troops along its border with Afghanistan.

However, the exact nature of the threat from which these governments are protecting themselves remains unclear. While there have reportedly been sightings of ISIS flags among militant groups on the Afghan border with Turkmenistan, most analysts agree that for the time being ISIS has no coordinated presence in Afghanistan and that such symbols represent opportunistic use of the ISIS brand. The Turkmen service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has quoted local Afghan officials as describing a mixture of ISIS, Taliban and IMU forces gaining hold over a series of villages in Afghanistan close to the Turkmen border, but there are no journalists in the region who can independently verify this. So while it seems certain that a proliferation in militant activity in the northern Afghan border regions exists, it has yet to manifest itself in a sufficiently coordinated manner to pose a clear threat to either Turkmenistan or Tajikistan.

Several foreign governments have been keen to provide counter-extremism and border security aid to these Central Asian nations. All of these efforts come in the context of ongoing competition between the big players for influence in the region. Officials from the European Union visited Tajikistan for high level security

dialogue in March 2015 to reaffirm the EU's commitment to assisting in counter terrorism activities. The EU plans to appoint a special representative on security issues in Central Asia in the near future.

With the authorities of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan especially unwilling to accept democratisation or human rights assistance, counter-terrorism is among the few areas in which the West can co-operate with these governments. Meanwhile, Russian officials have repeatedly warned of the threat from Afghan militants to Central Asia. In early March 2015 the Russian deputy defence minister highlighted the threat of ISIS in Afghanistan to Tajikistan in particular. Soon after, the (Russian) head of the regional security body the Collective Security Treaty Organisation announced that its troops could be at the Tajik-Afghan border within days should a conflict erupt.

Modest conclusions

Out of this myriad of contradictory, partial and disputed information, we can draw two modest conclusions. First, the rise in ISIS recruitment across the region is a real problem but appears to differ little from the same phenomenon across the West. The appeal of ISIS to young people remains elusive and governments struggle to identify clear patterns in recruitment profiles on which to base their counter-radicalisation policy. Second, the case in favour of a burgeoning, impending, mass radicalisation of Central Asia's populations is unsubstantiated. Militant activism is likely currently disorganised and poorly coordinated, and in some instances may be exaggerated by opportunistic governments looking for an excuse to curb dissent.

Militant activism in Central Asia is likely disorganised and poorly coordinated and in some instances exaggerated.

Nonetheless, in this minefield of determining cause, effect and threat, we should be careful not to dismiss all discussion of the Islamist threat by local governments as cynical opportunism. Given the geopolitical and socio-economic ingredients in place, rapid changes in the political and religious circumstances in the region are credible prospects. It is therefore important to avoid a boy-who-cried-wolf scenario in which the regional governments' and security-focussed media's current hyperbole means that any eventual, meaningful escalation in religious radicalism is overlooked by analysts and the international community alike.

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Waiting for a Better Future

ROMAN HUSARSKI

Azerbaijan is the most secular Muslim-majority state in the world. However, despite the declaration of religious freedom in its constitution, Azerbaijan does not make it easy for Christian organisations to operate. Even with thousands of years of Christian history in the Caucasus, attitudes towards Christianity today are largely based on Azerbaijan's sour relations with Armenia.

There is no doubt that Azerbaijan is the richest country in the Caucasus region, but money does not equate to progress. Construction projects can be seen across the whole country, however they are often poorly planned and chaotic. Zaqatala, a city in western Azerbaijan, is a good example of what here is called modernisation. The city's downtown pretends ineffectually to be old, but everything has been renovated and rebuilt. The new medial wall which surrounds the city centre makes you feel like you are in Disneyland. Like all major cities in Azerbaijan, Zaqatala also has a park. Not surprisingly it is named after Heydar Aliyev, the former president of Azerbaijan who died in 2003, and who was the father of the current President Ilham Aliyev. Today, the cult of Aliyev Sr. is bigger than when he was alive. He still possesses the status of a great president: his picture and name is scattered around all public places in the country. A stroll in the park is an opportunity not only to enjoy the natural beauty of your surroundings, but also three banners of their leader. As if that was not enough, a large statue in the heart of the park is a reminder of who is responsible for the country's success.

Apart from the North Korean-style propaganda and cult of personality, the city is clean and renewed. There is only one element right in the centre of Zaqatala that does not fit the image of this country's success. It is a large, abandoned and ruined Christian church.

Serious consequences

It is not so easy to get inside the abandoned church because the building has been separated by other buildings. Those who want to get a closer look have to cross through somebody's backyard. The small plate on the front of the church states that it was a Caucasian Albanian (not to be confused with the modern state of Albania) church built in the fifth century. Inside, there are some remains of mosaics that used to serve as decoration but the walls, in general, are covered by graffiti. I tried to speak with people who live close by and ask about the history of the church, but it was impossible to get any information.

I was about to leave when a young man approached me. He explained that it was a Georgian church and many years ago Georgians were living close by. Later it became a shelter for homeless people, although it is no longer occupied. Bidding me farewell, the young man assured me that church is slated for renovation, for tourists of course.

The Zaqatala church is not the only example of what is today commonly seen throughout Azerbaijan. Some temples are now museums, some are shops with souvenirs, but most are abandoned and ruined. Reverend Elnur Jabiyev, the former general secretary of the Baptist Union in Azerbaijan who now lives in the United Kingdom, claims that he cannot return to his home country because of religious persecution. According to him, "If you bring any Christian literature from outside" or even print a Bible, you might face very serious consequences in Azerbaijan, including imprisonment.

Though the constitution declares religious freedom, many abuses are being noted in Azerbaijan.

The developments regarding the persecutions of Christians in the country are cause for concern. In 2012 the government introduced a new law for all religious groups: they cannot operate legally without prior registration. The registration process is very burdensome and most Christian organisations have not been able to successfully register. And while the constitution guarantees religious freedom, many abuses are being noted in Azerbaijan. Although it is true that people who believe in Jesus do not have an

easy life in Azerbaijan, is the Muslim-Christian conflict, as Jabiyev and many other pastors perceive it, so serious?

The most secular Muslim state

Azerbaijan is probably the most secular Muslim majority country in the world. Soviet times were a very painful period for religion and even after gaining independence in 1991 the country was ruled by the communists, who were sceptical about religious organisations and worried about the prospect of a potential Islamic Revolution which could be supported by neighbouring Iran (even though both countries share Shia Islam and a similar heritage, relations between them are cold). According to research undertaken by the Estonian magazine *Postimees*, Azerbaijan is the fifth most atheist place to live in the world. Only 21 per cent of Azerbaijanis responded positively to the question: "Does religion play an important role in your life?" In these circumstances, a serious religious conflict seems rather unlikely. It is, however, a much more complex issue than simple religious animosity, and it is difficult to understand without some historical knowledge on the topic.

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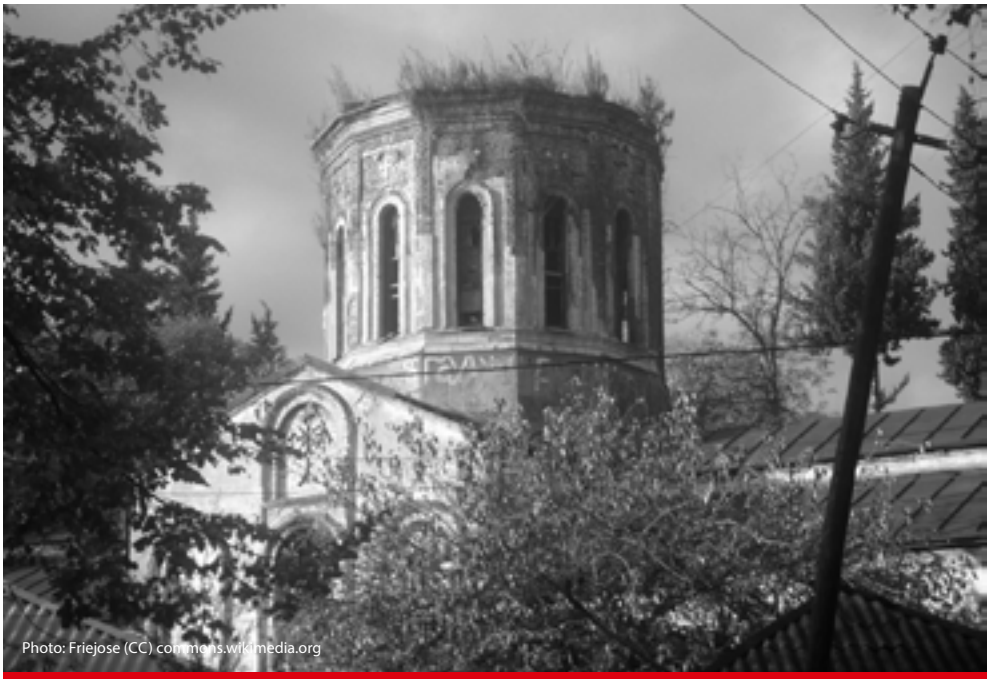
Throughout the centuries, the dominant religions in the Caucasus region and populations have changed many times. The situation of the Christians in the area depended to a large extent on favouritism. In historical Caucasian Albania (with no connection to today's Balkan state), Christianity spread in the late fourth century. The first Christian communities had to compete with Persian Zoroastrians and also, from the seventh century, with Muslims. A better time for Christians came in the 11th century when part of today's Azerbaijan was taken by the small Christian Kingdom of Kakheti. One century later, David IV of Georgia (also known as David the Builder) took over a large part of the Caucasus. It was brief lived, however, as the Mongols soon after conquered the land. Until the 18th century, the region was divided into Muslim khanates and many Christians living in the region changed their faith as a result of the Islamisation. The situation changed once again when the Russian Empire was invited to protect the area. Soon the khans regretted this decision as Russia established its own laws and supported Christianity. During the Soviet era, religion suffered severe repression – many mosques and churches were shut down. After Azerbaijan



The abandoned Christian Church in the centre of Zaqatala. It is not so easy to get inside the church, those who want to get a closer look have to cross through somebody's backyard.

gained independence, with a secular constitution and many different ethnic groups that had to co-exist on a relatively small territory, the situation seemed to be on a steady path until the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh broke out.

"Before the war started, we did not care who was Armenian, Georgian, Lezgian or Tatar," says Rashid, a retired soldier and veteran from Nagorno-Karabakh. "For example, there used to be an Armenian bakery and everybody was buying from them," he tells me pointing at a building during a small tour around the town of Oghuz.

It was Stalin who separated Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia. With an influx of Azeri settlers, tensions grew high. Just prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, independence guerrilla fighters made their way into Azerbaijan's Armenian-majority region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Soon a war between two countries broke out. The war lasted five years and left thousands of people without homes and more than 30,000 dead.

Rashid has his own theory on this: "It was Russia that divided us. They care about the conflict because they can interfere. Do you see that river? Before the war, during the summer, we would have picnics over there. We often spent the hot days together, all the families from the city."

We walked to a place where the old Armenian church stands, but it was closed. "It is waiting for a better future," Rashid says of the church. "All Armenians left after the war started. Nothing will be the same again. Too much blood was spilt on both sides."

Indeed, the war was a disaster for both sides. As the conflict escalated many Armenian districts and churches were attacked. In 1990 the famous Church of St Gregory Illuminator in Baku was set on fire. Even though it was rebuilt a few years ago, it has remained closed – just like all Armenian churches in Azerbaijan. During the conflict more than 300,000 Armenians fled the country.

The oldest church in the Caucasus

The war ended in 1994, but the ideological conflict continues. In Kish, a tiny village near the city of Shaki in northern Azerbaijan, there is a small well-constructed church which is now a museum. It is commonly believed that it was the first Christian temple in the Caucasus built by St Elisæus who brought the new faith to the region in the first century.

The young guide showed me around and told me the story about Caucasian Albania, and where else we can find the Albanian churches. The problem for my guide was that in the fifth century the Albanian Church fell under the religious jurisdiction of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Armenian Christians had used the temples in the region for over a thousand years. The Kish church was first described in writing by Armenian historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi in the seventh century. However, this was not a topic for my guide. She preferred to talk about the controversial traveller Thor Heyerdahl who funded the reconstruction of the churches and claimed that the Caucasian Albanian people were the protoplasts of the Scandinavian gods – because of their height. The only time my guide used the word "Armenian" was when she referred to Nagorno-Karabakh. When I asked her about the Armenian history of the church, she quickly responded that the Armenians tried only to appropriate the Caucasian Albanian heritage.

Most of the Christian churches in Azerbaijan are now empty and abandoned. Only a few remain open as tourist attractions.

Most of the Christian churches in Azerbaijan are now empty or open only as tourist attractions. But are there any active churches in the country? Throughout my travels, the only historical church open for regular mass was in Nij, in northern Azerbaijan.

This small village is the hometown of the Udi people, a community totalling around 10,000. They claim to be the descendants of the original Albans and they also have their own language. I asked some people in the village about life in today's Azerbaijan.

"We do not have any major problems. We are the original inhabitants of the Caucasus and they should respect us. But life here is peaceful," one resident told me.

I asked then about the abandoned churches. "There are many of them, it is true. And not only churches but also shrines and cemeteries. We have no illusions, the government has other priorities."

It is very difficult to clearly assess the situation of the Christians in Azerbaijan. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict left a stigma and widespread hatred for Armenians which leads to a negative opinion of Christianity in general. The Azerbaijan government has also shown disdain towards other religions, making it extremely difficult for Christian organisations to officially operate. There are sporadic signs of hope for the improvement of the situation, but without any real peace agreement between the two countries, there will be no improvement for the people. As for the abandoned Christian churches – most of them will stay where they are, overgrown by plants and waiting to be discovered.

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The Thaw in Russia's Periphery

JĘDRZEJ MORAWIECKI

For ages Russia has been building projects which in the 21st century have been repacked again. Two products are being offered at the same time, with two dominating identity concepts. The first is the Orthodox identity. It protects conservative values, defends Kremlin policies, but also does not stay away from the lights of shopping malls, the glamour and consumption joys. The second concept is quite different. On the surface, it seems quite icy and unattractive. But when you get a closer look at the post-Soviet cities, remotely located from Moscow or St Petersburg, you will understand that this second Russia speaks with multiple voices and is very polyphonic.

"Go ahead. Forward! Try again. Exactly here. Soft. Can you feel the vibrations? This is your energy. It is still numb, but waking up." A young squaddie of the Russian Federation's border guard, Alexei Zarubin, obediently digs his hands in the bluish snow. A moustachioed captain nods his head and mumbles with approval, like a bear.

Then he asks: "Do you understand now? You can heal other soldiers with your hands. Three times a day you dig your hands in the snow and that is it. I was in Tibet once and this is how the monks train there. Thanks to this method you will

cure any illness, any injury. It is all very simple. People just do not know about it. Human beings collect energy in themselves…."

I see these soldiers only a screen. I am in Tomsk. I am at a student dormitory on Komsomolsky Prospect. I am writing down and translating the raw material for a film, directed by Michał Marczak, entitled *At the Edge of Russia*. This documentary is to tell the story of Russian border patrols who are protecting a base near the Arctic Circle that nobody really needs. In parallel to translating, I write about religious life in urban Siberia. I take breaks and make occasional trips to Krasnoyarsk, or Buryatia, and sometimes Moscow. Then I return to the dorm and my cold, spacious room which is located on the ground level of the building. My room is decorated with a touching sign that reads "Welcome to Tomsk", which every day is lit up by the light coming from the headlights of the refuse lorry parked right across from my window.

Omnipresent

When I finally surface from my room, I listen to numerous conversations taking place outside on the street. I feel as if my hearing has been numbed. I realise that I am toughening up like the locals who are tired of the humidity and the frost. At times, I also grumble and yell at bus drivers who miss their stops. In most cases, though, I remain silent. I write. I sleep. And dream about Europe. I miss western music, low street curbs, zebra crossings, cheap airlines, and wine from a discount shop. You can indeed get fed up with the cheesy dance music from the local Siberian bistros.

In Russia, since 1991 religion has not been so willingly pushed to the private sphere as is the case in Europe.

And yet, in spite all of it, Tomsk still surprises me. There are things that you will never take for granted. For example, the impression that religion seems omnipresent: it sneaks into conversations in the most bizarre and least expected situations, such as the dialogues quoted above between the border patrol officers, or during day-long conversations on the Trans-Siberian railway. Or even during interviews and meetings with academics and local journalists.

Since 1991 religion here has not been so willingly pushed to the private sphere as is the case in Europe. Esotericism can easily be found on bookshop shelves. Intimate spirituality clashes with cyber-religions and powerful media productions. A producer of the Russian rip off of *Dr House* preaches patriotic Orthodox sermons at stadiums, while in a popular reality show fortune tellers, witches and gaudily dressed shamans confront each other. With a bit of luck we can even come across

a political commentary programme with a few preachers trying to prove which one of them is another incarnation of Christ.

A truly Orthodox man

In my search for interesting religious figures to interview I was told about Professor Karpitski. He was mentioned by several people in different cities. I heard statements like: "He is the first truly Orthodox man. He lived in the students' dormitory. He did it to be closer to the students." When I meet Mikhail Karpitski he does not live in the dormitory anymore. I sit with him and his wife in a wooden hut located in the city centre. In our conversation we first touch upon very current events; the professor is deeply engaged in pre-election fever. He is a candidate for the position of director at the faculty of philosophy. The decision will be made in a few days.

My interlocutor starts talking about Satan. About his vision of hell, which he claims he almost touched physically. There everything seemed ordinary. But everything, every being, was hollowed-out. Because hell is earth deprived of God.

On Sunday I attend a Catholic mass in Tomsk. The service is very Polish, and different from those in Krasnoyarsk, and even more different from the ones in Buryatia where there is a handful of Catholics. In Tomsk, conversely, Catholics are numerous. They have blended with the locals and established relations with the local authorities. They have also entered into a dialogue with Eastern Orthodoxy. After the mass, we start talking with the priest – Father Andrzej Duklewski. He tells us about his love for Russia, which in the beginning he could not tame. He talks about the assistance he receives from the local administration, the meetings with other religious groups, and their volunteer work in the psychiatric hospital. They have been working there together with a group of Eastern Orthodox led by Father Alexander Piechurkin. I am told that Father Alexander is someone else who I must meet. He is an open-minded and highly spiritual man, not assigned to any parish. Maybe because he became too close to the Catholics?

"It has become more and more difficult to talk to the Orthodox hierarchy," the Catholic Father Duklewski tells us. "There was a time when they would meet for tea and dumplings. Now everything has changed. Such a meeting could be costly today."

Two identities

Back in my room in Tomsk I try to put together all the pieces of the Russian religious mosaic. I am writing an article about religious repackaging: For ages Rus-

sia has been building projects which in the 21st century have been repacked again. Two products are being offered at the same time, with two dominating identity concepts. The first is the Orthodox identity. It protects conservative values, defends Kremlin policies, but also does not stay away from the lights of shopping malls, the glamour and consumption joys which have been so desired and awaited by the Russians who not only remember the Soviet Union but also the chaos of the Yeltsin era.

The second concept is quite different. On the surface, this different Russia seems quite icy and unattractive. It is indeed the Siberian Russia. When you get a closer look at these post-Soviet cities, remotely located from Moscow or St Petersburg, you will understand that this second Russia speaks with multiple voices and is very polyphonic. It buzzes with a dazzling multi-denominational mosaic. It tempts with spiritual utopias.

The hallways of the dormitory where I live spit out frost that has been collected over winter. I sleep as long as possible. During breaks between sleep I continue translating the raw material for the documentary movie. The conversations of the border patrol from the Arctic Circle region are beginning to sound stranger and stranger. At one point, the soldiers organise a Passover celebration. They arrange the order of the ceremony and fight over the Lent rules. In the end, the issue is resolved by the moustachioed captain. And then it gets even stranger. The border patrol officers prepare a poetry evening. They recite poems about Rus'. About grain. And about Eastern Orthodoxy. Then the soldiers drink vodka from tin cups and sing patriotic songs.

A Pharisee?

"You have to just go with the flow," says the charismatic Orthodox priest in a sad voice. This is Father Mikhail, the very same one whom the Catholic priest would meet regularly not so long ago. Many of my contacts, not only in Tomsk but also in Krasnoyarsk, Abakan and Ulan-Ude, recommended it to me that I visit him.

"I have found that it is easier for me to meet with businessmen, even shady ones, than with Catholics," he continues. "I have a wife. I have a family. I cannot lose my parish. Or leave the parish." We are sitting in a small room in the rectory. The walls smell of fresh wood. Behind the windows, snow slowly slides down from the church. The new golden dome shines in the sun.

Later I join an Orthodox congregational meeting. Father Alexander Piechurkin, the priest that has better relations with the Catholics, arrives on a bike. He leaves his bike in front of a cosy hut, near the brewery. The congregation has already

gathered. The Orthodox community are making *pryaniki* – spice cookies. Later we read a story about the vineyard workers. Twice. After the reading there is silence.

"How could God have allowed that," asks one of the participants of the meeting as he cannot hold it in any more. "This was a sheer provocation."

"I also worked many times in the field in the heat, I know what it is like," agrees Yuri who informally chairs the meeting. "Does this mean that God is a provocateur? He indeed differentiated people."

Father Alexander shakes his head. "He did this to show us something. To free us from our pride," he explains. "He did the same to the Pharisees, by turning to tax collectors and harlots. This made the clergy furious. Notice that back then he was beaten up too; it was not that people were fighting with each other, they held grudges against him. In the same way, we now hold grudges against heaven for the injustice on earth."

We are sitting on a large sofa. In front of us is a coffee table with lingonberry and tea from taiga with pine needles. We are eating and talking about pre-historical issues. And the conversation moves to the beginning of the world. How could all people come from Adam and Eve, somebody wonders aloud, this is nothing but incest.

"But back then there was an extremely strong chromosome bank … back then it was possible," comes a reply. "The Bible is an allegory. Adam and Eve are only images," says another member of the congregation.

Father Alexander again tries to give order to the discussion: "The Earth was created, which with God's help underwent such a change that a man emerged. Religion tells us what we are for and not what we are like nor what the world is like. The latter is explained by science."

Religion tells us what we are for and not what we are like nor what the world is like. The latter is explained by science.

After a while the group starts talking about the German philosopher Bert Hellinger. They are very interested in the constellations. "We are constantly on the road, we will see where we arrive and what will happen to our group," the priest says.

When the priest leaves the room, the congregation discusses the issue of a flat for him. Something has to be done. He himself is to write to the bishop. But who knows what answer he will get. At the end of the day, they decide to have a collection for the priest once a month.

Outside, Father Alexander switches on his bike lamp and gets ready to leave. He says that he is scared. Isn't he becoming too similar to a Pharisee? He advises people on how to live. And this advice can indeed bring help and relief. But that is

not the point. That is not where Christ is. Harlots will experience salvation before those who give advice.

Cleaning up the square

Unexpectedly the coldness returns to Tomsk. The wind is chilling and cold. On TV, however, Russians find joy from the military reality shows, which are gaining popularity on national Russian TV stations. The shows depict laughing soldiers, male and female, jumping over burning rings, while other TV series present brave KGB officers in leather jackets.

We ride a pink tram which howls with sadness. The driver slams the doors when the inside gets flooded by a crowd from Soviet Street. This is the tram to take in order to get to the amusement park with the Ferris wheel. We get off the tram not far away and head to a wooden Lutheran church. We await the pastor. It was not that long ago that Angela Merkel paid a visit here. Now this place stinks of "the rotten West". The times that have come are not easy. Reforms are one thing, but allowing homosexuals to get married? The pastor lowers his voice. He himself cannot really imagine what he would feel if he was forced to take communion from a woman. "At least the Russian Orthodox Church guards its values. This is our hope," he says.

The media growl from Moscow. Ivan Otrakovsky, the leader of Holy Rus', a group of Russian Orthodox vigilantes, wants to create "Orthodox patrol squads" in the capital. They are to protect morality on Moscow's streets. He calls on the Eastern Orthodox to "prepare for the physical defence of faith". The Russia Public Opinion Research Centre (WCIOM) reports that this idea is supported by two thirds of the Russians. The mayor of Moscow calls it "terrible". The Ministry of Internal Affairs believes the initiative is "premature". In the meantime some Muftis are convinced that the idea is by all means justified: "The faithful should have a right to protect their churches or temples." In turn – as the Levada Centre reports – 55 per cent of Muscovites are of the opinion that the greatest problems are related to the immigrants coming from the Caucuses and Central Asia.

Alexey Venediktov, editor-in-chief of *Echo of Moscow*, says: "Freedom of expression is indeed shrinking."

At the same time, the Kremlin puts pressure on the media. Phrases such as "cleaning up the square" are entering common discourse. Alexey Venediktov, editor-in-chief of *Echo of Moscow*, in which Gazprom has a controlling share, is of the opinion that the square is not empty yet. However, he also compares the existence of journalists to a "zombie existence". He says: "Freedom of expression

is indeed shrinking." And it may soon happen that some books, including classic 19th century novels, will be treated like porno mags. They contain too many bad words. Film and theatre actors can only use "literary swear words". Their "literary nature" is to be determined by an "independent commission".

Isolation is unavoidable

Back in Tomsk at the supermarket across from the dormitory where I live, I could not buy beer. I was late by five minutes. Today is the first day of a new prohibition law. Hence I arrive to the house of Professor Karpitski empty-handed. The atmosphere is bleak. Karpitski lost the elections for the director position at the faculty of philosophy by a thin margin. The professor mentions that he predicts that Russia will head towards autarky and believes that isolation is unavoidable for the country. Later Karpitski talks about a court case that is taking place in Tomsk. *Bhagavad Gita* is about to be regarded as an extremist publication. The Hare Krishnas are trying to defend themselves by appealing to international organisations. Karpitski is sceptical: "The system works in such a way that a stupid government official cannot be blocked, not even from above. Even from Moscow. His blows cannot yet be parried. They need to be responded to. This is the only way. Here all government officials do whatever they want as long as they do not slip. When they fall out of the system, nobody helps them. It resembles a criminal structure in a state of decay."

Patriarch Kirill has achieved what his predecessor feared. He came closer to the Kremlin.

As consolation, a piece of good news comes from abroad. Marczak's film *At the Edge of Russia* received the Planete Doc Festival award. It is time to pack up. I am heading to St Petersburg. It is high time I meet the soldiers who are in the film. We will be talking about Eastern Orthodoxy, cosmic energy and healings.

On my way I make a stop in Moscow. I pick up film discs sent by Marczak. I am to deliver them to the film's protagonists. I stop by a book shop on Lubyanka Street. There I meet Boris, a friend who is also a religious studies specialist. We speak for a brief moment of the latest developments regarding the Orthodox Church and its role in politics.

Russia's Eastern Orthodoxy has emerged as a key political player. Patriarch Kirill has achieved what his predecessor feared. He came closer to the Kremlin. He began appearing in the media. Priests no longer avoid talk and reality shows; they get involved in arguments and scream on camera. An ultra-conservative celebrity,

Vsevolod Chaplin, the chairman of the Synodal Department for the Co-operation of Church and Society of the Moscow Patriarchate gets into fights on TV. He shouts that today's Russia is "the only remaining Christian civilisation".

St Petersburg

After Moscow, I head to St Petersburg by train. I am to meet the protagonists of the film I worked on. But there are no border patrol officers from the Arctic Circle. I cannot find the military base, the one which I watched the whole time I was working on the raw material. The moustachioed captain built it solely for the film. Yes, he indeed was a solider. But those times are long gone. He now organises survival expeditions, while Alexei Zarubin, the guy who was taught to emit cosmic energy, does not know a thing about the army. He only put on a costume. He became involved in the film after he was chosen at the casting call. I learn about all this while talking to my protagonists. They think I know it was all a fake and I pretend I know. As I listen, my eyes get wider and wider. The film's soldiers look the same. They speak in the same way and joke the same. The only thing is: they are not who they were supposed to have been. Reality starts to set in. I look at Anatoliy Kondyubov, one of the film's protagonists. I still cannot comprehend that I did not recognise him when I was working on the film's raw material. He is a well-known Russian actor. I even have a film with him in it on my laptop.

"Playing scenes can lead to *istina*," says Kondyubov. "This film could have led to it. But it did not work out. Marczak could not do it. I could not do it. I could not get the spirituality to the surface."

After the meeting with the film actors, I head to my Petersburg hostel. Unfortunately, my experience there is no better. I should not have been tempted by the cheapest offer. Boys from the Caucuses dressed in white t-shirts feel very comfortable in our shared room. The hang their underwear on the heaters and cover the window with a green blanket. Nobody wants to give me a bed. "Go away. All the beds are taken, our buddy left but he's coming back and that is his bed; if he doesn't come back today, then maybe he'll be back next week." After some time, a sleepy concierge assigns me to a different room.

In the morning black rain is pouring down. I take the first metro to the Novodevichy Convent. I am to meet with an Orthodox nun who was previously in a Catholic order: a dramatic conversion and a very difficult spiritual path. I have to talk to her, I was told in Tomsk. This is important for her and me: our meeting is to put new light on the mosaic. "A meeting? What for?" I am asked by her superior. Still she makes me wait.

The Church is black. I can hear some strong, clear singing. Small, microscopic candles are blinking. In the side aisle there is a morning service. And later everything suddenly ends. After four thousand kilometres of travel, I have the shortest interview I have ever made in my life. Sister Anastasia is very quiet and humble. She has very narrow eyes, one of which is constantly turned towards the altar. She does not want to talk. She cannot. We sit on a bench together in silence.

Russian Spring

Later the real spring comes. It is 2014. Our TV screens again show soldiers – many soldiers. This time they are not pretending to be somebody else. They are real. Or are they? Little green men? Regular divisions? Is truth on the screen or outside it? Why would the scenes played by actors have to be less authentic? Where is reality?

Be that as it may – the city has been taken with a fever. Passers-by shout on the phones that Russia has finally risen from its knees. Liberal academics grab me by my hand and order me to support the federalisation of Ukraine. They tell me that Ukraine in all its history has never experienced any harm from Russia. And wars are unleashed by Satan.

Kirill, the current Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' is of the opinion that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a tragedy, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* reports. "May God save us from the temptations that we succumbed to in the 1990s." The Patriarch is also convinced that one of the causes of the USSR's collapse was spiritual degradation and also the loss of national pride, which has to be painstakingly nurtured.

The Patriarch is convinced that one of the causes of the USSR's collapse was spiritual degradation and also the loss of national pride, which has to be painstakingly nurtured.

On Skype, my friend Boris, the religious studies specialist from Moscow, talks about shame and depression and how intellectuals are quitting Facebook. Professor Karpitski, however, does not suffer from depression. He has not quit Facebook. He fights on, but not in Tomsk. He got a job at the Yurga State University. He lives in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug in Siberia. He is trying to establish a Polish-Russian-Ukrainian platform of dialogue. Meanwhile, Donbas is on fire and the Russian media are publishing the first reports of zinc coffins and secret burials of Russian soldiers who died in east Ukraine.

Russian nationalism consumes everyday life and finds its way into offices, coffee shops and kitchens. It announces its presence via a national spring, a spring that

is difficult to hide, even in Siberia – even in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug where Professor Karpitski soon loses his job with the Yurgy State University. He was dismissed for participating in an academic conference in Ukraine. The voting took place behind closed doors. He was not let in to the council; he had classes at that time and was not allowed to reschedule them.

Boris's Facebook page revives. There I find a link to a popular speech delivered by the Archpriest Dmitry Klimov, one that reflects very differently the mood of most in the country: "I am telling you, not only as a clergyman, but also as a historian; when a majority of the nation agrees to the possibility of war, a war will take place … We are taken by a wave of national hatred and this is an ascending wave. There has been much talk about patriotism, about a specifically understood national consolidation. Can someone be a patriot because he or she hates others? We hated different people at different stages. In the 1990s we hated the oligarchs. Later we learned how to hate people of different nationalities. Now we hate Americans and Europe. Patriotism is love for the homeland, for culture. Patriotism needs to arise from love. From love for history and respect towards it. When we start feeding ourselves with myths that Russia has never lost any wars, and that it has never started any wars, this only says that we do not know our own history." NEE

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Jędrzej Morawiecki is a co-founder of a group and a magazine titled *Dziennikarze Wędrowni* (Wandering Journalists). He is a writer and a lecturer with the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication with Wrocław University. He is also an author of books on Russia, including: *"Łuskanie światła"*, *"Głubinka"* and a co-author of other works, including *"Krasnojarsk zero"* and *"Cztery zachodnie staruchy. Reportaż o duchach i szamanach" (together with Bartosz Jastrzebski)*. Their new book *"Jutro spadną gromy"* is to be published this year.

DOUBLETAKE: Is Ukraine a Failed State?

GRZEGORZ GIL

The crisis and strife in Ukraine has once again brought failed state semantics and experts to the centre of the debate. However, considering the numerous facts and indicators that determine whether a state can be qualified as "failed", it becomes clear that Ukraine is rather a state that has been faced with an endemic political crisis and whose well-known economic problems, amplified by Russian influence, only increase the difficulty of succeeding in any area.

Since the collapse of the Viktor Yanukovych regime in early 2014 and the onset of Russian-supported separatism in the east of the country, Ukraine's socio-economic indicators have plummeted. The new government in Kyiv has scrambled to secure new credit and support to keep the economy afloat while slowly reforming its over-bloated, corrupted public sector in order to become more dynamic and open to competition. The result, however, has been drastic. In just one year, the hryvnia, Ukraine's currency, has lost 60 per cent of its value against the dollar, while its gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by seven per cent. Inflation has risen at a dramatic rate of 34 per cent in only 12 months and Ukrainians now face a 285 per cent increase in gas prices and a 50 per cent increase in electricity costs over the same period of time. On the political level, there appears to be a growing level of frustration within the society. The people are more and more of the opinion that the government is not doing enough to enact much needed reforms to stop wide-spread corruption, while the war in the east of the country has taken a significant toll on both Ukraine's economic and social well-being.

The 7–8 million ethnic Russians and an unconsolidated sense of Ukrainian nationhood in Crimea and the Donbas region made Ukraine a particularly vulnerable state. All Putin had to do was to open up this source of "domestic" instability in eastern Ukraine.

All of these facts have pushed many people to ask the much dreaded question – is Ukraine a failed state? As expected, some answer this question with a definite "yes", not seeing much hope for the future of Ukrainian statehood, while others are more convinced that the current difficulties are a temporary obstacle and not a long-term impediment that would affect Ukraine's political system. In light of this, we asked a Polish scholar and researcher on failed states, Grzegorz Gil, to closely examine certain assertions about Ukraine as well as the definition of "failed state" in the current context, which may help us get closer to find our own answer.

Assertion one: A failed state is not an analytical category but rather an axiologically-burdened term reflecting one's preferences or even propaganda. However, even if Ukraine is not an archetypical "failed state", the current crisis invokes the question of the very nature of its state-building and nation-building processes.

The crisis and strife in Ukraine has once again brought failed state semantics and experts to the centre of the debate. The term "failed state" had been popularised in the mid-1990s by the United States as a new label for civil conflicts and complex humanitarian emergencies, and was often used to stigmatise weak and conflict-prone states. Empirically the "measure" of a failed state primarily refers to the quality of government (its legitimacy, security and capacity) and a lack of key attributes (delegitimisation, defragmentation and distress). However, excluding

extreme cases of state collapse, such as Sierra Leone and Somalia in the 1990s, a failed state category is often relative and subjective.

Firstly, there is no universal threshold above which quantitative features, such as low legitimacy, civil strife or weak capacity, change into qualitative ones – "state failure". Thus, even fierce sectarian violence and civil war do not necessarily equate to a failed state situation, as the latter is mostly defined by its scale and protracted character. It is noteworthy that each of the previously recognised "failed states", or even collapsed states, could not fail according to the international law which presumes the continuation doctrine, in other words a state maintains its legal identity even if it loses portions of its territories or undergoes some other radical change.

Secondly, with no single accepted source on the definition of a failed state, the rhetoric of world powers, such as Russia, about others, in this case Ukraine, is vague and becomes truth only through repetition. Even though there are no exact criteria that would determine what a failed state is, some states are certainly stronger, more capable or less dysfunctional than others – as depicted by the Fund for Peace and *Foreign Policy* magazine's "Fragile States Index" (FSI), which was previously called the "Failed States Index". In the 2014 edition of the FSI Ukraine ranked only 133rd out of 177 countries, but it needs to be kept in mind that this place in fact refers to 2013. Nonetheless, according to the ranking Ukraine is not an archetypical failed state like Sierra Leone or Somalia.

Ukraine clearly is not an archetypical failed state like Sierra Leone or Somalia.

Aside from the methodology of such rankings, Ukraine's statehood should be seen in the broader context of the 25th anniversary of its independence. There is no doubt that Ukraine's sovereignty has always been a complicated issue, one that could be called into question. To the casual observer, a Russian one in particular, the current crisis taking place in the country is just one more argument in favour of the "artificial character" of the Ukrainian state; a state that such an observer sees as regionally and ethno-linguistically divided. The name Ukraine itself derives from the Russian *okráina*, meaning a "frontier region" or "outskirts". What is more, the splintered history of Ukraine cannot disqualify it as a state but defines it as a "cleft country" (a term coined by Samuel P. Huntington) divided between the western and the Orthodox orientations. Even if the independence of Ukraine was welcomed by 92 per cent of Ukrainians (though only 54 per cent in Crimea), the main challenge to the state- and nation-building processes has been to bond the Russian minority, which makes up 22 per cent of the population, with the Ukrainian state.

In practice, a perception of the Russian threat to the young Ukrainian statehood was Kyiv's excuse for the lack of state-building and good governance in the 1990s.

After the stagnant presidency of Leonid Kuchma which promoted a "blackmail state", the Orange Revolution's shift westward was countered by Viktor Yanukovych's reign. The impeachment of Yanukovych was then called illegal and the EuroMaidan Revolution "illegitimate" and inspired by the West. However, two Pew Research Centre surveys conducted in May 2014 show that 77 per cent of Ukrainians, as well as 58 per cent of Russian speakers in Donbas, want to remain united. Yet, they probably consider this unity in two completely different ways.

Nevertheless, this strategic cleavage is not the only cause of Ukraine's political and economic misery. From the very beginning a lack of capacity building and rent-seeking for the transit of gas and other schemes have been just as damaging. In addition, independence has institutionalised problems such as energy dependency, oligarchic rule or rampant cronyism and corruption that impede state and social modernisation. Such a "soft state" – as Gunnar Myrdal originally referred to the South Asian governments – operates amidst corruption, incompetence and disorder. In Ukraine's case, "management" was preoccupied with oligarchs' profits since president Kuchma parcelled out control of heavy industry to regional clans. As a result, in today's Ukraine the 50 richest citizens control almost 50 per cent of the country's GDP. Not surprisingly, in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2014 Ukraine ranks 142nd out of 175. All of these facts suggest that Ukraine is not a failed state in the conventional sense, but it is a state that has been faced with an endemic political crisis and whose well-known economic problems, amplified by Russian influence, only increase the difficulty of succeeding in any area.

Assertion two: After the Cold War the label of a failed state has been used to add a security dimension in order to legitimise aggressive policies. It also serves as a tool to reintegrate the Russian sphere of influence by direct or veiled interference.

Modern political history has taught us that a state's formation process is not linear. State failure is usually more spectacular and occasionally used to annex parts of weak states (consider the partitions of Poland), install a puppet regime or to stabilise and rebuild them in a more liberal way. After 1990 Russia has clearly intended to restore the former Soviet sphere of influence and cling to the first two patterns. Though Ukraine is a very special case both in political and economic terms, the Kremlin's strategy refers also to Transnistria, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. To this end Moscow wanted to institutionalise its supremacy through the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Nevertheless, at various times Ukraine, Georgia and Uzbekistan, which are out of the CSTO, resisted adhering to or fully co-operating with these forums under Russia's conditions. Thus, an instrument of last resort

for the Kremlin was to channel sub-state separatisms to its "near abroad" against prospective geopolitical losses.

Russian presence in the separatist republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia was simply justified as a defence of ethnic Russians and its legally deployed peacekeeping troops. But Russia also aspires to gauge order in the post-Soviet space. Even if you are not fully convinced about this, think of how Russia's former president, Dmitry Medvedev, openly qualified the Kyrgyz Republic as a state on the brink of failure in 2010, signalling a possible need for Russian intervention as a gesture of "goodwill".

Russia has always perceived Ukraine as part and parcel of a founding myth of Russian statehood – regardless of the latter's political status. Suffice to say that the media in Russia continue to use the preposition *na* (on) *Ukraine*, which is a more apolitical description than *v* (in) – the politically correct expression that Ukrainian authorities have recently begun championing aiming to semantically uphold their state's sovereign status. Overall, Ukraine's "failure" has served Russia's geopolitical interests and well predates 2014. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has presented Ukraine as a sick, pseudo-state on the road to international isolation. This sentiment was even reflected in the well-known 1994 CIA report which stressed that, except for a significant Russian minority, the NATO issue "may bring Ukraine to the verge of existence as a sovereign state". The Russian position was also expressed by Putin in his private remarks to George W. Bush at the 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit. Subsequently, each pro-western regime change in Kyiv urged Russia to either meddle in Ukraine's domestic politics or curb gas supplies (or both). The former is easier to do successfully in Ukraine than elsewhere as 7–8 million ethnic Russians and an unconsolidated sense of Ukrainian nationhood in Crimea and the Donbas region made Ukraine a particularly vulnerable state.

Ukraine's "failure" has served Russia's geopolitical interests and predates the year 2014.

That is why after Ukraine's regime change in February 2014 Putin had an easy task. All he had to do was to open up a source of "domestic" instability in eastern Ukraine. In the broader context the current crisis and the war in Donbas reflect a conflict between legality, represented by an anti-terrorist campaign, and legitimacy – self-determination in this case. These two are always intertwined, but also at odds. To avoid accusations of unlawful conduct, Russia keeps up an appearance of non-interference in Ukraine by acting below the level of open war, as well as by simple Soviet-era propaganda. The Kremlin foments the illegitimacy of the new "Nazi" government, lack of order and human rights violations. Responding to these accusations at a meeting with the European Commission in Brussels Prime Min-

ister Arseniy Yatseniuk replied that "Russia will not succeed in making Ukraine a failed state".

To this end the Kremlin has already (successfully) securitised the annexation of Crimea. In the case of Donbas it brought back the term Novorossiya that was used to denote large swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine prior to the 1917 Revolution. The difference is that the annexation of Crimea has helped Putin to boost his domestic legitimacy, while the war in Donbas is the hostage of Ukraine's pro-Russian alignment. Overall, two Levada Centre surveys conducted in Russia in August 2014 suggest that Putin's policy towards Ukraine faces limited domestic opposition and that Russians continue to suspect the West of installing a puppet regime in Kyiv to the detriment of the legal authorities.

Assertion three: The war in Donbas is a key argument for the artificial character of Ukraine which paradoxically could also consolidate Ukrainian statehood, as war generally creates demand for institutions.

Historically, both declarations of Ukrainian independence (1941, 1991) were a side-effect of internal turbulence in revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union. It could suggest that Ukraine's existence goes hand-in-hand with Russia's weakness and vice versa. However, today's situation differs from previous periods in Kyiv's pro-European drift sustained by the growing pro-western civil society. Of course, regional polarisation and a corrupted oligarchic system need time to be toned down. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has to prove it by winning the "anti-terrorist operation" in Donbas that primarily depends on Russia and western, including non-lethal, military support. Bearing in mind that apart from voluntary extinction a state cannot fail due to internal disturbances, Russia has to legitimise further territorial losses of Ukraine. This is the case for the two pro-Russian self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples' Republics which held status referenda and separate elections.

Even with a more federalised Ukraine the end to the stalemate is unlikely unless Russia changes its attitude.

Such externally sponsored quasi-statehood, despite the lack of Russia's diplomatic recognition thus far, stands for a metaphorical failure of Ukraine. In parallel to the conflict, discussions on the federalisation of Ukraine have taken place. Ironically, this issue was ignored during the pro-Russian Yanukovych's term. However, even with a more federalised Ukraine, an end to the stalemate is unlikely unless Russia changes its attitude. Conversely, the Kremlin intends to maintain low intensity conflicts in order to paralyse the state-building process and western pivots of its former subordinates.

Given the pro-Russian sentiment in Donbas, one should consider how crucial it really is to Ukraine's economy. Even if the region produces 20 per cent of GDP and about a quarter of Ukraine's export volume, this story also covers a myth since the coal from Donbas is subsidised and the region itself has been artificially revived over the last three decades, mainly for social reasons. Apart from space and defence components that Russia imported from eastern Ukraine, driving this separatism is equally risky in political terms as only 17 per cent truly want to secede. In other words, Putin's "artificial state" argument primarily serves to undermine Ukraine's credibility as a worthy partner for NATO and, increasingly, for the EU.

In the short-term, the prospects for Ukraine's statehood seem to be akin to "the prisoner's dilemma", in which both players' rational and dominant strategy is to win unilaterally due to the lack of mutual trust. Accordingly, there are four models of payoffs. A unilateral win for the pro-western government of Ukraine would be if it joins European political and military structures without compromising Donbas, which would in fact put an end to Putin's "artificial state" argument. Conversely, for the Kremlin the federalisation scenario – if accepted by Kyiv – could lead to Ukraine's legal partition and its final collapse. It would be a prize for Russia. Another option is that Russia and its proxies mitigate the pro-western pivot of Ukraine as well as stop sponsoring the separatists. This lets Ukraine stay formally intact and profit from eastern exports. Likewise, Russia aggrandises the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, which seems to be likely a paper tiger without Ukraine. This "Finlandisation" scenario would prevent future Ukrainian disintegration and lead to a possible win-win situation. Finally, penalty payoffs for both sides would be represented by Ukraine's rapprochement to liberal Europe with protracted destabilisation of eastern Ukrainian quasi-statehood up to the Dnieper River. Such a conflict would surely need more direct Russian assistance and thus force the West to act decisively. Ironically, this deadlock could also create incentives for the state's development and for nation-building in Ukraine, as every war promotes the demand for effective institutions and unity.

In conclusion, Ukraine will not utterly fail as long as it is still "manageable" by Russia. However, the most important question that should be asked remains unanswered: Is Putin's Russia truly a rational player in this matter? NEE

Grzegorz Gil is a Polish political scientist and adjunct professor at the department of international relations of the Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin. He specialises in state failure semantics, interventionism in international relations and works recently on the "international state-building" research project.

World cultures and theatres in Gdańsk | World theatres and Shakespeare in Gdańsk

Have you dreamt about a trip to the Land of the Rising Sun? Or maybe you are interested in Romania's art and culture? Then, you should come to Gdańsk, where you will find an extraordinary place – The Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre, opened in September 2014.

You might ask, why Shakespeare in the north of Poland? It turns out that Shakespeare's works reached that city already during the playwright's lifetime. The Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre was built in place of the Fencing School building, which was the first public theatre in Poland. The building served as a venue for fencing competitions, but also for staging plays. The latter were organised in the open air, in a big courtyard. The Gdańsk theatre was visited regularly, also by actors from England. Today, in its place, you can admire one of the most outstanding theatres in the world. The new high-tech facility has a unique opening roof, designed by Italian architect Renato Rizzi. The stage and the auditorium are composed of movable platforms which give guest directors almost unlimited staging options.

Today, the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre functions similarly to its 17th century predecessor. It is a theatre without its own troupe, hosting theatres and artists from Poland, Europe and other parts of the world. As part of Theatres of the World programme, the month of May will be full of events that cannot be missed. Although the name Japanese Weekend may sound inconspicuous, during just three days (15th – 17th May 2015) 15 different events (spectacles, performative lectures, meetings with Japanese animation, film presentations and book promotions) will be offered. The universality of Shakespeare's plays will be reaffirmed by two unusual performances by a Japanese actress – Aki Isoda, who has been staging *One-woman plays* based on Shakespeare since 1971. On the GST stage we will admire her vision of Lady Macbeth and Ophelia. Both spectacles are rooted in the Japanese dramatic tradition, use, especially *Ophelia*, traditional Japanese music (Shamisen) and elements of kabuki technique.

The GST cycle will be continued during the Romanian Week (30 May – 11 June 2015). The programme of that week will be include spectacles of *Oedipus* by the Radu Stanca National Theatre in Sibiu and 3 spectacles of the *Marin Sorescu* by the National Theatre in Craiova.

We will open the summer season with the first Polish performance prepared for the Elizabethan stage – *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, directed by Paweł Aigner. With this play the actors of the Gdańsk-based Wybrzeże Theatre will take the spectators back in time to the Elizabethan epoch and allow them to experience a less known relation between the stage and the auditorium. When the weather permits, the play will be staged with the roof open.

It is worth considering a longer stay in this part of Europe in order to experience the 19th Gdańsk Shakespeare Festival (August 1st – 9th). The festival is the only one of this kind in Poland and one of the biggest in the world. This year we shall see Macbeth directed by one of the most distinguished contemporary directors – Luk Perceval.

Magdalena Hajdysz

More information is available at: www.teatrszekspirowski.pl and www.shakespearetheatre.pl
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/gdansk.shakespeare.theatre; Twitter: @TeatrSzekspir

THE GDAŃSK SHAKESPEARE THEATRE

THEATRES FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN GDAŃSK

JAPANESE WEEKEND

15–17 MAY 2015

Performances

- LADY MACBETH and OPHELIA – dir. Tadashi Azuma, starring Aki Isoda
- DESERT ROSE – TO-EN Butoh Company

Films, meetings with artists, lectures on Japanese theatre

ROMANIAN WEEK

30 MAY – 10 JUNE 2015

Performances

- OEDIPUS, dir. Silviu Purcărete, Radu Stanca National Theatre Sibiu
- PROFU' DE RELIGIE, Mihaela Michailov, dir. Bobi Pricop, Marin Sorescu National Theatre Craiova
- CLEAR HISTORY, dir. Nicoleta Esinencu, Spalatorie Theatre, Chisinau, Moldova

Concerts, films, photo exhibitions, art exhibitions, Romanian cuisine and many more

THE GDAŃSK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

1–9 AUGUST 2015

Performances

- TIGER LILLIES PERFORM HAMLET, Republique Theatre, Denmark/UK
- MACBETH, dir. Luk Perceval, Baltic House Theatre, Russia
- JULIUS CESAR, dir. Robert Sturua, Rustaveli Theatre, Georgia

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Why is Central Europe So Divided?

MAGDALÉNA VÁŠÁRYOVÁ

The occupation of Crimea, as well as the ongoing conflict in the east of Ukraine, have created deep divisions between the Central European states. Despite their recent shared history, there is a growing crisis in relations between Poland and the Baltic states on the one side, and the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Austria on the other. Yet this shared history should be used as an example of how to escape the post-communist legacy, something that Ukrainians are now attempting themselves.

When a prisoner, as if by a miracle, appears in front of a slightly opened window of a prison, he or she has little time to decide whether to jump into the free world or to consider the possible consequences that will await him or her at the moment he or she gets caught. Most likely the person will keep the information about this slightly opened window from the rest of the prisoners and without hesitation jump out, leaving the rest of his or her peers behind.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Central European states were the ones who were all of a sudden standing in front of a slightly opened window to the West. Apparently, they did not take too much time to look around. They gathered together as the Visegrad Four (V4), without inviting those further to the East, and

took the opportunity of this slightly opened window. By 1999, these states were members of NATO and by 2004 full-fledged members of the European Union. It seemed that any opening for the countries of Eastern Europe would not come again for several years.

Yet already in 1995 the Slovak Foreign Policy Association in Bratislava organised a conference regarding the fate of Ukraine. And we called upon the invited Ukrainian politicians and experts to take more vigorous steps and reforms; we were conscious that one day this window might close permanently.

Deep disappointment

The Visegrad Four began to work in the format of V4 + Ukraine in 1998 in an effort to send a signal about the window, which could easily be closed by a strong wind or a bad neighbour; and no one would know when the window could open again. And then came 2008 and the NATO summit in Bucharest. We in Central Europe were convinced that facilitating Ukrainian accession to NATO via the Membership Action Plan was a necessary step which should have been taken by the Alliance at a time when it was possible without significant or even horrific consequences. I recall the deep disappointment we felt when we found out that the engines of the European Union – Germany and France – had decided to "remove" Ukraine from this plan, right before the summit. As a reward, treaties in Moscow on the Mistral ships (built by French companies) and the Nord Stream pipeline (to deliver gas directly from Russia to Germany) were signed. Worse, moving Ukraine away from the still slightly-opened window led to the comic and absurd "reset" of Russia-US relations in 2009. Today, the windows are closed and some would even say that the neighbour wants to attach a grating to them.

In contrast to 2008, the occupation of Crimea as well as the conflict in the east of Ukraine has managed to divide the Central European states today. There is a growing crisis in relations between Poland and the Baltic states on the one side, and the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria on the other. Why is this division now occurring in Central Europe? In 2008 they were not divided by the fate of Ossetia and the war in Georgia. To understand this division, we need to examine three important dimensions.

The source of the first dimension is comfort, namely the comfort of receiving Russian energy supplies with long-term price stability. When Slovak politicians, beginning in 1998, sped up the integration of Slovakia into NATO and the European Union they also aimed to diversify Slovakia's energy supplies. However 49 per cent of the owners of shares in the Slovak Gas Enterprise (SPP) – Gaz de France and

Ruhrgas – were unconditionally against this objective. They argued that "Russians never reduced their supplies and would not do it now, since they are as dependent on their exports as Central Europe is on receiving them."

In essence, the Czech Republic was the only Central European state that gave serious thought to its diversification from the very beginning. The Czechs built an oil pipeline from Ingolstadt in order to be independent from the oil supplies flowing from the East for its strategic refineries and already by 1996 they began diversifying their gas supplies through contracts with the Kingdom of Norway. Today, on a contractual basis, the Czechs receive 22 per cent of their gas from Norway and built a gas connector at Hora Svaté Kateřiny. At the same time it is necessary to add that Czech politicians paid a significantly high political price for their visionary policies. At the time when this diversification was promoted, many of their partners, citizens and media did not understand them and considered such projects pointless and a waste of money. These politicians were defeated in elections and have not returned to the Czech political scene.

Poland has also experienced significant problems with the company EuRoPolGaz in which all of a sudden, to the Polish government's surprise, a Polish businessman became a four per cent owner and his firm Bartimpex, as it later turned out, had been playing a dangerous balancing game in Polish-Russian relations. Meanwhile, in 2009 Germany decided to take advantage of European subsidies to build a direct gas connection with Russia, the so-called Nord Stream, and by doing so reduced supplies to Germany through Poland. That is also why in 2010, under pressure from the European Commission, Poland decided to separate gas producers from the distribution network and the state-owned GazSystem took control over the Yamal transit pipeline. Since April 2014, however, there is now a reverse gas flow in the Yamal pipeline from the Mallnow station on the border of Germany and Poland.

The only Central European state that has not seriously considered energy diversification intensively enough is Hungary.

The only Central European state not seriously considering energy diversification intensively enough has been Hungary. Perhaps that also explains the current panic expressed by Viktor Orbán, the country's prime minister. Even at the price of damaging the image of his country and impinging on a conflict with the EU, Orbán attempts to ensure cheap supplies from Russia through direct contact with Vladimir Putin. In return he pledges various advantages in the Hungarian energy sector. However, the price for this is much higher now than it was 10 or 15 years ago.

Actions by the Russian Federation – or, more precisely, Gazprom – have not resulted in a unified position by Central Europe to defend themselves, but rather led to independent actions without any coordination between the neighbours to solve the problem of energy dependency. In the context of Ukraine, we are experiencing the same thing today. Central European states are not working with a unified action plan in an effort to help Ukraine on its way to building a democratic, western-style state. On the contrary, the government of each state looks at its own expected gains and advantages first via bilateral negotiations with Putin and Russia.

Meanwhile, Austria, being almost 50 per cent dependent on Russian gas, signed contracts with Gazprom allowing it to make commercial use of 50 per cent of the greatest Central European storages in Baumgarten, without consulting it with its eastern neighbours. Perhaps it could be argued that only the Czech Republic in 2009 enabled a reverse flow within a short period in the shared Druzhba gas pipeline, when it radically cut on supplies causing a panic in Slovakia. Furthermore, to the advantages of cooperation we could also add an already existing gas connector between Slovakia and Hungary introduced by the end of the year 2014 and financed by EU resources. The Slovak Republic, treating post-Maidan changes through the mouth of its prime minister indifferently, is in fact the biggest supplier of reverse flow that is of vital importance for Ukraine.

Misplaced romanticism

The second dimension which hinders the formation of a coordinated position of Central European states towards Ukraine is related to national memory. When we consider the differing and surprising positions of the former Eastern Bloc countries towards Russia's aggressive politics of today, which they also had the opportunity to experience during 1956 and 1968, we must come back to the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, when a Pan-Slavic movement was gaining strength. At that time, there were already growing misunderstandings between the Poles, who had experience of Russian hegemony, and the romantic nationalists of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. These romantics were mainly under the influence of Jan Kollár, a Slovak poet who lived in Vienna and put forward arguments on Slavic solidarity, the power of Russia and its cultural and clerical connectedness. The Poles rejected these arguments. And even though 120 years have passed since, the arguments by the Czech president or the Slovak slavophiles, or even Hungarian politicians, are today coming out of the coffers, which we thought were not only outdated but also was washed away down the Danube to the Black Sea; buried in its dark waters.

In terms of historical memory, it is also necessary to highlight and appreciate a huge shift in Polish-Ukrainian relations. At the beginning of the 21st century it was still unclear how the Poles would react if the democratisation process in Ukraine were to begin during the Orange Revolution. In the history of these two nations there have been too many deaths and border changes for this relationship to be simple or friendly. Yet in the same way as the French and Germans managed to reconcile in the name of a common European future without wars, the Poles, in a relatively short time, managed to overcome the trauma of Volhynia (Wołyń) and the "Ukrainisation" of Polish cities like Lviv. The Poles decided that in the name of their own European future, as well as the future of a European Ukraine, they will bring an end to nostalgia and regrets with regard to the past. But in the course of their co-operation with Ukrainians they will try to cleanse the history of myths and prejudices and create an oasis of peace in this heavily tested part of Europe.

In Moscow no one today mentions the word reconciliation. And yet, there is no better example of a European idea than the burying of hatchets between two nations. That is also why relations between the Czechs and Slovaks, whether it was leading to a breakup or not, do not include countless victims, nor do the more complicated relations between the Slovaks and Hungarians feed themselves with hatred to the extent that was not so long ago observed between the Poles and Ukrainians. However, neither Hungarians nor Slovaks, as direct neighbours of Ukraine, gave any thought to reconciliatory politics with Ukraine; claiming that they do not share these types of problems. And by this ignorance and absence of appreciation of Polish and Ukrainian efforts they missed out on an opportunity for any real discussion between the Central European states on the topic regarding the quality of relations with Ukraine.

There is no better example of a European idea than the burying of hatchets between two nations.

What is even more interesting is the attitude of Austria towards Russia. For decades we have witnessed the extraordinary goodwill of the Austrians, who received tens of thousands of migrants from Hungary, Slovenia, Czechoslovakia and Poland in order to allow them to live in freedom and democracy. The Austrians took care of them and enabled successful careers for many, while preparing others for their journeys to Western Europe or across the sea. It is therefore very sad that this openness and friendship faded away only weeks after the fall of the Iron Curtain. It was replaced with reluctance and suspicion, melting into efforts by Austria to slowdown the integration processes of the post-communist countries into the EU. Austria became reluctant to build bridges, roads, or other infrastructure; they blocked energy connections and attempted to keep their labour market closed to

the Central Europeans. That is why none of us should be surprised by Austria's unclear, or even negative, position towards what is happing in Ukraine today.

Switzerland of the Carpathians

The third dimension to the problem of a united Central Europe is associated with the unclear attitude towards liberal values of present day politicians in three Central European countries, namely Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It is argued that where the Habsburgs ruled, liberal political thoughts will never flourish. There might be something to this statement when we look at the fate of liberals in Germany, or more precisely, in Bavaria. Public statements by Orbán of Hungary on the topic of illiberalism confirm the politician's strong position on the domestic political scene. But we all know that these deliberations are taking place in silence in the other two countries, and if there is a significant change in government in Poland we could expect a similar trend. It was not so long ago that relations between Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński (head of the opposition Law and Justice party) were more than friendly. But the Ukrainian crisis has changed everything. It will be interesting to observe how this trend, as well as others spreading throughout Western Europe today, will have a more visible impact on the politics of the V4 countries and how these less experienced states will tackle them.

One of the most interesting phenomena, about which very little is spoken, regards a small piece of the Carpathians crossing Slovakia and Ukraine until it reaches Romania. Today it creates an extraordinary part of Ukraine, but one which has evolved in a historically different way and which used to be called Carpathian Ruthenia (Zakarpattia Oblast). During the Paris Peace Conference in 1918, this small, mountainous and poor yet beautiful part of Ukraine was given to Czechoslovakia. Almost 100 years on, this part of Ukraine is a forgotten region not only for Slovakia but also for the other Central European states, with the exception of Hungary. This region has played a key role and even became a victim of Central European politics. Endless tensions, conflicts, disputes over minorities, coupled with extreme poverty and the difficult life of the inhabitants, contributed to the creation of this special region in Ukraine. Only after the Second World War did it become, by Stalin´s will, a part of the Soviet Union with the Czechoslovaks losing a portion of their territory and with the Hungarians losing a portion of the territory they were striving for.

At the same time, Stalin did not comply with the requests of Ukrainian communists who wanted to incorporate the Polish region around Przemyśl together with the Zakarpattia Oblast into the Soviet Union. As a result, one part of Ukraine

became a multi-ethnic region whose relations with Kyiv were very weak. Today, this is manifested in some polls whose results seem to be closer to those of elections in Donetsk than to those of western or central Ukraine. Given the proximity and shared boundaries, it could happen that this forgotten region will become very problematic for the Central European states in a new hybrid war. It would be dangerous if the region became something of a fifth column for foreign powers that could threaten the territorial integrity of Ukraine primarily through the inactivity of Slovakia and Hungary. At the same time, it could also become a base for spreading this hybrid war to the centre of the European Union. And yet, it is exactly this region which has all the preconditions to become a Switzerland of the Carpathians, given its cultural diversity and natural beauty.

Black hole of Europe

When we think back to the beginning of the 1990s, right after the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, we must admit that we have already forgotten all the doubts we had and obstacles we had to overcome to get into NATO and the EU. Those 15 years were filled with intrastate politics, tensions between political powers, or even doubts from abroad about whether Slovakia is capable of real independence, which led to the dramatic statement by Madeleine Albright, the former US Secretary of State, that Slovakia is the "black hole" of Europe. But the window remained slightly open for Slovakia and we took advantage of it.

I remember the time at the beginning of the 1990s when I was ambassador of Czechoslovakia to Austria and some Austrian politicians informed me of how the German Bundestag commissioned one of its think tanks, which no longer exists, to conduct a study on the extent to which Slovakia, as well as Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union, were capable of independence. Of course I have never seen such a paper; however, there was quite a serious debate about it in Vienna. According to the analysis, Slovakia had a greater chance to survive the dissolution of Czechoslovakia as long as the Czechs would not take revenge and the Hungarians would not take advantage of a weakened Slovakia. On the other hand, the analysis quickly judged Ukraine as completely incapable of organising a meaningful and functioning state.

We must admit that Central Europe has already forgotten all the doubts and obstacles we had to overcome in order to get into NATO and the EU.

When I read a recent letter from German celebrities and politicians with a socialist orientation on how we should share compassion for Russia without mentioning a word about Ukraine, I wonder whether some of the current politicians and experts do not refer back to this analysis of that past situation, diligently trying to keep the window to Europe closed from the outside. Yet, we have to stay mindful of our recent history and use Central Europe as an example of the results that can be achieved. Central Europe succeeded in escaping the prison of its post-communist legacy. Let us not close the window to the Ukrainians, who now have the same aspirations as we did in the early 1990s.

Translated by Martina Cebecauerová

Magdaléna Vášáryová is a Slovak actress, diplomat and politician. She was ambassador of Czechoslovakia to Austria (1990–1993) and ambassador of Slovakia to Poland (2000–2005). Since 2006 she has been a member of Slovak's parliament and the national council.

Greetings from Novorossiya

PAWEŁ PIENIĄŻEK

I never thought I would find myself in a war; especially a war in Ukraine. But the war is here and it is raging. I am fully aware that it is risky to report from a war zone, especially as I was writing quickly when events are so unpredictable. This book attempts to describe the events as I witness them and describe my impressions and the impressions of people on both sides of the conflict.

The article is an excerpt from the book titled Pozdrowienia z Noworosji (Greetings from Novorossiya). It was written by a Polish journalist and frequent contributor to New Eastern Europe – Paweł Pieniążek.

It is October 2014 and we are near Donetsk airport. Artem lives no more than a kilometre from here. The village is totally in ruin. It is possible to find maybe only a few houses that do not have any damage from bullets or shrapnel. Undetonated missiles scatter the ground and the asphalt is rutted by explosions. There are no people around; the only sign of life are the many dogs which have become stray overnight. It is quite ironic that the village's name is *Vesele*, which means "happiness".

It is possible to find maybe only a couple of houses without traces of bullets or shrapnel.

The damage is a result of the months-long fighting between the Ukrainian army and pro-Russian separatists for control of the Donetsk airport. The separatists have been aiming to take control of the airport away from the Ukrainians. The sound of explosions is sometimes interrupted by machine guns. Those among the locals who decided to stay do not even react to the sounds anymore.

Villages in the conflict zone are totally in ruin. It is possible to find maybe only a few houses that do not have any damage from bullets or shrapnel. There are no people around; the only sign of life are the many dogs which have become stray overnight.

"It is a machine gun," says Artem calmly. He does not raise his bent neck even for a moment. He moves further to show us an "interesting hole" made by one of the missiles. It looks just like any other hole I have seen in Donbas so far.

"Take a deep look inside," Artem suggests. It is narrow but at least one metre deep. The explosion was very loud and it affected several surrounding buildings. While talking, we hear other explosions which are closer or further from us. Then, we hear a whistle.

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Artem tells us to look in the direction from which the sound of the whistle is coming. After a second, we hear a deafening explosion. Artem does not even move a muscle. A photographer standing with us flinches.

"Do not be afraid, it is far away," Artem laughs. He already knows which whistles he should be afraid of. This one seemed harmless to him. However, even when you hear a whistle which seems too close, there is nothing you can really do about it.

A few hundred metres away, a girl who was returning home did not have as much luck as we did. She died immediately, killed by shrapnel from the explosion.

Her body lies under a bed sheet on the pavement. An elderly woman comes to her and peeks underneath the bed sheet. "Oh dear Lord! Nastia!" The lady bursts into tears upon recognising her daughter.

Two metres away on the pavement, we see a large blood stain, broken eggs and a cap. Shrapnel punctured a man's lungs. His relatives hid him in a shelter. He is breathing, but losing a lot of blood. It is uncertain whether an ambulance will come as the paramedics are afraid to travel to the areas which are being shelled. Finally, two private cars arrive and relatives of the injured man get him into one of them. It is the only way to transport him to the hospital on time.

I never thought I would find myself in a war; especially a war in Ukraine. But the war is here, and it is raging. According to official data from the beginning of October 2014 more than 3,500 people have died in Ukraine. Unofficial statistics are much higher. It all started in March 2014. At the beginning, it seemed that normal processes were taking place in Ukraine, but they became more and more cruel. It took just a month and a half until the separatists got their hands on weapons. Armed forces appeared as well and the first battles took place. In May the fighting started for good.

It was on my fourth trip to Donbas that I discovered that I would like to write something more than just reports for the press.

The first time I went to Donbas was in April 2014, after the conflict had begun. Although I have visited Ukraine many times since 2008, this was actually the first time I went to its eastern parts. I had only known this area from articles, reports and essays. Since then, I have travelled throughout all of Ukraine's eastern regions. (…) I am fully aware that it is risky to report from a war zone. It is also challenging since I aimed to write this book quickly with the events unfolding fast. Its conclusion reflects my forecast of the further developments in eastern Ukraine with the understanding that it could very well be inaccurate. (…)

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"Dear Vladimir Vladimirovich! We are a small, provincial town in the Donetsk Oblast that fascists and imperialists of all nations want to conquer. They kill our brothers and harm our citizens. They conduct military actions against our people. This is why I call on you, Vladimir Vladimirovich, to please consider sending a military contingent to the oblasts of Donetsk, Kharkiv and Luhansk to save the peaceful people from the aggression of Pravvy Sektor and the National Guard of Ukraine which will bring us nothing but death. They want to turn us into slaves,

they do not talk with us, they simply kill us," said Vyacheslav Ponomarev, the self-proclaimed mayor of Sloviansk on April 20th 2014. He gave a speech during a press conference after a shooting took place at one of the separatists' posts.

I arrive in Donetsk in mid-April of 2014. My aim is to reach Sloviansk. I purchase tickets without any problems. The train is nearly empty, with maybe just a few people in the whole car: a married couple heading to Dnipropetrovsk, three other journalists from Belarus and Poland and a middle-aged woman, Maya, who is a supporter of the Donetsk People's Republic. But our train does not stop in Sloviansk. The station has been closed. The next station is Krasnyi Liman, the conductor explains to us. He asks if we want to go there. What choice do we have? From time to time, Maya joins our conversation to tell us about the successes of the "volunteers" whom she supports.

"They have joined the side of the nation," she says, commenting on the information that some Ukrainian soldiers joined the separatists. Maya has no doubt that Donbas should become a part of Russia. "It is our future," she claims.

After three hours, we arrive in Krasnyi Liman. We walk a bit until we hear the conductor's voice calling us back: "Wait! We will actually go to Sloviansk! Come back!"

We return to the train sit on the same seats for another hour. The trip from Donetsk to Sloviansk took us four hours. Before the war the express train would have made the journey within an hour.

Sloviansk is a city inhabited by slightly more than 100,000 people. It is a stereotypical, post-Soviet city: gloomy, ugly and completely uninteresting. There are only two things that may make it somewhat attractive: the salt lakes that can be found in its vicinity and are visited by tourists, and the city of Sviatohirsk, with its Orthodox Monastery where the former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych used to go to pray.

"You should visit these places when things calm down. You show only what is ugly and evil, but there things are beautiful," one of residents tells our group of journalists.

"We will definitely go," we assure her, even though it is most unlikely that after what we experience here we will be coming to Sloviansk any time soon.

The city's main square, Revolution Square, consists of all the typical elements of a post-Soviet ideological jumble. What catches our attention first is the Lenin statue. It is not as splendid as in other, bigger cities. Lenin in Kharkiv, for example, is placed on a tall pedestal, proud with a hand reaching out to the front. He convinces the observer that such a leader could lead people everywhere. The Lenin in Sloviansk, however, seems less certain. He does not look like an intellectual or a revolutionary. He stands, wearing a cap and a buttoned-up jacket. In one hand, he holds a

paper while his second hand is simply hidden in his pocket. In fact, he looks very dull. On his right, there is an Orthodox church with its shiny domes. It looks like the newest building on this square. Behind Lenin is the city council, housed in an enormous modernist block like thousands of similar ones of the post-Soviet area.

The square is surrounded by bars, shops and banks. The concrete space is slightly brightened by a few trees and benches. On all of the benches there is a small plate informing that it was funded by the deputy Oleksiy Azarov, son of Mykola Azarov, Ukraine's former prime minister. Thanks to Oleksiy the residents of Sloviansk also have access to wireless internet on the square. Not surprisingly, before we connect to the network, we need to read a special pop up window that tells us who provided this technological marvel to the city. There is also one more thing that cannot be missed while speaking about Revolution Square in Sloviansk, which is truly the icing on the cake – a painted rooster situated in a special, glass lodge. It represented the city in 2013 in Kyiv, during the rooster parade organised on Ukraine's Independence Day. Apparently, the city's officials liked the rooster so much that they decided to proudly display it on Sloviansk's main square.

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When I come back to Sloviansk I see a small change in this boring, unattractive city. In front of the city council there are barricades made with sandbags. There are a few "little green men" wandering around. There is also a banner hanging which informs us that this city is now under the control of "The Donbas People's Militia". There are no longer Ukrainian flags waving and most have been replaced with Russian flags. Only the flag of the Donetsk oblast remains in its place – a rising yellow sun which symbolises eastern Ukraine and black water which resembles coal and the Sea of Azov with the reflection of the sun on its surface.

On other streets we see barricades made of sand, tyres or wood. Numerous banners seem to scream out slogans like "Junta, go home!", "Power to the people!" or "We are against the fascist occupation of Donbas!" Barricades appear next to the police station and the building of the Security Service of Ukraine on Karl Marx Street where the "little green men" are also stationed. Each barricade is a checkpoint where the separatists check documents and search cars.

"Hey, 'Chechen' (a nickname for one of the rebels), journalists have arrived," a masked man shouts to his colleague. "Chechen" approaches our car where there are three journalists, including me. "Poland? You are our enemies!" he says and straightens the rifle on his arm. However, after this unpleasant introduction he finally lets us free.

On the nearby playground, next to the city council, a group of people gather. They listen to the conversation between journalists and the "volunteers" and try to understand what is going on. Armoured carriers with Russian flags make them proud and confident.

"Could you please lift my child? We want to take a picture," a mother requests a man sitting on one of the armoured vehicles. He is wearing a balaclava with a grenade launcher in his hand. He lifts the child and they pose for a picture. A few metres away, another "green man" hands his machine gun over to a child and they pose for photos together, with big smiles on their faces.

We have the impression that to the locals, the separatists are like a travelling circus that has stopped at their town for some time.

We have the impression that the separatists are being treated a bit like a travelling circus that has stopped in the town for some time. The separatists themselves contribute to this image as they organise armoured vehicle races on the parking lot behind the city council. Eventually, one of the cars breaks down and the people leave.

"Thank you, boys," an older woman says upon seeing the Russian flags. She is almost in tears. After posing for photos and an exchange of chit-chat, everyone goes back to their daily activities. Although most of the people return home, life on Revolution Square goes on. Many drink beer from big plastic bottles while children play around. People talk just as they used to, except now the theme of these conversations is different. Everybody is talking about the war. It is just not certain who is fighting against whom. As time goes on – and thanks to the Russian media – the dominant narrative has become that it is a civil war. And that Donbas is fighting with the rest of Ukraine.

Editor's note: Since this report on Sloviansk for this book, the separatist stronghold has returned to the control of the Ukrainian forces starting in July 2014.

Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski

Paweł Pieniążek is a Polish journalist specialising in Eastern Europe. He regularly contributes to the Polish daily *Dziennik Opinii* and *New Eastern Europe* as well as freelances for Polish Radio. His book, *Pozdrowienia z Noworosji* (*Greetings from Novorossiya*) was recently published by Krytyka Polityczna in Poland.

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What Does Aliyev Fear?

DOMINIKA BYCHAWSKA-SINIARSKA

While the world's eyes are turned towards Ukraine, Azerbaijan's civil society has been progressively dismantled. Leading human rights defenders have been jailed, funds of independent non-governmental organisations have been frozen and most civil society activists have been forced to shut down or go underground.

The Government of Azerbaijan has a long and well-documented history of restricting fundamental human rights through arbitrary arrest and detention. The issue of wrongful imprisonment has long been a serious concern of the Council of Europe institutions including the Court, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Ministers. Despite this attention, however, the human rights situation has steadily declined and is now reaching a crisis point – with independent civil society being systematically repressed. While the targeting of activists in Azerbaijan is nothing new, the nearly complete elimination of independent human rights activism, coupled with a significant expansion of criminal charges, both in scope and severity, used against civil society leaders, is the result of continuous crackdowns in recent years.

The downward spiral began around the time of the Arab Spring in 2011 and continued through Baku's hosting of the 2012 Eurovision contest, the presidential elections of 2013 and Azerbaijan's leadership of the Council of Ministers in 2014.

Over time, the government adopted increasingly restrictive laws on civil society; forced international and local human rights organisations to cease operations; and arrested activists, opposition leaders and journalists who were critical of government policies.

Hostile environment

In the space of just a few months, civil society in Azerbaijan has been forced to cease official activity and move underground. Profound repercussions have been possible due to the hostile legal environment in which NGOs have been forced to operate for many years in Azerbaijan. Moreover, the government's fear of civil society interference in high profile events may have influenced the most recent crackdown on activists. In 2015, Baku will host its first European Games. Learning from previous events, which were partially interrupted by activists, Azerbaijani authorities cannot afford to allow the regime's positive image to be damaged by interventions. In 2012, for example, the Eurovision song contest was successfully impeded by the "Sing for Democracy" campaign led by the Human Rights Club, a local civil society organisation. Furthermore, Azerbaijan's parliamentary elections are due to take place this fall. The government does not want them to be hindered by independent candidates and observers. The timing of international events regularly provides opportunities for Azerbaijan to further repress its civil society. The most recent wave of repressions took place while the world's eyes were turned towards Ukraine. It was also during this time that Azerbaijan was chairing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Needless to say, the repression attracted little attention.

Independent NGOs in Azerbaijan are regularly denied registration, forcing human rights defenders to finance activities from accounts opened under their personal names.

Since 2009, NGOs in Azerbaijan have had to obtain an official registration from the authorities in order to operate. Independent NGOs are regularly denied such registration. This affects their ability to receive funding, forcing many human rights defenders to finance activities from accounts opened under their personal names. On February 3rd 2014 new amendments placing additional restrictions on independent NGOs were signed into law. The amendments introduced a number of new obligations for Azerbaijani and foreign organisations, including a requirement for individual recipients of grants to register with the Ministry of Justice in

the same way as organisations. NGOs are also required to register funding sources and agreements between themselves and foreign NGOs, and the Ministry of Justice must include an expiry date. Significantly, the provisions of the NGO law also apply to branches and representations of foreign NGOs.

The February 2014 amendments lay out the following additional grounds for suspension of an NGO's activities: when the NGO's activities impede measures to resolve emergency situations; when the NGO has been penalised for failure to rectify deficiencies identified by the Ministry of Justice and has not done so; and when the NGO breaches the rights of its members.

The amendments introduce a number of new sanctions as well. An NGO can be severely penalised for: failing to submit the necessary information for registration; signing contracts based on non-registered grant agreements; or failing to maintain a registry of its members. Further, the amendments establish penalties for new and existing obligations. For example, new administrative offences became punishable by fines, which have increased to 2500–3000 Azerbaijani manats (approximately 2600–3100 euros) for NGOs and 1000–2000 manats (approximately 1000–2100 euros) for the directors of national and foreign NGOs.

Activists under arrest

The current law on the registration and operation of NGOs in Azerbaijan continues the trend of undermining respect for the right to freedom of association and civil society in the country. The Venice Commission (a body of the Council of Europe assessing member states' regulations) criticised the legal environment governing associations in Azerbaijan in two distinct opinions. The regulations concerning the requirement of registration of foreign NGOs were compared to similar laws imposed in the Russian Federation in the mid-2000s, which were strongly criticised by foreign states, assessed as incompatible with European legal standards, and finally dropped. Further, the Venice Commission expressed serious doubts whether the requirement of signing an agreement with the Ministry of Justice to register a foreign NGO would be legitimate under the European Convention of Human Rights. The Commission also criticised the vague formulation of some articles, which enables the authorities to dissolve and/or temporarily suspend an organisation.

The harsh legal environment constituted a perfect background for the authorities to eliminate leaders of the most successful NGOs. The arrests and trials of activists started in late 2013, after the presidential election, held in October of that year. The first activist to be sentenced for tax evasion, illegal business ac-

tivities and abusing his office was Anar Mammadli, the chairman of Azerbaijan's Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre. On May 30th 2014 Mammadli was sentenced to over five years in prison. The centre's executive director, Basir Suleymanli was also arrested after the presidential election in 2013 and sentenced to three and a half years. The Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre had published a report on the rigging of elections in Azerbaijan. The report was largely cited by international organisations. In September 2014, while in prison, Mammadli was awarded the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Vaclav Havel prize.

The arrest and sentencing of Mammadli and Suleymani should be regarded as an "experiment" which has been later replicated with activists and journalists. Over the course of 2014, the Azerbaijani authorities have convicted or imprisoned at least 34 journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders and civil society activists, including prominent investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova, human rights activist Leyla Yunus, civil rights lawyer Intigam Aliyev and Rasul Jafarov, coordinator of the "Sing for Democracy" (2012) and "Art for Democracy" (2013) campaigns. All of them face long-term prison sentences under sham charges such as "tax evasion", "high treason", "illegal entrepreneurship" and "abuse of power".

Dozens of activists have either fled the country or gone into hiding. Emin Huseynov, a prominent human rights defender and the Director of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS), was forced into hiding in August 2014, facing imminent arrest on false charges. He was prevented from flying to Turkey for urgent medical treatment on August 5th 2014. IRFS, a registered NGO, has been wrongfully accused of tax evasion; the charges pertain to income tax, VAT and profit tax, none of which apply to non-profit NGOs under Azerbaijan's national law. Following the charges, IRFS has been shut down since early August 2014, while Huesynov, who has a registered disability, remains in hiding without access to necessary medical care.

As a result of the massive crackdown on civil society, there are no more human rights groups operating in Azerbaijan.

Radio Azadliq, the Azerbaijani service of US-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, became the latest victim of the government crackdown when inspectors raided its Baku bureau to shut it down in December 2014. Thus, one of the last bastions of free expression in the country has been effectively suppressed. As a result of such a massive attack on civil society, there are no more human rights groups operating in Azerbaijan. Those who wish to continue their work are forced to operate underground.

Smile, spend big and supress dissidents

The arrests demonstrate the negligence of the government towards its international obligations. The harshest repression, including the arrests, took place after the European Court of Human Rights warned Azerbaijan about arbitrary detention in the judgment of Ilgar Mammadov. In May 2014 the Court considered that Mammadov, who had a history of criticising the government, had been arrested and detained without any evidence to reasonably suspect him of having committed the offence with which he was being charged: organising actions leading to public disorder. The motives of his detention were purely political and served the purpose of silencing or punishing Mammadov for criticising the government and publishing information it was trying to hide. Azerbaijan, being party to the European Convention of Human Rights, should undertake all necessary steps in order to properly implement the Court's judgments and to avoid similar violations in the future. The Azerbaijani authorities have gone in the opposite direction, however, ignoring their international obligations.

The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, also reacted to Azerbaijan's civil society crackdown. In his recent intervention before the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the Hilall Mammadov case, Muižnieks stated that "there is a clear pattern of repression in Azerbaijan against those expressing dissent or criticism of the authorities. This concerns particularly human rights defenders, but also journalists, bloggers and other activists, who may face a variety of criminal charges which defy credibility. Such charges are largely seen as an attempt to silence the persons concerned and are closely linked to the legitimate exercise by them of their right to freedom of expression. Moreover, these criminal prosecutions often constitute reprisals against those who cooperate with international institutions, including the Council of Europe."

In June 2015, Baku will host its first European Games. This would be an occasion to show to the European audience a glamourous Baku and the Olympic facilities built on expropriated land. The regime dispenses of almost unlimited funds for the promotion of the country. The modernisation of Baku and the new construction projects have become an element of the new Azerbaijani image, advertised at most European airports and in major international media. The investments in Azerbaijan's international image are reflected on Atletico Madrid's football shirts, emblazoned with the logo "Azerbaijan Land of Fire." Similar to previous major events, such as the Eurovision Song Contest held in Baku in 2012, the government decided to adopt the policy of "smile, spend big and supress dissidents". The sporting event could not be disturbed by the critical voices of civil society organisations or the media revealing corruption linked to the preparations of the European Games. In order

to assure the smoothest of celebrations, all NGO leaders who had attempted to interrupt major promotional events in the past were detained.

Caviar diplomacy

The geopolitical situation of Azerbaijan and its plentiful energy resources substantially weaken the reaction of the West towards the crackdown on civil society. Many European countries are aware of the situation but prefer to remain silent even when repressions escalate. Politicians prefer to wait for international organisations to act, despite knowing that they are ineffective on their own. Such an approach, although inexcusable, can be explained by a number of factors.

First of all, Azerbaijan, unlike other countries of the South Caucasus, is rich in oil and gas. For some European countries, Azerbaijan's resources are an attractive alternative to supplies from Russia. Pipelines from Azerbaijan supply Georgia and Turkey and currently a trans-Adriatic pipeline is being built to deliver natural gas to Greece and Italy. The wealth of Azerbaijan gives it independence from Russia and other European partners. Flush with money, Azerbaijan prefers "caviar diplomacy" and is using all the means at its disposal to win over western supporters.

For many European countries, Azerbaijan's resources are an attractive alternative to supplies from Russia.

Moreover, Azerbaijan benefits from a special geopolitical position as a bridge between Russia and Iran. Azerbaijan's conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh has been frozen for several years, detracting international attention from it. Although inhabited mostly by Muslims, it is a secular country and is a traditional ally of its bigger brother – Turkey. Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev, plays on these considerations, acting as the guarantor of peace and security of the entire region, including protection against Iranian fundamentalists.

The question that arises, hence, is what does Aliyev fear? How dangerous are the few civil society leaders? The repressions show how efficient these groups were in monitoring human rights violations and the president's abuses of power. By keeping them in detention Aliyev has bought himself a quiet Baku for the 2015 European Games and parliamentary elections without scrupulous monitoring. He can ensure silence during international events (such as the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly meetings) with no human rights activists from the country able to attend. And the gap that is left by these detentions is being filled by NGOs loyal to the government.

With his latest repressions, Aliyev has also taken advantage of the fact that the world's eyes are turned upon Ukraine, Russia and Vladimir Putin, the Israeli conflict in Gaza and the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS). Arresting activists and forbidding them to leave the country is an attempt to silence those who want to inform the European public about political prisoners, human rights violations and the corruption taking place in the country. Meanwhile the rest of the world, busy with other conflicts, pays little attention to those who are paying a high price to defend European values and promoting them in Azerbaijan.

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Who is Aligning with Who?

DAVID ERKOMAISHVILI

Despite the demise of the Soviet Union, the pattern of strategic partnerships and alignments among post-Soviet states has not changed significantly. Most states still find themselves aligning with Moscow through multilateral frameworks or bilateral agreements. Any significant change will only be accompanied by the abandonment of zero-sum logic and the dispersion of economic and political ties in multiple directions.

At times there is a feeling that the established laws of politics do not necessarily apply in the post-Soviet space. This can be seen on many occasions: the way that the Soviet Union collapsed; the manner in which conflicts are fought; the power of blackmail as a political tool; or the fact that democratisation – which includes free and fair elections, a major element of traditional democracies – ends up elevating a new autocrat to power. This logic can be extended to the analysis of post-Soviet foreign policy and alignments, or strategic partnerships, with other states. One of the typical political attributes of post-Soviet politics has been the constant evolution of multiple integrative frameworks. To be sure, bilateral contacts remain a preferred mechanism of co-operation; however, multilateralism has never been abandoned.

In fact, analysing Ukraine's plunge into a protracted and violent conflict it is difficult to resist the temptation to conclude that, despite the multilayered fac-

tors responsible for the current crisis, the immediate trigger was the conditional foreign policy choice presented to Kyiv. The European Union's Eastern Partnership framework has been the EU's central multilateral platform for reaching out to selected post-Soviet nations. Russia's Eurasian Economic Union, on the other hand, has positioned itself as a competing framework. And Ukraine was offered a no-compromise choice.

In designing their comprehensive multilateral strategies for the post-Soviet space both Moscow and Brussels made a bet on economic integration as the means towards their political ends. The logic is simple: economic ties create stronger and more enduring alignments, as compared to those entirely built on political grounds, and stand in firm contrast to traditionalist, security-oriented co-operation. Nevertheless, architects in both Moscow and Brussels seem to have passed over the essence of regional alignments.

Both Moscow and Brussels bet on economic integration as a means towards their political ends.

The role of trade

The strongest and most enduring political alignments are those that double as top trade relations. Trade partnerships both reflect and confirm the strength of an alignment, as it becomes costly to reverse direction once trade is involved. States align to other states, not to abstract institutions. In other words, a state does not align to NATO as an institution, but it aligns itself to other members of the bloc. If it aligns itself to those states in a way that reflects their trade and migration patterns, those become even stronger commitments.

In most cases, there is a positive correlation between trading patterns and alignments. In cases where there is little or no correlation, such as the Kazakh-Russian alignment, this may indicate that relations are strategic, but not supported by trade patterns and dependent on specific governments, and are subject to change in the case of a change in power. In other cases, such as Georgian-Azerbaijani relations, diverging patterns may indicate the direction of alignment. In the Georgian case, there is a strong correlation between trade and its alignment with Azerbaijan. In the Azerbaijani case, however, there appears to be little such correlation as Georgia is absent from the list of Azerbaijan's top trading partners. This may suggest that Georgia might be more interested in its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan than the other way around.

What is more, since the departure of Mikheil Saakashvili's government, Georgia has been exhibiting a tendency to realign with Russia. That may not be entirely

visible on the political level since much of the rhetoric remains supportive of the country's western aspirations. Nevertheless, the share of Russia in Georgia's strategic trading partnerships has been steadily increasing, from 6 per cent in 2013 to 13 per cent in 2014, as has Tbilisi's economic dependency. Coupled with a sharp decline, from 24 per cent in 2013 to just 10 per cent in 2014, in the share of Azerbaijan on the same list, it may indicate a realignment pattern for Georgia. By itself the trade data does not explain anything. However, positioned in the regional context, it does reflect a dynamic worth keeping an eye on.

Contrary to the rhetoric, data indicate that Ukraine is also not in any serious stage of realignment to the West. While both import and export from and to Russia have been in decline since 2011, from 35 per cent to 23 per cent in 2014, Moscow still tops Ukraine's strategic trade partners list. Though Poland, and generally the EU (Poland and Germany represent this for Ukraine), is in the top five on the list, its share has been steady and does not exhibit any significant growth pattern. Hence, any feasible solution to the crisis in Ukraine will have to inevitably include and preserve Ukraine's alignment to both EU and Russia.

The economic dimensions of post-Soviet alignment do have a historical, regional and cultural character. Trade partnerships lead to bonds that are difficult to disrupt. And when there is disruption, the costs are high, as seen in Ukraine. Over history, alignments have always been reflected in trade and accompanied trade routes, with the Silk Road a good example here. In yet another example, the borders of the EU are almost identical with those of NATO, as economic links require protection.

Such a framework of how states align allows us to create a different understanding of formal statements of neutrality. A state can declare itself to be neutral and be recognised as such. However, analysing its trading patterns explains where its potential allies lie, should circumstances change. Uzbekistan, for example, having adopted neutrality in 2012, participates in the China-led Shanghai Co-operation Organisation and is trading with the states of the region.

But the most important advantage of using such a framework for the post-Soviet space is that by looking at these indicators, one can identify foreign policy shifts and changes before they take place and adjust a strategy accordingly. The indicators can help predict mid- and long-term tendencies in alignments and understand them beyond the level of current governments. Despite a change of government specific factors will not allow a succeeding party to easily create a new alignment or realign a state immediately. With the exception of conflict-related or forced choices, how a country is aligned is always a long-term process. In fact, artificial or benefit-based alignments are characterised by instability and are prone to realignments.

Zero-sum games

Several important lessons should be taken from the uninterrupted hurdles associated with multilateralism in the post-Soviet area. First, declarative foreign policy goals that tend to neglect real alignments lead to political crises which have the potential of spiralling out of control. Second, the mismanagement of factors and situations that directly entail alignments can lead to unintended consequences. Third, there is an observable element of irresponsibility which is associated with multilateral efforts in the post-Soviet space. It has surfaced in Russia's management of the Eurasian Economic Union framework and to no less a degree in the EU's negotiations with Ukraine. Zero-sum logic has been discernible in both cases. Surprisingly, this exact element of irresponsibility comes from the two major international actors, the EU and Russia, which have tried to advance their own multilateral efforts at the expense of that of their competitors.

The main foreign policy aims of post-Soviet states have been to delicately balance economic and political ties with Brussels and Moscow.

Ukraine, like other post-Soviet states which have a desire to participate in such projects, was given incentives and pressured to choose a side. Hence, it should not be surprising that the main foreign policy aims of these states have been to delicately balance their economic and political ties with Brussels or Moscow in a way that would not alienate either. In fact, this provides us with an explanation as to why authoritarianism has been flourishing in the region. One of the reasons is, simply, that choosing sides under constantly changing circumstances requires a firm hold on power. In such a situation, a normative approach to democratisation is not a likely solution.

There is a strong tendency to shift focus towards economic determinants of alignment that are inextricably linked to the market, migration and commerce. In fact, the EU's Eastern Partnership is driven by market-oriented measures (i.e. the creation of a deep and comprehensive free trade area) which are designed to serve as economic means to political ends. The Russian counterpart, the Eurasian Union, prioritises barrier-free trade as its main incentive. Both frameworks' main function is related to granting access to vast markets, though with costs attached to such access. The problem is that in advancing the logic of commercially-driven political alignment, they are not abandoning traditional zero-sum rationale associated with alignments. Zero-sum logic in alignments is a remnant of the Cold War, where no trade-offs were attainable due to systemic constraints. The whole concept of competition based on multilateralism has lost its credibility and should

be phased out due to the fact that it creates more complications and fault-lines than are helpful for the stability of the post-Soviet space. In many cases, traditionally landlocked states of the post-Soviet area need to strengthen their sovereignty via positive-sum co-operation.

The only solution to the political deadlock in terms of alignment is encouraging post-Soviet states to develop their economic and political ties in multiple directions. Uzbekistan is a good example of how a constrained choice of allies allowed it to benefit through reaching out to a number of less traditional partners by assembling allied relations with South Korea as well as extending more traditional links to the United States, Russia and China, not to mention the EU. The essence of this alignment policy is to ultimately strengthen sovereignty instead of falling into a dependency relationship.

Dominating patterns

Despite the demise of the Soviet Union, the pattern of strategic partnerships and alignments has not changed significantly, with post-Soviet states aligning with Moscow through multilateral frameworks. Institutionalised co-operation such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and other military and security alignments, such as that between Belarus and Tajikistan, all occur via Moscow. This pattern continues to dominate in the post-Soviet space and is reflected in the low intra-regional co-operation and the high bilateral relations of individual states with Russia. A good example here is the Ukrainian-Georgian alignment, both on a bilateral level and a multilateral level via GUAM (a joint effort by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova). The low level of engagement does not allow for these two states to build a stable and lasting relationship, but only one that is limited in time and objective. A similar situation is observable in the absence of an alignment between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, though there are factors which are considered most important in alignment: the presence of a common threat, common interests and powerful states available as partners. However, for more than two decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union, these two states have consistently failed to set up a viable partnership.

The inability to create a community with common goals is one of the reasons why multilateral alignments are consistently failing in the post-Soviet space.

The inability to create a community with common goals is one of the reasons why multilateral alignments are consistently failing in the post-Soviet space, con-

tributing to the development of purely bilateral relations. The most important conclusion, though, is that the absence of strong factors contributing to alignments is almost a guarantee that any serious multilateral alignments will be unsustainable in the long run. On the other hand, the greatest amount of work that needs to be done to trigger a realignment in the post-Soviet space would have to focus on trade and migratory links. However, zero-sum logic, which thus far has dominated, would have to be abandoned in order for any new alignments to seriously become a reality.

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A Weak Response Produces Bigger Risks

Interview with Leszek Balcerowicz, Polish economist and architect of Poland's economic reforms in the 1990s. Interviewer: Igor Lyubashenko

IGOR LYUBASHENKO: After the 2014 EuroMaidan Revolution references to Poland's economic transformation in the 1990s have once again become very popular among Ukrainian intellectuals. These comparisons, however, are often quite simplistic. What are, in your opinion, the fundamental differences between today's Ukraine and Poland a quarter of a century ago?

LESZEK BALCEROWICZ: Poland symbolises a certain type of transition, which is sometimes referred to as "shock therapy". However, I try to avoid using this emotionally-loaded term and prefer to speak of a radical approach. In Poland, it meant the rapid introduction of a front-loaded comprehensive programme with the objective of both stabilisation and transformation. The implementation of this programme was consistent during the first two years of the systemic change and it was then largely maintained. Poland was not the only country to introduce such a programme. It was also introduced in the Baltic states.

On the other hand, there were several different examples of non-radical approaches. One of them can be found in Ukraine. For various, also political, reasons changes were delayed for several years (especially stabilisation). As a result, the overall situation of the country got worse, not better. At the same time, the institutional and structural reforms were half-hearted. Here I especially refer to de-monopolisation and the extension of economic freedom to everybody. As a result, a mixed system emerged, one which allowed a select few to get rich thanks to personal and political connections rather than competitive qualities. Such a system was entrenched. It was the opposite to what was done in Poland where competition had increased even before the privatisation of the state economy. The latter was a more long-lasting process. The Polish economy was

also de-monopolised. As a result, even state-owned enterprises had to improve their performance or disappear.

The effectiveness of the radical approach has been confirmed by a number of studies. In particular, they prove that, if sustained, the radical approach brings better results in terms of economic growth than the non-radical one. Having said that, I do not want to imply that if a country, for some reason, has missed the first period of transformation, nothing can be done. Of course, there is always a possibility of catching up as long as there is a proper team and a proper political basis. A good example is Slovakia. During Vladimir Meciar's rule in Slovakia, the country's economy was booming, but this was mainly due to fiscal stimulation. However, in the long run, this policy proved irresponsible and short-sighted with radical reforms being delayed for several years. In my opinion, the Slovak case is more interesting for Ukraine than the Polish one. I really appreciate the efforts of the Slovak reformers, such as Mikuláš Dzurinda and Ivan Mikloš and I am really happy that they are among the experts who are now trying to provide advice to Ukrainian authorities.

Regarding the question itself, of course, there are huge differences between Poland and Ukraine. At the start of the transformation, both countries suffered from hyperinflation. This problem is like a fire in your house that you have to deal with immediately. Fighting hyperinflation in Ukraine was postponed, whereas in Poland it was done much faster. Today Ukraine has different challenges, namely high inflation caused by the devaluation of the hryvnia. Furthermore, as many institutional changes have taken place we can no longer talk about a typical socialist system in Ukraine. I would say that there is a very imperfect mixed system which requires the introduction of more competition in many sectors of the economy. It also requires the restructuring of the state apparatus as well as changes to regulations hampering the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises. My impression is that some of these changes have already taken place. Other changes are envisioned in the programme of the new governing coalition.

In other words; the main difference between Poland and Ukraine's economy is the fact that the Ukrainian economy has turned into an oligarchic one.

This is what I was referring to, without using the term "oligarchic" itself. This is the outcome of the first changes not having been sufficiently radical including a radical liberalisation of the economy. If there is significant competition, those who get ahead are those who are better and not just those who have good connections. When the economy starts experiencing some oligarchic elements, the first thing to be done, immediately, is to increase competition and restructure the state apparatus.

What you are speaking about actually fits into the popular narrative of "de-oligar-

chisation transformation". Do you think this is a proper concept? Is there a need to create such a new concept of transformation specific for oligarchic economies?

These are rather slogans. Increasing competition is crucial when oligarchic capital emerges. It is essential to expose the "shielded" sectors of economy to the open market. From this point of view, it is important that the association agreement with the EU should finally be implemented and the Ukrainian economy opened to external competition. It is one more task that has been delayed, unlike in Poland if you want to compare. What should be added, though, is that one cannot fight on all fronts simultaneously. Ukraine faces Vladimir Putin's invasion and the Ukrainian authorities have to calculate how to proceed in order to succeed, but also not to make too many enemies.

Indeed, Ukraine is fighting wars on two fronts – the front of political and economic reforms and the military front in Donbas. As an economist, how would you assess which one is of primary importance?

Both problems are of extreme importance. However, what should be stressed here is that in Ukraine's current situation the military threat should not become an excuse for the lack of reforms. The result of such an approach would be a weaker economy and a weaker defence. I do not want to say that the Ukrainian authorities are performing this kind of policy. Nevertheless, I definitely think it is necessary to warn about the dangers of this approach. As a matter of fact, the Russian aggression should be regarded as a stimulus for even faster reforms. A country with a weak economy is weak in general. In the end, you cannot have a strong army without sufficient economic resources. In Ukraine's case, reforms are thus not just a matter of improving living standards, they are also a condition for more effective actions in the military dimension.

In your opinion, what is the most important precondition for a successful transformation – strong political leadership or support from the public?

These factors should be seen together, as a package. It is rare that one factor is enough. In fact, three factors are usually needed to succeed in a difficult economic situation. Firstly, there needs to be a leadership that understands what must be done. After my meetings with President Petro Poroshenko, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Finance Minister Natalia Yaresko and other Ukrainian leaders I have an impression that they do not need to be told what to do. From my point of view, intellectually it is the best team that Ukraine has had since 1991. Secondly, there is the issue of coordination. There needs to be good managerial capacity to stabilise and reform the country. This does not mean that the whole bureaucracy needs to be changed. That would be impossible. What you need is to have 100 to 200 good people who are in the right positions to change the behaviour of the administration.

This task should be done rather quickly. Thirdly, the political basis is crucial. It is difficult for me as an outsider to judge the managerial aspect of the changes in Ukraine. As for the political basis, the current parliament, although not without its own problems, is the most reformist parliament in Ukrainian history.

There are more and more signs that the Ukrainian people are less understanding when it comes to the direction of the reforms. I am afraid that the political basis may not be strong enough in the long term…

I have noticed that it is usually fashionable for intellectuals to be on the pessimistic side. That is why I would rather not base such judgments on individual intuitions, but on surveys. If I refer to the Polish experience, what actually mobilises people is professional and honest communication. By the way, whenever people mention reforms they usually add the word "painful". It is a cliché and insinuates that the opposite (no reforms or delaying reforms) would be painless, which is not true. In fact some changes, like the increase in gas prices, have been already done in Ukraine without mass unrest. Of course, you will never convince everybody, but there is no need to convince all citizens. In my opinion, good communication, if based on a sound programme, is possible and necessary.

On the other hand it is true that if you want to maintain support you need a comprehensive programme, containing both unpleasant measures and measures that, for example, have a positive impact on small- and medium-sized enterprises. It is important to show positive changes as well. This is not a criticism of the Ukrainian authorities; these are just my observations from the transformation experiences of different countries in the world. Undoubtedly, in Ukraine's case the stabilisation of the hryvnia is now very important. Thanks to the agreement with the International Monetary Fund, significant steps have already been taken in this direction. Its effect will also have a political impact. The rest of the fundamental reforms that we have already discussed need more time to be successfully implemented. However, they need to be started quickly.

But the truth is that in this era of new media people tend to expect immediate results.

I would not agree with that statement. I think people in general are smart enough to understand serious reforms need time.

Let us also look at Russia. How do you assess the effectiveness of the West's sanctions against Russia in light of its aggression towards Ukraine?

If you face an aggressor, then whatever you do is risky. In other words, if we take game theory as a basis for analysis, we see that a weak response usually produces bigger risks. Weak sanctions are regarded by the aggressor as proof that aggression pays off. With this in mind, I have always been a supporter of stronger sanctions as a less risky option. I hope

Photo courtesy of Leszek Balcerowicz

Leszek Balcerowicz is best known for implementing the transformation programme of Poland's economy in the 1990s, which became popularly known as "shock therapy" or the "Balcerowicz Plan".

that the West will be able to maintain and strengthen them if necessary.

However, so far Russia has suffered economically not because of the sanctions, but because something that was not foreseen happened, namely there has been a steep decline in the prices of oil and gas. Putin's policies had made Russia structurally weak even before the aggression against Ukraine. As a matter of fact we can say that several factors have weakened Russia's capacity to grow. This includes the growing politicisation of Russia's economy, which can be observed in the growing nationalisation (exemplified by the Yukos case) and in what I call "a temporary private ownership". In Russia even if you are an owner you never know what may happen to you and your property. This, in turn, makes you think about using available non-formal connections with decision-makers and bureaucrats to preserve your own position or destroy your enemies. It also discour-

ages investments and encourages capital flight forcing the Russian economy to borrow money from abroad. In my opinion, this is the area where the western sanctions can be particularly effective. Russia is already heavily dependent on the production and export of raw materials. Add to this the military aggression and its economic consequences and it is almost certain that there will be a recession in Russia. If Russia's economy does not grow and if the sanctions are maintained or strengthened, Putin will face a serious dilemma – how to choose between butter and guns? He will have difficult choices to make.

In your view is "authoritarian modernisation" possible, or is it just a myth?

It depends on what you mean by this term. Think about Peter the Great. He attempted to modernise Russia through what can now be called a "state sector". But the top-down reforms cannot succeed in today's circumstances. The modern economy is simply too complex.

In that case, under which conditions could such development be theoretically possible?

There should be a strong market with a lot of competition and private entrepreneurs who are genuinely independent from the political elite. According to what I spoke of earlier, it is the opposite to what we actually see in Russia. Under Boris Yeltsin Russia was moving towards the western model. Putin reversed this trend after about three years of being in power and increased the politicisation of the economy. Such a model cannot work. Stories about countries such as Brazil, praising it as an example of state-led modernisation, are myths.

And yet when I speak to my Russian colleagues I often hear them mentioning the idea of "authoritarian modernisation". Usually, this narrative goes in pair with the narrative of co-operation with China.

Of course co-operation is possible. There is an obvious possibility to sell more Russian gas to China. But at the same time there are huge infrastructure barriers to doing that. It would take time and billions of dollars to construct the proper connections. Even if this is successful, it would have nothing to do with modernisation. If the system does not change, Russia would simply become China's vassal.

Returning once again to the issue of sanctions, do you think that there is a level of cost for western economies that we should not cross?

When compared to Russia, the western economy is enormous. Hence, it is rather a question of maintaining unity, especially in Western Europe. This is exactly what President Putin is trying to undermine. If the West lifts the sanctions, it de facto recognises Russia's aggression. This would have negative consequences not only for Ukraine, but also for peace in the world. It would simply mean that aggression pays off. What Putin did is a violation of one of the principal rules of

the modern world – respect for territorial integrity.

What should western support for Ukraine look like? What should be its logic? There has been some talk about a "new Marshall Plan"…

The term "Marshall Plan" is usually misused. After the Second World War there was no need for deep reforms. It was easy to restore the market economies which had already existed in some shape and form. Financial support was necessary for the physical reconstruction. In today's Ukraine financial support is important as a supplement for economic reforms. This resembles the situation in Poland after 1989. We focused on reforms and external financial support was needed to maintain people's support for them. Without reforms there would not be any major support. In other words, reforms and financial assistance go hand-in-hand. Countries grow through private business, they do not grow through the state sector. The state sector poisons both the economy and politics. External aid is important if you have an unstable situation, especially in the fiscal area and it should be regarded as a means to support the measures taken by the country itself.

Leszek Balcerowicz is a Polish economist and the former chairman of the National Bank of Poland (2001–2007). He has held other high positions in the Polish government, including the minister of finance and the deputy prime minister (1989–1991 and 1997–2000). Balcerowicz is best known for implementing the transformation programme of Poland's economy in the 1990s, which became popularly known as "shock therapy" or the "Balcerowicz Plan".

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Georgia is not a Eurasian Country

An interview with Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, a Georgian politician and son of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first democratically elected president of post-Soviet Georgia. Interviewer: Bartłomiej Krzysztan

BARTŁOMIEJ KRZYSZTAN: You spent 12 years in exile. What made you decide to come back to Georgia after the 2003 Rose Revolution?

KONSTANTINE GAMSAKHURDIA: After the Rose Revolution I decided to participate in Georgia's parliamentary elections as it was possible for me then to return to Georgia and pursue a political career. I created a party named "Tavisupleba" (Freedom). After the coup d'état in 1992 against my father, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was the first president of Georgia following the fall of the Soviet Union, I was forced to live as a political émigré in Switzerland. My father found asylum in Chechnya but when he came back to Georgia in late 1993, , he was, with a high possibility, assassinated. It was the Rose Revolution that gave me the opportunity to come back to Georgia. Mikheil Saakashvili was the person who made the decision to allow the reburial of my father in the Mtatsminda Pantheon and also about awarding the ex-president with the title of National Hero of Georgia, reviving the positive memories of his presidency.

Nevertheless, you decided to remain a part of the opposition vis-à-vis Saakashvili.

In the beginning Saakashvili proposed reasonable solutions for the democratic development of Georgia. Many positive changes were made and necessary reforms were introduced. Unfortunately, he quickly began to fall under the strong influence of a political circle which was trying to consolidate power in their own hands, especially with regard to law enforcement and the prison system. Even though the pro-European and democratic direction was certainly positive, Saakashvili's internal policies could be considered authoritarian. That was the reason why my party decided to join the

opposition. We noticed several examples of human rights violations, including assassinations and later attempts to cover them up. Similar to Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Saakashvili found himself surrounded by people who should not have been close to the president, such as the Minister of the Interior, Vano Merabishvili, orthe Minister of Justice and Prosecutor General, Zurab Adeishvili. In my opinion these two figures brought misfortune and later criticism to Saakashvili and his open-minded, pro-reform government.

How do you interpret the death of Zurab Zhvania, the prime minister who died in office in 2005?

I find the circumstances surrounding Zhvania's death very suspicious. After Zhvania died, there was not one person who was able to explain what had really happened. The investigation that was held cannot be called objective and impartial. The day after the body was found, Merabishvili declared the cause of death to be carbon monoxide poisoning. The cause of death was given even before forensic specialists had finalised their conclusions. In my opinion there has not been a fair investigation into Zhvania's death yet.

After the change of power in Georgia in 2012 you are still in the opposition. Is this because of the alleged pro-Russian policy of the new government?

As a matter of fact, Georgian Dream is composed of two factions: pro-Russian and pro-western. It is not a homogeneous party but rather a bloc which was created in opposition to the policies of Saakashvili. Interestingly, the founder of the party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, financed almost every initiative of Saakashvili until 2011, when they broke off relations as a result of a personal conflict. Obviously, their dispute was about money.

You mentioned your father, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was assassinated. However, there are many other opinions regarding the cause of this death…

As a matter of fact, there are only two opinions – suicide or assassination. I am sure that he was assassinated. He was followed by special forces sent by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Security. The problem is that it is difficult to say at what point the Georgian special forces became active. They were virtually indistinguishable from the Soviet KGB and his death took place at a very uncertain time. We already know that the orders were given, by General Gia Gulua, who was also assassinated in early 1994, and Shota Kviraia. The responsibility for president's death lies also with Igor Giorgadze, the previous Minister of the Interior currently living in Russia and being pursued by Interpol.

Which elements of the legacy of your family, both your father Zviad and grandfather Konstantine, who was a well-known Georgian writer from the 20th century, are still alive in today's Georgia?

Both did a lot to develop the values which are now considered to be the core


Photo courtesy of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia

Konstantine Gamsakhurdia is the son of Georgia's first president after the fall of the Soviet Union, Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

elements of Georgian identity, culture and politics. Their mission was to build a free, independent and western-oriented society. This work began with the novels that were written by my grandfather and it was later continued by my father. When talking about Zviad let me make it clear that he was never a nationalist in the pejorative meaning of the word. He had close relations with Russian, Ukrainian and Czechoslovakian dissidents, especially with Václav Havel. The situation in Georgia in the 1980s was actually very similar to the situations in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Being aware of this similarity my father would often stress that Georgia is not a Eurasian, but an Eastern European country.

If we look closer at the legacy of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, we realise that freedom is a crucial and inalienable value. When you read his novels, you can see that all of their plots are inevitably laced with the ideal of freedom. My grandfather described the symbols and embodiments of freedom and unity of Georgia, like the Svetitskoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta. For him Georgia seemed to be on the eastern border of Christian Europe. And indeed, throughout its whole history our country has had strong relations with Central Europe. When I was living in Vienna I had the impression

that Tbilisi could have been a similar city had Constantinople survived the siege of 1453. The Austrian poet Hugo Huppert, the translator of Shota Rustaveli's "Knight in the Panther Skin", wrote that the fortress of Tbilisi survived countless attacks by eastern tribes through the centuries defending the Christian kingdom. Had Tbilisi fallen back then, today there would be a mosque instead of a church in the main square of Vienna.

Characteristically, in the western regions of Georgia your father is considered a great hero while in Tbilisi and eastern Georgia his legacy is that of an authoritarian and weak leader. Why is there such a difference?

Western Georgia, especially the Samegrelo and Adjara regions, were always more pro-European and pro-western than Kakheti and eastern Georgia, which traditionally had been under more visible Russian influence, and that is the reason why Russians are planning to build a highway between the mountainous part of Dagestan and Armenia. In this way Georgia would be divided into two pieces. This scenario is obviously a plan for the future, but the threat for Georgia lies in the active work of Vladimir Putin's agents in Kakheti, the region in the east that borders Russia. Without the support of the West this goal could be achieved. It may sound like an exaggeration, but there are voices inside Russia that already claim to have a plan to fully occupy Georgia. Similar ideas can be seen in the works of Aleksandr Dugin, a leading Russian theoretician of the neo-Eurasianist doctrine. This indicates that the Donbas and Crimean scenarios are being considered for Georgia.

But this does not necessarily explain why your father is still a controversial figure in Georgia…

The main reason is that he decided to work as a politician. Compare his decision to that of Merab Kostava (a Soviet-era dissident), who never entered politics, because of the tragic death, so that he could remain a symbol of the dissident fight for freedom.

Kostava was indeed considered to be Gamsakhurdia's voice of reason and the only person who was able to co-operate with all members of the Georgian dissident group, including the radicals of Gamsakhurdia and the centrists of Zurab Chavchavadze.

Kostava and Gamsakhurdia were always together. Any opinion that Kostava was somewhere else is simply not true.

So why did Gamsakhurdia lose the support that he enjoyed in the beginning of his rule?

He never lost the support. Within a year after the coup d'état there were thousands of people gathering every day and protesting on the streets of Tbilisi. Many of these protesters were arrested and some were killed. Support for Gamsakhurdia was especially visible in Mingrelia, in the western part of Georgia. Right now Russian-influenced circles are trying to destroy his image, but in

the long run this will change. History will show him as a hero and a martyr.

But what about the accusations that pointed to Gamsakhurdia's dictatorial aspirations, which could be seen in the imprisonment of political enemies during his time as president?

We need to remember who was being put in jail at this time: Jaba Ioseliani and members of his paramilitary group called "Mkhedrioni". Ioseliani created a private army and I would challenge you to show me at least one European state which would agree to the existence of such an illegal organisation on its territory. There were two politicians arrested during Gamsakhurdia's term – Giorgi Chanturia and Giorgi Chaindrawa – both were accused of creating barricades at Rustaveli Avenue in the centre of Tbilisi. The so-called authoritarian behaviour of Gamsakhurdia is a fake accusation. Another false accusation is that he was a nationalist. His famous "Georgia for Georgians" slogan was not about creating an exclusive state for ethnic Georgians. You can find many interviews where he denies this perspective. These attempts to show Gamsakhurdia as a fanatical nationalist have a Russian source and are used to stoke instability in the Caucasus.

Do you believe that paramilitary Georgian organisations co-operated with communist apparatchiks and the Kremlin to oust Zviad Gamsakhurdia?

Absolutely. The aim of these groups was to stop the creation of a stable, independent Georgia and Gamsakhurdia's idea of building united, regional Caucasian co-operation. Russian politicians realised that this policy could cause Russia to lose the Caucasus. Georgian militias were armed by the Soviets and, later, the Russians with heavy equipment. Machiavellian figures such as Eduard Shevardnadze used the situation to their advantage.

What about the situation in the conflict regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia? How are they connected to your father's legacy?

It is very interesting how Zviad Gamsakhurdia actually achieved peace in Abkhazia. Today in Europe not many remember that; nor do they remember the fact that the person who really started the war in Abkhazia was Shevardnadze himself. Along with Abkhazians, Gamsakhurdia agreed on a special electoral status for the autonomous republic. He also proposed that Abkhazians would have 52 per cent of the seats in the regional parliament. Forty per cent of the seats were reserved for Georgians and eight per cent would belong to other minorities. Under these principles the leader of the autonomous republic was to be Abkhazian, while the prime minister a Georgian. The parliament worked in these conditions until the outbreak of war. Interestingly, the Abkhazian people perceived Zviad Gamsakhurdia as their legitimate president even after the coup d'état.

The situation in Samachablo (South Ossetia) is different. From the beginning,

the separatists rejected any possibility of autonomy in the Tskhinvali region. We should remember that it was Stalin who created this artificial region to reward Ossetian Bolsheviks who fought against the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1921. Thousands of Ossetians are living in different places in Georgia and nobody blames them for the tensions. Ossetians who were separatist leaders have been directly connected with the Kremlin and the KGB. Differences were also evident when it came to the possibility of finding a common position at the beginning of the 1990s. Both of these conflicts were obviously Russian-driven, but in the case of Abkhazia an agreement was possible and Georgians made some mistakes. I would like to remind you that my grandfather is the author of one of the first novels about Abkhazia. It was titled *The Abduction of the Moon*. In this magnificent book he described in great detail the common struggle of Abkhazians, Mingrelians and Svans against the Bolsheviks.

What mistakes did the Georgians make in the early 1990s in the context of these conflicts?

The first thing is to distinguish between the events which we can say were the Georgians' fault in general and actions which were undertaken, sometimes fully consciously, by Georgian communists under orders of the Kremlin. *Divide et impera* (divide and rule) is the old Roman principle which was the first rule of the Tsarist and Soviet empires and nowadays seems to be the modus operandi of Putin's Russia. The principle of the Kremlin in the early 1990s was to divide the ethnic groups of the South Caucasus as much as possible in order to gain control over this area. I would not talk about the "mistakes of Georgia or Georgians" in general, but rather about the concrete mistakes of certain people such as Eduard Shevardnadze, Jumber Patiashvili, his successor as First Secretary of the Georgian SSR, the next Secretary, Givi Gumbaridze, as well as Zviad Gamsakhurdia. And here the biggest mistake was to start the war in Abkhazia. It was absolutely unnecessary.

But what caused the hatred between Abkhazians and Georgians?

This hatred was encouraged by the communists and the KGB primarily under Stalin and then in later periods. The same happened in South Ossetia. The communists established those autonomous republics to act like ticking time bombs, just waiting to explode when the time is right. The same thing took place in Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh and is now happening in Crimea and Donbas.

You are again talking about external factors. But it is also possible that there are some internal factors and not everything is driven from the outside…

The truth is that in the 19th century ethnic hatred between Georgians and Abkhazians and Georgians and Ossetians did not exist. Everything emerged with

the communists. Irredentism started to play an important role when the Red Commissars came to the Caucasus. The Bolsheviks promised the Ossetians that if they started a rebellion against Georgia they would receive the status of an autonomous republic in the historical Georgian Province of Shida Kartli.

Do you think that there is a possibility of conflict resolution?

For peace to happen, first and foremost, an internal change is necessary in Russian politics. The second thing that is needed is "public diplomacy" and the creation of possibilities for building a dialogue with the Abkhazians and South Ossetians. Governmental dialogue is not possible because the Abkhazian government is a "puppet" government. And yet, ironically, they consider our government to be a "puppet" of the United States. The big mistake of Mikheil Saakashvili was made during the 2008 war. After sending troops in response to the provocations of Ossetians and Russians, he should have withdrawn the army and sent it to the Tskhinvali district with unarmed police so that independent journalists from other countries could see that Georgia was not attacking the autonomy of South Ossetia. He also lost this war in the context of political marketing. Russia was able to present Georgians as fascists and aggressors.

And what about the agreements most recently signed between Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia? The Georgian government has reacted by saying that these are the first steps to annexation…

These are not only the first steps to the annexation of these territories, but also the annexation of the whole of Georgia. In other words, this is Russian imperialism at its best.

Konstantine Gamsakhurdia is a Georgian politician. He is the son of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first democratically elected president of Georgia after the fall of the Soviet Union. He is also the grandson of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, a Georgian novelist and dissident writer.

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Transnistria's Lost Generation

IULIIA MENDEL

The breakaway region of Transnistria is an incomplete project full of paradoxes. Since the 1990s it has successfully educated a new generation that has experienced much Russian propaganda. As a result, today the Transnistrian youth is brought up on the same illusory values of the *Russkiy Mir* that their parents were in the Soviet Union.

"Russia is a well-developed country. "It is an economic and gastronomic power," says Kristina, a 14-year-old student who lives on the territory of the self-proclaimed Moldovan Republic of Transnistria. Her definition of "gastronomy" and its soft power implications might be confused, but she accurately describes the geopolitical dream that most local residents have held close for nearly a quarter of a century. Kristina confesses that she knows nothing about Europe and although she studies in one of eight pro-Moldovan schools on the left bank of the Dniester River, which delineates the breakaway state, she does not believe the history lessons they are taught.

"We do not learn the truth. In the history books, it is written that during the war, Romania was our friend and that Russia occupied the territories. They say that Russia is our enemy. But that actually is not true," she says. Later, confusing concepts, she starts talking about a historical "European Union with Russia" where there is no room for any actual European country, including Romania. I have no doubt that such a historical mess in the minds of Transnistria's youth is the work

of the Russian media which have monopolised the information sphere. Here Russia, as elsewhere in the post-Soviet space, cultivates its own adoration through encouraging intolerance to everything different and new.

Sea of misinformation

Kristina's classmate Liza admits that if you start speaking Moldovan in Transnistria's public places it is likely that no one will respond to you, even if they understand. Indeed, while in theory, the region's authorities officially recognise both the Moldovan and the Ukrainian language, in practice these two languages are outside the law. Kristina does not even try to hide that Moldovans in Transnistria are treated with ridicule and rejection.

Yet when asked, Liza finds it difficult to identify her own citizenship and during the course of our conversation is surprised to realise that she is in fact a Moldovan herself. Transnistria is an incomplete project full of paradoxes. It has already educated a new generation of its inhabitants that have never experienced anything other than Russian propaganda. Adrift in this sea of Russian misinformation, these girls that I talked to attend school at one of the eight islands of Moldovan education; where on September 1st and at the end of each year the children sing the Moldovan national anthem surrounded by police.

For many years these schools have fought for their right to teach Moldovan, a form of Romanian, in the Latin alphabet. There is no doubt that studying Moldovan in Cyrillic is no less absurd than would be studying Ukrainian or Russian in the Latin script. But Transnistria finds it advantageous: those who learn Moldovan in Cyrillic have fewer opportunities in Moldova (where the Latin alphabet is used). It could almost be seen as a backdoor policy for stopping emigration from Transnistria to Moldova proper. Nevertheless, during its so-called independence, the population of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic has shrunk by a third – from 750,000 to only half a million.

During its so-called independence, the population of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic has shrunk by a third – from 750,000 to only half a million.

"We do not want to be a part of Moldova. Here, Transnistrians criticise us for being Moldovans, but the Transnistrians also face the same criticism in Moldova." It is difficult to understand who Kristina has in mind when she refers to "we". Her parents sent her to the Moldovan school outside the city of Dubăsari where they live, showing unambiguously that they want their daughter to be educated in Romanian and brought up

with pro-Moldovan views. Supposedly, this is how all the students are supposed to be taught in this school. Yet the simple question as to whether Transnistria should be a part of Moldova or Russia divides the class in half.

Liza appears to be the opposite to Kristina: she recognises her family to be Moldovan and dreams of becoming a journalist in Europe. She talks with unusual reservation for a teenager, hesitating with each word out of worry for her parents. She is conscious that the local police monitor information and could cause problems for her family. As a Ukrainian I find it extraordinary that despite taking conflicting views, these children were free of any ideologically-motivated aggression towards one another. They even did not regard these questions as matters of national security.

Confessions

Vadim, a 29-year-old brought up on pro-Russian Transnistrian ideology, also sounds pacifistic. He is the first to tell us that in his native town of Dubăsari there are no jobs and the only cinema that the city had was destroyed some 22 years ago. He does not even know where to spend time with his two children because the only place left for "entertainment" in Dubăsari is the local liquor shop.

In Dubăsari there are no jobs and the only cinema was destroyed some 22 years ago. The only place left for "entertainment" is the local liquor store.

"The bakery, the tobacco plant, the garment factory… everything is gone. People earn money in any way they can. If there is any work, the highest official salary is 200 euros, or 2,200 Transnistrian roubles. Even with such salaries, people's living costs are usually around 6,000 roubles. To be honest, I do not know where they get their money. I myself have never worked in Transnistria."

In fact, Vadim works in the capital of Moldova, Chișinău where, he drives a taxi every other day. His trip to the Moldovan capital takes about 30 minutes by car. "Look at what kind of cars there are in the capital [of Moldova]. With the gas price at one euro per litre, people are driving cars with 6.3 litre engines. Transnistria, to be frank, is no different than the Soviet Union was. There people drive *moskvichi* or *zhyhuli*," he says, referring to the late models of the Soviet automotive manufacturers. Vadim's comparison sounds more like a confession, not sorrow. He used to think about moving to Chișinău, but he cannot afford the cost of living there. The average monthly rent is about 3,000 Moldovan leus (about 150 euros) – a significant amount for his family.

Transnistria

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Transnistria, or the self-proclaimed Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, is a de facto sovereign political organism which has full control over its territory and has all the attributes of a state although it is not recognised by the international community. The self-proclaimed republic has its own president (Yevgeny Shevchuk, elected in 2011), parliament, army, police and currency – the Transnistrian rouble.

Transnistria is located between the River Dniester and the eastern Moldovan border with Ukraine. Its territory is 200 kilometres-long with an average width of 12-15 kilometres. The capitol is in Tiraspol. Transnistria's population is around 509,000 people, according to data from 2013, but in fact, its population most likely does not exceed 350,000. The main ethnic groups inhabiting the quasi-state are Moldovans, Russians and Ukrainians – their share is nearly equal.

Transnistria, as a separate region, started to take shape after the First World War. In 1919, in response to the secession of Bessarabia (a territory composed primarily from the land of today's Moldova without Transnistria) from Russia and annexation by Romania, the Soviet rulers decided in 1924 to create the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic encompassing modern Transnistria. During the Second World War, Romania lost Bessarabia to the Soviet Union. Transnistria, unlike the rest of Moldova was not a part of pre-war Romania so the Romanian speakers were never a majority there. In 1940 the Soviets put the former Romanian Bessarabia and Transnistria together and established the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

In spite of all these differences, right-bank Moldova and the left-bank Transnistria coexisted peacefully within one Soviet Republic during the Soviet times. Tensions between Transnistria and Moldova began at the end of the 1980s when the Romanian national movement, calling for the reunification with Romania, started to grow in Moldova. People, especially Slavs, living in left-bank part of the republic were strongly opposed to this idea for two main reasons. First, they wanted to keep the Soviet Union alive. Second, they did not know Romanian and were afraid of becoming second-class citizens. These fears were well managed by the ruling communist elite which controlled the heavy industry in the region.

On September 2nd 1990 the authorities in Transnistria proclaimed independence from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Chișinău, the capital of the republic, did not accept this move. As a result, on April 1st 1992, clashes broke out in the region of Dubossar and Bender. In May and June that year fighting intensified. Eventually, thanks to the support of the Soviet 14th Guards Army stationed in the region, the conflict ended with a victory for Transnistria. On July 6th 1992, a ceasefire was signed.

Currently, apart from the 5,000 separatist soldiers, there are other forces stationed in Transnistria including a trilateral, Moldovan-Russian-Transnistrian peace corps as well as the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Moldova, a leftover of the 14th Soviet Guards Army. Its main goal is to secure the Colbasna arsenal in north-eastern Transnistria. The number of Russian soldiers in the region is estimated to be between 1,500 and 1,800.

Although he was educated as a lawyer in Chișinău and he works there, admiring the city's prosperity, Vadim also sees the downside of life in Moldova's capital and criticises Moldovan politics. He appears to be a typical representative of the young Transnistrian generation, hesitant towards and critical of the outside world: "A person only needs the most important things in life. Everything else is unnecessary. Of course, I would like something better; to live well and not have to worry about tomorrow or how to make enough money for my family."

In many ways, Vadim is quite passive when speaking about the decisions he makes. It is clear that he does not see them as choices. He becomes passionate only when the conversation touches on the lives of the elderly. Monthly pensions in Moldova are under 1,000 leus (about 50 euros) while heating payments alone amount to 1,200 leus in the winter months. In Vadim's view Moldovan elderly would have it better in Transnistria where their income would be sufficient enough to cover their heating expenses. As a matter of fact, in Transnistria people pay a mere 100 roubles for heating each month. Although the Transnistrian rouble is not recognised anywhere it is considered equal to the Moldovan leu; hence even with conversion factored in, the price for a month of gas in mainland Moldova is equal to a year of heating in the breakaway region. Like many residents of this pro-Russian enclave, Vadim believes that they owe Moscow for this convenient aspect of life.

Soviet babushka syndrome

Visiting the city of Dubăsari on the western edge of Transnsitria was a surreal experience. The streets were empty, except for the occasional armed peacekeeper. We saw deserted homes, abandoned manufacturing plants and a billboard which read: "Russia and the peacekeepers – We are for peace!" We also saw buildings which had undergone some renovation such as a guarded cultural centre, a church, a school built by Moldovans and several homes belonging to the local elite. People told us that the owners of these projects were Russians, but we had no way of verifying this information. This is what life looks like today in Dubăsari, a city where, in 1992, active military operations were taking place.

The citizens of this town are grateful to Russia for their discounted price of gas. Yet it is unlikely that they will ever know the true story behind this "discount". It for sure is not a topic that local journalists are allowed to investigate. The money that people pay for gas is accumulated in a special fund in Tiraspol (the capital of the so-called Transnistrian Republic) and then returned to the residents in the form of social benefits. In other words, Moldovans on the left bank do not pay for gas even though they use jeven more than as those on the right bank. The continuation of this circular payment scheme for over 24 years has led to an unreal debt – nearly five billion euros according to Moldovan authorities. This is more than ten-times the annual Transnistrian budget.

Fully conscious of the reasons behind this insane debt, Russia continues to blame Chișinău for the situation, while Moldovans feel the opposite: "This is direct support of separatism in Moldova, funded by gas," says Moldovan energy expert Viktor Parlikov. "Transnistria is an artificial problem, created by Russia."

The foundation of this problem is a chronic illness that I call Soviet babushka syndrome. Twenty four years ago, older post-Soviet citizens agonised in Transnistria over "Romanian imperialism". In the spring of 2014 they were the foot soldiers of Russian propaganda that helped the Kremlin to annex Crimea. Their desire is to return to the nostalgia of the long-gone Soviet Union. "I am so happy I could cry," explains an elderly voter at the illegal referendum that was organised by Russia in the middle of March 2014 in Crimea, "my sister is 75 years old, she was born in the Soviet Union and during all this time she dreamt of dying in Russia. Now her dream can come true."

Transnistria and Crimea are examples of how those who grew up on Soviet soil do not often want to take responsibility for free will and free thinking.

Transnistria and Crimea are two examples of how the people who grew up on Soviet soil do not often want to take responsibility for free will and free thinking. They seek any chance to continue their life as a cog in a machine that broke down years ago. That is why with aggression and an invented nostalgia, they fight for a happy past that never existed and will never return.

Vadim's retrospective

When Vadim was just five years old, he saw an amazing trick performed by an elderly man from his neighbourhood: the man wedged himself inside a doghouse in his backyard. The house was built for a small dog, and nobody ever imagined that a grown man could fit through the door. Years later the story of the old man crouched like a turtle that had outgrown its shell still makes Vadim laugh. Yet, the reason why the man ended up there is not so funny: he dived into the doghouse out of fear from a nearby explosion.

"We tore apart the doghouse to release him, but he still would not move," Vadim recalls. When the unofficial war between the "two Moldovas" began, Vadim spent the first month of the conflict in an area on the front lines of the military operations. Vadim has many stories from his childhood, memories that would shock many people. This includes the names of weapons and combat vehicles and the strangely childish nickname given to Moldovan soldiers – the Chipmunks: "No one saw the Chipmunks. There were too many Cossacks in the town. And the Chipmunks never came through, they were always hiding somewhere."

Vadim cannot say for sure who was responsible – either the Transnistrian rebels or the Moldovan Chipmunks – for bringing the lawlessness of war directly

into the homes of ordinary people. He was too young to distinguish any features of their uniforms. The only thing he remembers is that they spoke Russian and that his family was very afraid of saying anything that their sudden and uninvited house guests might find disagreeable.

"My grandmother understood that it was better to give them everything we had. If you want to know more about the extent of this lawlessness, we have a museum. There are many stories of rape there."

When Vadim started primary school, his first teacher was newly widowed. By a trick of fate, it happened that little Vadim had witnessed her husband's disappearance during that hot summer in 1992. He cannot remember the man's name, but his family met him at the funeral of another local man who had been burnt to death in the fighting. On the way back from the ceremony, they came across some rebel troops. The Transnistrian rebels were "mobilising" anyone of any age they could find.

"When they saw someone, they asked why he was hiding from them. My teacher's husband was a pensioner and he said: 'I know you guys. What's the problem?' But they said he had to join them. After that day, he disappeared. There was never even a body and everybody eventually forgot about him." Vadim's story is typical of the Transnistrian conflict: countless people went missing during that summer.

After spending a month in his native Dubăsari and witnessing first-hand the horrors of an unofficial war, Vadim was sent to one of the largest cities on the Moldovan right bank – Bălți (Beltsy). He lived there until the end of the military operations, but was then taken back to Transnistria. He has never been abroad, but he left Dubăsari. First he went to study and later, when he was 17, to work in Chișinău. Since then he has earned a living for himself, his widowed mother and his own family. The young man is careful not to reveal his true feelings about the events that led to the creation of the unrecognised Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, now a world-renowned example of how an empire can spread itself by way of shallow graves and sandcastle republics.

Vadim, Kristina and Liza, are representatives of the young Transnistrian generation that was brought up on the illusory values of *Russkiy Mir* – the Russian world. While Liza seeks to understand the world beyond the terms of everyday propaganda, the other two believe the fictional truths of the fictional state around them without a flicker of doubt. Due to their hesitance, it is difficult to say exactly what really goes on inside their minds, but their compliance with this fable is gravely serious and a source of power for today's Russia. NEE

Iuliia Mendel is a Ukrainian television journalist who heads an investigative programme at Espreso TV.

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A Forgotten Genocide

TOMASZ LACHOWSKI

The mass killings of Armenians committed by the Turks between 1915 and 1923 are one of the few massacres of the 20th century that has not yet been adequately addressed with a legal response. Today, Turkey's recognition of the decisions issued by the Courts-Martial that originally prosecuted and punished the perpetrators would constitute the first steps on the path towards an official Turkish acknowledgement of the crimes that were committed against the Armenian nation.

Armenians are one of the most ancient peoples in Eurasia. They are proud of being the first nation that adopted Christianity as a state religion, gathering around the orthodox Armenian Apostolic Church since the early fourth century. In contrast to the history of the nation, the story of the Armenian statehood is much shorter. Today's Armenia has been independent only since 1991, while before that the state existed only for a very brief period of time: from 1918 until 1920, when the Turks conquered most of its territory. The remaining part of the state was annexed into the Soviet Union where it existed for the next 71 years as the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Today's Armenia covers a smaller eastern part of the historical lands inhabited by the sons of the legendary patriarchs: Haik Nahapet and Ara the Beautiful. The massacres that were aimed against the Armenian people took place in many

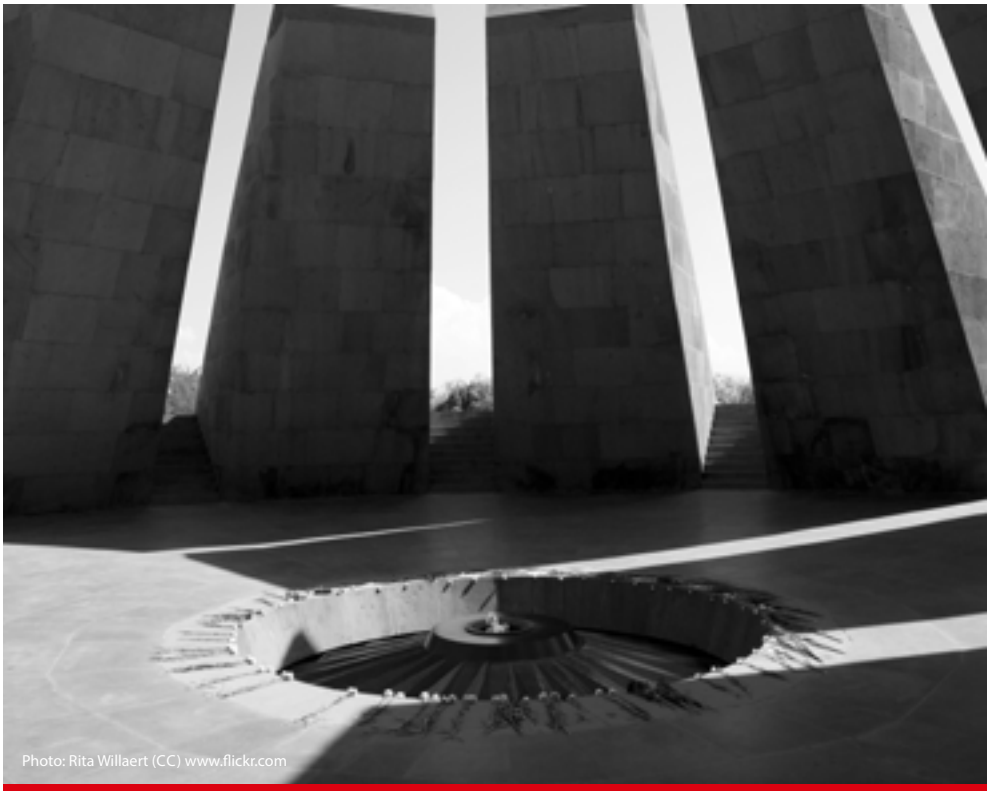
different regions of the Ottoman Empire to which the western part of historical Armenia entirely belonged, and whose boundaries go beyond those of today's Armenian state. Within the empire, the inhabitants of Armenian origin were treated as second-class citizens, deprived of their rights and freedoms. And even though the 1878 Treaty of Berlin obliged the Sultan to guarantee more rights to Armenian communities, they were rarely granted by the authorities. Conversely, it was the Sultan's discriminatory policy against the Armenians that led to the first mass slaughters in 1895 and 1896. Pogroms were then repeated in 1909.

Total annihilation

At the beginning of the 20th century a new political movement known as Pan-Turkism, with the simple slogan, "Turkey for the Turks", began to build a strong position throughout the country. Its followers were named the Young Turks. They took power after the defeat of the Empire in the first Balkan War in 1913, creating a government with leading figures as Mehmed Talaat Pasha (Prime Minister), Enver Pasha and Ahmed Djemal Pasha ("the triumvirate"). Also importantly, the Young Turks formed a political party called the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which was also known as the Ittihad Party. The main massacres against the Armenian people, which "the triumvirate" government planned, organised and legally legitimised by two acts of law (the Law of Deportations and the Expropriation and Confiscation Law, both passed in 1915) took place under the cover of the First World War. Since in the Ottoman state the Armenians were seen as natural allies of Russian Tsardom, it was not difficult to raise anti-Armenian sentiment among ordinary Turks after the first Russian victories against the Turks in 1914 and 1915.

On April 24th 1915 (the date today commemorated as the first day of the genocide) Armenian elite and civil leaders were arrested in Constantinople, sent to prison in Anatolia and murdered. This act marked the beginning of a genocidal plan that was carried out by the Turks. Its aim was to annihilate the Armenian nation entirely. Eventually, under the fog of war 1.5 million Armenians were subjected to mass deportations, persecutions, sexual violence and slaughter (with some sources citing as many as 2 or 2.5 million victims). While the greatest atrocities were indeed committed in 1915 and 1916 (up to 1918), the killings continued until 1923. As a result, the Armenian nation virtually ceased to exist: many people perished, their property was lost and the spiritual culture was wiped away.

In the aftermath of the First World War there was a strong desire to hold accountable those who had been responsible for the genocide. The first declarations regarding the question of Turkish accountability for the massacres were issued by



A genocide memorial was erected on the hills of Yerevan. It became a physical symbol of the memory of people who had been brutally slaughtered during the First World War.

the Allied Powers (Great Britain, France and Russia) in 1915. Subsequently in 1920, the Peace Treaty of Sèvres stipulated that the Turkish authorities were obliged to hand over the perpetrators to the Allied Powers. It was assumed that the offenders would be tried by an international tribunal under the auspices of the League of Nations, a court fully recognised by the Turkish authorities.

However, without ratification, the Treaty of Sèvres never came into force. Consequently, the idea of an international tribunal aimed at examining the case was abandoned. The next post-war agreement, namely the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, did not contain any provisions on criminal accountability for the genocide. The only activity that was undertaken in this regard was by British officials who transferred some of those responsible for the genocide to Malta and Mudros, but they too did not conduct any effective trials. What is more, in October 1921 all of the captured were handed back to Turkey, now governed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The new Turkish authorities, however, put aside the question of the perpetrators' legal responsibility. Instead, most of them received government positions.

Evidence and acknowledgement

In November 1918 upon the escape of some of the Ittihad leaders from Constantinople, a debate on the criminal responsibility of the genocide organisers was held in the Ottoman Parliament. Two parliamentary commissions were established: the Fifth Committee of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies and the so-called Mazhar Inquiry Commission. They were equivalents of what we would call today "fact-finding" bodies. Their aim was to investigate and gather information on the massacres. The work of these commissions was used in subsequent criminal trials.

The trials were conducted within the structure of Courts-Martial. These courts were special domestic military tribunals. They were set up in December 1918 and became operational in February 1919. Although the exact number of these Courts-Martial has not yet been determined, scholars point out that there were three courts functioning in Constantinople and ten in the provinces. The criminal proceedings were based on the Ottoman criminal code. Recent research indicates that about 63 trials took place against the Ittihad leaders, ministers of wartime cabinets and other central and local officials. Indictments were issued against individuals, as well as institutions including the Ittihad Party, the General Assembly and the War Office. The main proceedings run against Mehmed Talaat, Enver Pasha and Djemal Pasha led to their convictions and the death penalty was ordered *in absentia** in July 1919. Other Ittihad leaders, such as for example Mehmed Talaat, were later killed by Armenian assassins, thereby facing justice in a more primordial way.

The case law of the Courts-Martial can serve as evidence and official acknowledgement of the Turkish genocide perpetrated against the Armenian nationals.

At least three trials resulted in the execution of convicts. Among them was the district governor of Yozgat – Kemal Bey. The judgment disclosed the truth about the systematic plan transmitted to provincial officials in order to annihilate the Armenians. The soft legal term "deportations" that was used then in fact meant "massacres" and a clear intent to destroy the entire population. Thus, the case law of the Courts-Martial can, beyond any doubt, serve as evidence and official Turkish acknowledgement of the genocide perpetrated against the Armenian nationals.

* The Young Turks leaders escape from Turkey in November 1918

What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that the Courts-Martial operated at a very complicated moment of Turkish history: even though the Ittihad Party and its leaders were officially defeated, many of their supporters remained in Constantinople. Political uncertainty and the assistance that the Young Turks' activists received allowed some prisoners, who were still awaiting trial, to escape. In addition, in the aftermath of the Greek-Turkish war that led to the Greek occupation of Smyrna (today's Izmir) in 1919 the Ottoman government released others who were accused of participating in the genocide. This internal instability, also viewed from the perspective of the British occupation of Constantinople (lasting till 1923), turned out to be political fuel for the nationalist movement (the Kemalists) that was rooted in the Young Turks tradition and led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

The Kemalists, who were actively involved in the war against Greece, acquired more and more political power in the country, eventually overthrowing the Sultanate in 1922 and transforming the state into the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The new government was deeply interested in barring prosecutions against offenders involved in the Armenian genocide. As a result, the Courts-Martial were dissolved in August 1920 and abolished in January 1921. Finally, in March 1923 a general amnesty was introduced which applied to all those accused and convicted by the military tribunals. Further, "the Kemalists' Courts" overturned former judgments and ruled that those who had already been executed (such as Kemal Bey) become recognised as "national martyrs". With these decisions, Atatürk and his fellows buried the record of the Courts-Martial and the memory of the victims for the decades to come.

Denial

Turkey has been denying the genocide of the Armenian nation since the early days of the Kemalist regime to the present day. Today, even the use of the word "genocide" when in reference to the year 1915 and the years following is penalised under Turkish law. Such was the case of, for example, Hrant Dink, a well-known Turkish-Armenian journalist or Orhan Pamuk, the 2006 Noble Prize Literature laureate. They were both prosecuted for their efforts to disclose the truth about the massacres and punished by Turkish courts for "defaming Turkishness" or "insulting Atatürk". For "committing" these "crimes" Hrant Dink paid an especially high price; he was gunned down in the streets of Istanbul in 2007. The reason for

Turkey has been denying the genocide of the Armenian nation since the early days of the Kemalist regime until today.

Dink's murder was his ethnic origin, beliefs and attempts to speak freely about the Armenian genocide.

Turkey eventually found a way to institutionalise its "denial argumentation" that the genocide never happened. The Turks believe that they cannot be blamed for the Armenian suffering as the legal definition of the term "genocide", as stipulated in the 1948 UN Convention, does not apply to the massacres which took place in 1915–1923. The above-mentioned legacy of the Courts-Martial was effectively hidden from the public discourse for decades, leaving no space for discussion of Turkey's accountability, one that was recognised by the Turkish courts themselves. Recently, with new publications issued on the functioning of the Courts-Martial, Turkey has started a new legal battle. For the moment, however, it is mainly taking place on the pages of academic journals and conference papers. This time it is diminishing the legitimacy of the military tribunals.

For many decades the struggle for truth and justice was undertaken mainly by the Armenian Diaspora spread throughout the world. Armenians living in the Socialist Republic were not as interested in healing the wound of the past as much as were their compatriots living abroad. The situation changed rapidly in 1965, when the 50th anniversary of the genocide brought more than 100,000 people on the streets of Yerevan demanding that the Soviet Union recognise the genocide and its numerous victims. The authorities had no choice but at least somehow respond to the voices. Consequently, a genocide memorial was erected on the hills of Yerevan. It became a physical symbol of the memory of people who had been brutally slaughtered during the First World War.

By now, more than 20 states (including Russia, France, Germany, Canada and Poland) and almost all US states have recognised the Armenian genocide. Nevertheless, without Turkish acknowledgement, a full picture of past and historical abuses against the Armenian nation cannot be fully painted.

How to deal with past crimes?

The question remains as to why the "Armenian issue" is still so valid today? Undoubtedly, the atrocities that were committed against the Armenian people by the Turks in the early 20th century should not be treated solely as an issue in Armenian-Turkish bilateral relations. The worst thing we could do is forget, and by doing so bury the memory and dignity of the murdered people together with their already buried remains. Inevitably, nothing will protect nations from annihilation if the whole world keeps silent on such large-scale tragedies and their legacies. The Nuremberg trials, which were established after the Second World War to hold ac-

countable those responsible for Nazi war crimes, were meant to send the world a clear message, namely that both war and wartime crimes can be examined by a court of law and shall not go unpunished.

The roads to justice differ as much as do the nations or societies challenged with such tragic dilemmas. The choices of retributive responses, executed by a criminal court or, for instance, truth-telling processes symbolised by the work of the so-called "truth and reconciliation commissions" (with the most well-known example of the post-Apartheid Commission in South Africa) heavily depend on political decisions implemented by political authorities of a given state. This explains why even today many countries, most notably the African states, choose amnesty policies in the aftermath of civil bloodsheds to leave the past behind and injustices unanswered.

Appropriate handling of historical justice is definitely not an easy task. Obviously, the system of international law tries to set binding norms and obligations for states to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of hideous crimes (including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes) to avoid the possibility of their being shielded from being brought to justice. Nonetheless, even though in the last quarter century some new international criminal tribunals have been created by international bodies, among them the permanent International Criminal Court based in The Hague, none of these institutions (due to a lack of jurisdiction) is able to handle the case of the Armenian genocide. The crucial obstacle to carrying out criminal proceedings in this case today, even though the crime of genocide is not subject to the statute of limitations, is the fact that all the perpetrators of the massacre are dead.

Even 100 years after the genocide took place, it is still almost impossible to find common ground for the Armenians and Turks to reconcile with each other over the past.

Gordian knot

In 2015, 100 hundred years after the genocide took place, it is still almost impossible for Armenians and Turks to find common ground for reconciliation over the past. Could this Gordian knot be eventually cut? As it is, it seems the Armenian claims, especially those aimed at bringing back the historical lands to the motherland, are of no legal value and the question of compensation appears to be at least foggy. For these reasons, acknowledgement of the genocide probably means only symbolic redress for the harm suffered. The Turkish-Armenian Truth and Recon-

ciliation Commission formed in 2001 and concluded three years later, served as a fruitful platform for discussion, even though it was not able to change the official position of the Turkish government.

In theory, the case is clear. The Turkish military tribunals in 1918–1919 prosecuted and punished most of the perpetrators, including the Ittihad state leaders. Once, with the Courts-Martial judgments, Turkey had accepted the truth. Later revisionist efforts allowed the authorities to hide the findings of the Courts-Martial, but it is still impossible to hide the facts. Thus, re-acceptance by today's Turkish government of its own courts' statements would be the first step on a path towards recognition of the Armenian genocide by Atatürk's descendants.

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A Crisis in Europe's Identity

A conversation with Larry Wolff, professor of history at New York University. Interviewer: Adam Reichardt

ADAM REICHARDT: I would like to start our discussion with a topic, or rather geographic term, which you are well-known for – and that is "Eastern Europe". In one of your most well-known books, Inventing Eastern Europe, you argue that the idea of the term Eastern Europe was created by Western Europe during the Enlightenment to separate this part of the continent from the "East". Why then in the 21st century do we still divide the old continent between East and West? Is this a legacy of the centuries' long invention or is there really a civilisation difference between Eastern and Western Europe?

LARRY WOLFF: What I was trying to do in my book, *Inventing Eastern Europe,* was to argue that while the Cold War made the East-West divide seem so self-evident (communist Eastern Europe and non-communist Western Europe), nobody really looked closely at the origins of this concept. However, when you go back a little further, you can trace the ways in which the idea of Eastern Europe emerged. As a matter of fact, I would have no problem with noting this division if it actually meant something. During the Cold War that term was indeed relevant as all the states on the other side of the Iron Curtain had communist parties which ruled, despite some differences. But after that ended, starting in 1989, there was a need to re-examine the logic behind this division of Europe.

What I would also say about the term "Eastern Europe" today is that it is meaningful as long as the idea of post-communism is meaningful. In other words, we can still speak about some differences between Eastern Europe and Western Europe to the extent that the legacy of communism still exists. That has obviously become less true during the last 25 years and it is going to become even less true over the next 25 years. Therefore, in my view Eastern Europe is a concept that is gradually losing its meaning.

What about Central Europe then?

As a concept, Central Europe has a really interesting history with some true definitional moments. One clear example was during the First World War when the German politician Friedrich Naumann

published a book titled *Mitteleuropa.* In this book Naumann defined Middle Europe as a domain of German economic and cultural influence. That idea was bankrupted at least twice; first when the Germans lost the First World War and later again in the 1930s when it was aggressively put to use in the Nazi period.

It was not until the 1980s that the concept was re-launched by the Czech-born writer, Milan Kundera, in his essay, "The Tragedy of Central Europe." Kundera made the idea of Central Europe play an extraordinary role in delegitimising the whole East-West divide. As a matter of fact, Kundera's concept challenged the fundamental definition of space in Europe. It has also challenged the idea that the Soviet Union, or Soviet influence, in any way was a historically meaningful aspect of countries such as Poland, Hungary, or what was then Czechoslovakia. Instead, it affirmed the region's connection to the rest of Europe, rather than to Moscow.

Nonetheless, as a concept, Central Europe can also be a little awkward. There is definitely a case that can be made for its usefulness, however, once you define "who is in" you also define "who is out". After 1989 Central Europe became an insider's club for the Visegrad group. Today we can see some of the implications of this issue when we talk about Ukraine.

That brings up the whole question of whether Europe itself is a concept that is tangible.

There are a lot of ways to define Europe. Today, we have a really concrete and useful criterion: membership of the European Union. You can consider membership or even aspirational membership as a definitional piece when trying to understand what today's Europe is. I believe that Europe can be geographically defined, but I also think that geography reflects a common history. As soon as you bring it up, however, boundary issues immediately emerge. The two that are really important are Russia and Turkey. You can find people of goodwill fiercely divided over the question as to whether there is any possible future for Russia or Turkey in the EU or in some relation to the EU; and whether they could meaningfully be labelled European by any other metric.

Speaking about Russia, what is your take on the assertion that this is a country that is neither European nor Asian but rather a Eurasian nation? This is an idea that is being re-popularised by Aleksandr Dugin and the Neo-Eurasianism movement…

This belief is much more a reflection of Russian ideological exceptionalism which can be a very dangerous and slippery slope. In my view those who agree with this sentiment and say, "yes, they are a Eurasian power" may regret it later. I would not buy into it myself. I would say that Russia is a part of Europe and should be understood in terms of some relation with Europe. Despite the fact that geographically a very large part of Russia is not in Europe, it seems to me

that the heartlands, the principle cities, the centres of Russian population, culture and industry all lie squarely in what we geographically call Europe and it has been for centuries connected to the rest of Europe, for better or for worse.

Would you yet agree with the statement that today's Russia is building its identity around this concept of being a Eurasian power? And is this tantamount to encouraging an anti-European identity among Russians?

To say that Russia is a Eurasian power from a geographical standpoint is unobjectionable, neutral and obviously true. To say that Russia will look for its sphere of influence among the former Asian republics is worrisome. It is wrong to say that Russians are fundamentally, in their cultural formations, Eurasians rather than Europeans. I think that the basic forces that have shaped Europeans historically have shaped most Russians as well.

We have definitely seen a significant change in Russia over the last year or so when it comes to the society's attitude towards Europe. The ongoing information war and the internal propaganda machine are among the main causes behind this phenomenon. How permanent, in your view, is this change? Would you agree that the European and American sanctions also reinforce internally this idea that perhaps Russia does not belong to Europe?

The sanctions are not a response to the fact that Russia is culturally different. The sanctions are a response to the fact Russia has violated international norms and occupied and annexed Crimea, and is now participating in fighting in eastern Ukraine in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty. I understand that inside Russia many might feel that they are being rejected by Europe and the West, but what is being rejected, and sanctioned, are very specific actions – not a whole country, culture, or people.

Coming back to the concept of Eastern Europe we cannot help but look at Ukraine and what has happened in this country over the last 18 months. Given what is now happening in Ukraine's east, I need to ask whether you think this could be a reflection of Voltaire's belief that Eastern Europe equates to chaos?

Voltaire indeed believed that Eastern Europe was a place of chaos, but the truth is that he never went there. When he wrote that particular phrase he wanted to flatter Catherine the Great as he felt she could bring order to that chaos. He needed the chaos in order to celebrate her as this figure of enlightened absolutism. Interestingly, there are a lot of parallels to today. Those who speak of chaos are often interested in imposing their own order.

The situation in Ukraine is very complicated, no doubt. However, if you put enough political pressure on any system, do not be surprised to see chaotic implications. I actually think that the Kyiv government has done pretty well over this last challenging year. What is

Photo courtesy of the International Cultural Centre in Kraków

New York University professor Larry Wolff in Kraków during the "Galicia after Galicia" Conference organised by the International Cultural Centre.

happening in eastern Ukraine now is a war to preserve the country's territorial integrity, not a collapse into chaos. I do not believe that Ukraine is fundamentally a chaotic place or that it could not become a meaningful and stable polity. But we also need to keep in mind that we are dealing with a relatively new country. Its neighbour Poland, for example, has a much longer tradition and a more solid political foundation. With the exception of brief periods of volatile independence, first in the middle of the 17th century and later after the First World War, Ukraine did not really have a lot of opportunities to define independent political institutions and culture until 1991.

Let us now look at what is taking place in Europe from a broader historical context. When we look back 200 years to the Congress of Vienna, the major European powers were focused on restoring a balance of power on the continent. One hundred years later we had the First World War, which undid the decisions of the Congress of Vienna and ultimately led to the Second World War; then there was the Cold War; the war in the Balkans and now we have the war in eastern Ukraine, which once again gathered major European powers, this time in Minsk, to formulate a balance of power before the conflict spins out of control. From your perspective, is this history repeating itself in Europe, or is it rather just a continuation of European history? Or is it unfair to overemphasise history when we talk about the current situation?

The answer to this question could take a whole book. It actually takes us back to where we started and the question of "what is Eastern Europe". This is a definitional crisis for all of Europe and can also be seen as a crisis of legitimacy. That is to say, it was quietly understood in this region that the communist governments were illegitimate. Therefore, the question as to what defines post-communist governments' legitimacy is quite challenging. Take the example of the former Yugoslavia. I think we are facing a similar problem in the post-Soviet disaster of the present moment in eastern Ukraine. There was a Congress

in Vienna and there was a Congress in Versailles. Those who made decisions at those congresses made mistakes, but the truth also is that after 1989 and 1991 there were no congresses. Everything was assumed de facto, with improvised responses to the facts on the ground. In other words, there was not enough time to think through what the post-Soviet legitimacy was going to look like or how it was going to be shaped and developed.

Another crucial element in our discussion is the European Union. Europe had a whole political project of its own that was carefully developed, starting in the 1950s through the 1980s; and that was basically turned upside down after 1989. Consequently, the European project had to be rethought as the Iron Curtain was no longer drawn. I bring up this period as we can see a certain similarity between that time and what is at stake in today's Ukraine. As you well know the whole Ukrainian crisis was started over Europe, and the economic agreement between Kyiv and Europe. Just as in Kundera's "The Tragedy of Central Europe" he describes the Hungarians as willing to die for Europe in 1956, the EuroMaidaners in 2014 were in fact ready to die for Europe. And their sacrifice was not even for membership in the EU, but for an economic and political agreement – a connection to Europe.

In another book of yours, you argue that Galicia was also an invented concept which nonetheless had an impact on the identity of those who lived in the region. Do you see this legacy of Galicia as having an important impact on what has taken place in Ukraine over the last year?

I think that the Galician identity definitely has played a role in the shaping of the pro-European attitudes among the Ukrainian society. Perhaps not everyone would articulate it as Galicianism, but most people would agree that there are notable differences between western Ukraine and eastern Ukraine; depending upon whether before 1918 they were a part of the Habsburg Empire or a part of the Russian Tsarist Empire. After the First World War these divisions grew further depending on whether you were a Ukrainian in the Soviet Union or a Ukrainian in Poland. The Ukrainian minority in Poland was very discontented and for good reason. They were not actually receiving what we would consider reasonable minority rights, but at the same time the situation made it easier for the Ukrainians in Poland to think politically about their nation than it was inside the Soviet Union, especially as the Stalinist period started.

Hence, the difference between west and east Ukraine is meaningful, but I do not think that it is necessarily an obstacle to Ukraine being a unified country. There is definitely a cultural fault line that runs through Ukraine which makes it challenging based on those multiple legacies – and Galicia is one piece of that complexity.

Which makes it very complicated for Ukraine, especially considering the soci-

ety's different historical experiences and memories…

Yet, I would not say that Galicia was hijacked by the Ukrainian political project. It is enough to look at Kyiv. Kyiv was not a part of Galicia in any way and is now the heart of the Ukrainian political consciousness. It was where the Maidan was located and is the centre of political gravity. That said, obviously person-for-person, you will find more intense and consistent dedication to the Ukrainian national project in the far west than in the far east.

That raises the question about Donbas and Crimea. Do you see any chance that Crimea could return to Ukraine?

It is hard for me to imagine Vladimir Putin ever returning Crimea to Ukraine. And that brings us back to the question of sanctions. As long as Russia does not return Crimea, should we keep the sanctions in place forever? And could we cancel the sanctions without Putin renouncing Crimea, which undeniably was a flagrant violation of international law? I do not know if it is something which could ever be resolved as long as Putin rules in Russia; and I think Putin will be in power for as long as he wants. Eastern Ukraine could stabilise tomorrow if Putin decides he is no longer interested in destabilising Ukraine. But what would make him decide that? Could there be any policy of incentives that would make that happen, especially now with the sanctions in place? He would need to be distracted by something elsewhere.

Or perhaps there could be an agreement that Ukraine returns to Russia's sphere of influence?

I do not see how that could ever happen. Russia's actions against Ukraine over the last year have pretty much guaranteed that Kyiv will never willingly return to Moscow's embrace.

Larry Wolff is a professor of history and director of the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies at New York University. He has written extensively on Central and Eastern Europe including his books *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994) and *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political* Culture (2012).

Adam Reichardt is editor in chief of *New Eastern Europe*.

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Many Visions for One Country

Frontline Ukraine. Crisis in the Borderlands. By: Richard Sakwa, I.B. Tauris, London, 2015.

The crisis in Ukraine has quickly become one of the dominant dimensions of the media narrative, across Europe as well as in the United States. Consequently, not long after the first shots were fired on the Maidan, numerous publications, essays and voices of highly opinionated expertise began to mushroom and make the rounds in public debates on the topic. Be that as it may, not all of them managed to rightly capture and fully grasp the true meaning of the changes taking place in Ukraine, let alone to accurately predict its future outcomes. For most, distinguishing the conflict's protagonists was simple – good, democracy-thirsty civil activists took it to the streets to hamper and eventually put down the oppressive, quasi-dictatorial regime of Viktor Yanukovych. Few and far between were those analysts recognising the complexity of the Ukrainian scene. The myriad of actors, their sponsors and the historical and political references they put on their flags and sang about – all of it was bypassed, narrowing the conflict down to first the EuroMaidan battling the dictatorship, and later the (new) Ukrainian state clashing with Russia and Kremlin-sponsored separatists.

Richard Sakwa's *Frontline Ukraine* definitely avoids those oversimplifications. The book's strongest suit is by far the most detailed, accurate and extremely well-researched description of Ukraine's post-Soviet political class, especially with regard to the long ways to power that each and every big fish in the pond of the country's politics and business has taken. By tracing back their pre-transitional careers, links to oligarchs and involvement in dubious transactions and only partially disclosed processes of privatisation, Sakwa provides the necessary background for every reader of the Ukrainian crisis. He also brings back to the table some of the already forgotten names, active yet in that version of Ukrainian politics before the Orange Revolution, such as Leonid Kravchuk and Pavlo Lazarenko. By doing so, Sakwa successfully constructs a map of the interconnectedness among the modern Ukrainian elite, grounded in empirical research, diplomatic testimonies and official documents rather than based on rumours and conspiracy theories.

What is also helpful in looking at the Ukrainian conflict through the lenses of complexity, rather than simplicity, is the handful of different categories that Sakwa introduces or simply relaunches. The division between the "Orange" Ukraine that gravitates around the heroes and heroines of the 2004 revolution, the "Blue", composed of supporters of the Party of Regions, and especially the "Gold" Ukraine – made up of deplorably wealthy oligarchs, often representing regional clans (such as the infamous Dnepropetrovsk one, with its chief representative Ihor Kolomoisky) and influencing both the past and present of Ukraine through corruption and dubious links with law-making bodies.

All of this, however, in the grand scheme of things acts more like a contextualisation of the recent Ukrainian crisis than actual analysis that would allow for drawing substantial con-

clusions. Context plays an enormous role in *Frontline Ukraine* – perhaps to such a degree that in places it even overshadows what should be the essence of the book. Its structure does not really help either. When starting to read it, one is easily led to an impression that for a book that bears the word "Ukraine" in its title, there is surprisingly little written about Ukraine itself. Sakwa kicks off with a far-reaching geopolitical and historical introduction, supposedly aimed to explain the current position of Ukraine vis-a-vis its neighbours, in particular Poland and Russia. He dedicates considerable amount of space to explaining the modus operandi behind the latest enlargements of both NATO and the EU, stressing the importance of the broken promise that the Atlantic community has given to Russia after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the eyes of Sakwa, it was precisely the ruthless attitude of the US President George Bush and the German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher that is now the source of Putin's revanchist approach. As the author argues, the broken promise of those two Western leaders, who promised Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not go further east, is nowadays echoed in the strategy of Putin, as he seeks to remind the West of that long forgotten agreement. And although there is evidence of such pledge indeed being tabled (see, for instance, Joshua Shifrinson's brilliant piece on the topic in *Foreign Affairs vol.93 n.5* from October 2014)), there are most definitely other, more particular and recent determinants of Putin's actions towards Ukraine. Moreover, a broader, more credible variant of such a hypothesis – based on Russia's sense of insecurity, rather than just the fear of the West being unreliable in its declarations – remains largely voiceless in the book; every now and then puncturing through in between the lines but lacking a clear statement.

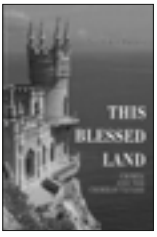
Sakwa is absolutely right in applying a broader, international perspective to the current events in Ukraine; especially the stance of the Kremlin which cannot be explained without seeing it through a wider geopolitical scope. Nonetheless, in places his line of thoughts is too forgiving towards Putin. His forbearance of Russian expansion, together with a harsh critique of the Eastern Partnership programme could be classified even as heretic in some European capitals, starting with Warsaw. As the author argues, post-Soviet Russia has never attempted to shake or destabilise the global geopolitical order by acting to re-establish its past empire. Contrarily, in the eyes of Sakwa, after all a renowned scholar of modern Russia, the only thing the Kremlin aimed to achieve was to retake the place it deserves among the global superpowers and to readjust the international order by introducing a fairer balance of powers. He states that the European Union deserves blame here as it deliberately radicalised its foreign policy in order to rip Ukraine away from Russian influence. For Sakwa, a particularly reckless figure was the former Polish foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski, who was no more than "another fruitcake of European politics" seeing "the reincarnations of Hitler and Stalin in Merkel and Putin". Indeed, the role of Poland's former foreign minister illustrates the final drawback of *Frontline Ukraine* – the selectivity of arguments and evidence cited. The author castigates the Eastern Partnership programme as a vehicle for provoking Russia, yet omits the paramount role Sikorski played in facilitating the settlement of negotiations

between the opposition and Yanukovych government in early 2014.

Frontline Ukraine is definitely a valuable contribution to the debate on the Ukrainian crisis. It fails, however, to deliver what it promises on the cover. The frontline that the title refers to indeed runs through the lands of Ukraine, but exceeds much beyond that. It is a frontline neither between the Azov battalion and the People's Republic of Luhansk, nor between the EU and Russia. It is a frontline between the past and the future of global geopolitics, which, irrespective of the conflict's result, will tear down the old order. And this seems to be a much more dreadful prediction than the vision of green men tacitly entering the territories of Poland or Lithuania.

Mateusz Mazzini

(Almost) All You Need to Know About Crimea



This Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars. By: Paul Robert Magocsi. Publisher: University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Canada, 2014.

In Andrei Kondrashov's documentary "Crimea: Way Back Home", which aired in Russia on March 15th 2015 on the occasion of the first anniversary of the "return of Crimea to Russia", Vladimir Putin stressed several times that "Crimea has been Russia's historical territory". He added that "in the mind of Russians, Crimea is associated with the heroic pages in Russia's history. It is a part of Russian history, literature and art". But the history of Crimea did not start in 1783 when it became a "pearl in the crown" of Catherine the Great after she took the peninsula from the Ottoman Turks. Unfortunately, this fact is often neglected in today's discussions on Crimea. Perhaps it is because of a lack of knowledge about Crimea and its rich and complicated history.

Paul Robert Magocsi, a professor of history and political science at the University of Toronto, sought to fill this gap by writing *This Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars*, a highly needed publication today. It is the "first book in English to trace the vast history of Crimea from prehistoric times to the present" as the back cover informs the reader – well not exactly "the present", as *This Blessed Land* does not touch on the recent annexation of the peninsula by Russia, which is the book's greatest weakness. It goes without saying that in a book on Crimea published in the second half of 2014, information on the annexation could have been at least mentioned. Without it, the book appears to be somehow incomplete.

Nevertheless, *This Blessed Land* illuminates the past. On the roughly 150 richly illustrated pages, Magocsi reminds us how many different peoples and cultures intermingled on this land throughout the ages. There were the Kipchaks, the Greeks, the Goths, the Armenians, the Mongols, the Tatars, the Jews, the Karaites, the Russians and the Ukrainians – all of these peoples have contributed to the beauty and the unique heritage of the peninsula. The author systematises the knowledge on Crimea and answers basic, but extremely important, questions such as "Who are the Crimean Tatars?"

In answering these questions Magocsi is clear and straightforward. As far as its population is concerned, Crimea was never Russian, nor Slavic. It is the ancestral land of the Crimean Tatars, to whom the book is dedicated. The author thus debunks a common conviction that the Tatars settled on the peninsula in the 13th century when they arrived with the Mongol armies. In fact – as Magocsi puts it – "the origins of Crimean Tatars are much more complex … Crimean Tatars evolved from an amalgam of ethnic groups, many of whom have lived in Crimea since time immemorial." In this context, Putin's words of "Russian historical territory" are nothing but half-truths, serving only as justification of the annexation.

Without a doubt, reading *This Blessed Land* leaves the reader with a much clearer understanding as to what has been taking place on the peninsula since March 2014. The malice of the decision made recently by the Russian state to shut down ATR, the world's only television channel broadcasting in the language of Crimean Tatars, can be fully understood only when set in a deeper historical context. Magocsi's book provides this context, and this why the book is so valuable today, even if it does not mention the most recent events.

Yet *This Blessed Land* is not a typical history book. It is short, with numerous pictures and images that help the reader understand the past and especially the last decades. The book is more like a handbook, a useful guide through Crimea's history, consisting of, basically, all you need to know about Crimea. The current difficult chapter in its history is still in the making and has not been finished. Magocsi also helps us understand why Crimea is so important to Russia – both symbolically and strategically. The baptism of Vladimir the Great took place there, and Crimea is also home to the Black Sea Fleet (based there since the late 18th century) and to Sevastopol – the "City of Heroes" or, if you like, the "City of Russian Glory". No wonder the support for Vladimir Putin skyrocketed after he took over the peninsula. Crimea and Sevastopol were essential parts of the Soviet, and then Russian, story. Not surprisingly, a great number of Russians could not stay neutral towards this piece of land. In a way, Russian sentiments towards Crimea may remind us of those shared by Serbs towards Kosovo.

Quite importantly, the book also presents how Soviet propaganda bolstered the myth of "Russian Crimea". Magocsi quotes the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* that "Crimea remained a poor and backward region until it was ceded [in 1783] to Russia". Interestingly, the present Russian narrative on Crimea, including the aforementioned Kondrashov's "Crimea: Way Back Home", carries the same basic message: Ukrainian Crimea was plunged into poverty and misery and life in the peninsula has been getting better since it once again became a part of Russia. One needs to remember, however, that the Russian and then Soviet-Russian reign in Crimea (170 years, from 1783 to 1954) was not as prosperous and positive as it is portrayed by the Kremlin. Magocsi recalls the most tragic chapters in the history of the Crimean Tatars: persecutions, ethnic cleansing and mass deportations to Central Asia during the Soviet times.

By observing the current situation in Crimea, after it has been annexed by Russia, we may conclude that the peninsula is in fact not "blessed" but rather has become a "cursed" land, especially since the communists took power in

Russia in 1917. Many in the West were shocked by the events that took place in March 2014 and yet, one year later, the annexation is not even mentioned in any international negotiations aimed at resolving the current conflict in Ukraine. This may suggest that many people in the West have, in some way, come to accept that Crimea has in fact more in common with Russia than with Ukraine. As a result, not many care about it now.

This Blessed Land is the first book about the history of Crimea published in English. It is too bad that its publication did not take place before March 2014. If this had happened, perhaps more people, could have understood the "Crimean issue" and possibly the western reaction to the annexation would have been different. It would be most beneficial if Magocsi would consider adding an appendix to the book in which he could present life in today's Russian Crimea. Clearly the peninsula's history is still being written.

Bartosz Marcinkowski

Dissecting Georgia's Democratic Experiences

The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918–2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors. Edited by: Stephen F. Jones. Publisher: Routledge, New York, 2014.

In May 2008, 90 years passed since the declaration of independence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG). Even though Georgia's statehood existed for only three years before being annexed by Soviet Russia, in historiography it is still an example of courage and exceptionality. After a long period of dependence, the newly-created Georgian political elite were able to create a basis for a modern state that conceptually was more pragmatic and democratically developed than many other examples in Western and Central Europe at that time. Facing a wide range of internal and external obstacles the leaders of Caucasian Mensheviks gathered around Noe Zhordania, who had united Georgians with the idea of a national and social-democrat statehood. The Soviet version of history, for obvious reasons, ignored this period or described it in a highly critical manner. The national awakening movements of the late 1980s when dealing with the question of Georgian identity, unexpectedly passed over the sole democratic experience in Georgian history. Consequently, later attempts to prepare common ground for Georgian statehood based on a united version of the past paid more attention to the glorious history of the Georgian Renaissance in the Middle Ages, almost entirely forgetting about the brief life of the DRG.

In a 2009 conference held in Tbilisi, American Kartvelologist Stephen F. Jones gathered together internationally recognised scholars who were trying to find the reasons behind this choice and further what, if anything, was left from the legacy of the DRG in contemporary Georgia. As a result of the deliberations Routledge published a collection of essays in the book titled *The Making of Modern Georgia. The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors*. For the first time in the English-speaking world,

readers have access to a unique analysis of this short-lasting period of Georgian history. The diversified articles, as Donald Rayfield notes, begin at a common starting point – an effort "to restore to history the forgotten episode, one of the extraordinary". When combined they attempting to build a comparative perspective on the state-building and identity-creation processes between two post-imperial or post-colonial periods – 1918–21 and 1991–2012. Input from different academic fields of scholars and professionals along with interdisciplinary approaches gives the publication a broad spectrum of interests beginning with the comparison of international circumstances through an analysis of state-building processes, internal ethnic and political conflicts, to studies over the role of the past and collective memory in today's developments.

The intention of the authors was to prepare a collection of the broadest range of essays possible, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage of the book. The greatest strength of *The Making of Modern Georgia* is the multi-level analysis of practically every aspect of the Georgian experience with democracy in the 1920s and its comparison to the developments and stagnations appearing after the fall of the Soviet Union. Based on multidisciplinary academic approaches the contributors of the volume discover many similarities in the obstacles and gains which both Georgian republics experienced during their democratic consolidations. Those politically important historical analogies might be observed in different spheres of state policy. The authors of the first part of the book, which presents the external situation of Georgia in a comparative perspective, emphasise the role of ideas and trends in regional geopolitics and international relations for both periods.

In their essays, Alexander Rondeli and Revaz Gachechiladze both describe the narratives connected with the existence of an increasing Russian threat after the August 2008 war in comparison to the permanent danger of Soviet Russia in the early 1920s. Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi and Mamuka Tsereteli deliver a general interpretation of the role of external players in the Georgian transition with a presumption that without international activism in the region, the scenario of the DRG could not have been repeated. In the second part of the book, readers find a series of articles devoted to the process of state-building and democratic consolidation. Consequently the authors of the third part, which deals with the question of internal conflicts and minority issues, critically analyse the foundations for contemporary Georgian turmoil in the past. Malkhaz Toria and Ronald Grigol Suny, in the fourth part, pay less attention to the first republic itself, and instead discuss the difficulties in the interpretation of Georgian history and memory and its influence on politics after 1991. In effect, Jones's editorial work on the entire book gives those interested in Caucasian studies the opportunity to have a multi-angled scope of perspectives while at the same time an in-depth study of particular elements of Georgia.

This volume is also a significant effort aimed at redefining how to study and analyse democratic consolidation in the Caucasus. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the dominant schools of transition studies were presenting the failures and mistakes of regained Georgian independent statehood based on a critical approach to internal politics by avoiding historical

circumstance. The essays gathered by Jones attempt to prove just how significant is the role of the South Caucasus, especially Georgia, in geopolitics. Through analogies and metaphors, the authors linked with the DRG are highlighting the differences between Georgia and the Baltic states and Central Europe. This unpopular way of interpretation, more closely related to post-imperial and post-colonial studies than the idea of the inevitable triumph of neoliberal democracy, on the one hand, seems to be an interesting academic paradigm to help understand modern changes. On the other hand, the comparative perspective should be a crucial indicator for the current Georgian elite to seek their own way of development and democracy, not fully based on just copying western patterns, as illustrated by the attempt of the elite of the first Georgian republic.

Along with the great strengths of the book, there are also some less positive sides to the publication that should be noted. Most volumes which contain the works of many authors face the problem of the unequal quality of articles. This is a permanent problem for the editor of such a book, and Jones's book is no exception. In consequence, the readers may find in-depth analysis with new approaches to the discourse alongside some informative but rather superficial texts. The majority of the articles are good academic works rooted in primary and secondary sources based on a precise methodology. However, this is not always the case and some articles can be easily considered politically-motivated and lacking in academic rigour. Even though the topic deserves multiple approaches, this ambiguity causes some uncertainty about the real intention of the volume. This might be partly explained by the different backgrounds of the authors, as not all of them are professional scholars. Nevertheless, the presence of high-quality materials prepared by such authors as Timothy K. Blauvelt, Laurence Broers, Malkhaz Toria, Ronald Grigol Suny and Cory Welt provides the reader with academic analysis. For those looking for more general information and analysis of the current politics, value is found in the articles by activists and politicians like Natalia Sabanadze, Giorgi Kandelaki or Tamar Chergoleishvili.

Finally it should be noted that quite often the Georgian authors participating in the volume, in comparison to the contributing foreigners, avoid some critical approaches to the problems. A reliable critical analysis requires objective interpretation of past and current issues with special attention paid to the mistakes and failures committed by one's own side of the conflict. Frequently the idealisation of the DRG experience and an internal perspective on politics prevail over a rational description of facts. This aspect might be observable especially in the context of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the minority issues and approaches to Russian foreign policy, both in the cases of DRG and today's Georgia.

Nevertheless, *The Making of Modern Georgia* delivers a comprehensive and multi-level analysis of the Georgian democratic experience in a fascinating comparative perspective. Despite some of the above-mentioned minor disadvantages, this publication seems to be the first broad interpretation of the heritage of the DRG in the context of Georgia's current situation. Additionally, observing the shape of geopolitics and the dynamic changes in Georgian politics after the 2008 war in South

Ossetia, the comparisons with the 1920s might provide some interesting indicators for today's situation; not only for the Georgian elite to emphasise the mistakes which should not be made again, but also for western decision-makers to not leave Georgia alone as it faces a permanent threat.

Bartłomiej Krzysztan

Lessons in the Confrontation of Right versus Wrong

Negotiating Human Rights: In Defence of Dissidents during the Soviet Era: A Memoir. By: Christina Isajiw. Publisher: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, Toronto, Canada, 2014.

For many people the word "lobbyist" conjures up images of dishonest dealing, smoke-filled rooms, and various forms of quid pro quo; the idea is that well-connected people with special access to lawmakers and other government officials are able to influence the development of policy to their advantage, often in direct contrast to what is in the public interest. It may be true that a fair share of lobbyists are less than respectable people, bent on shaping policy for their private gain or for the industries they represent. Or at the very least, that lobbyists collectively have a public image problem. It is a shame, however, that such a grossly simplified perception of lobbyists continues to be pervasive, as lobbyists are not a uniform bunch. The reality is that lobbyists need not be well-connected, or selfish or narrow-minded in their design. While it is easy to think of lobbying by the usual suspects – the tobacco industry, Big Oil, defence contractors – much less obvious is the lobbying carried out by more compassionate sectors of society. Human rights lobbyists are one such group and may in fact be the quintessential example of the selfless lobbyist.

Christina Isajiw's *Negotiating Human Rights* is nothing if not a meticulous and systematic account of one woman's work defending and lobbying for human rights in Ukraine, mostly throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. Isajiw is a Canadian of Ukrainian heritage and her work was done in large part from Canada. The tone of the book is mostly matter-of-fact reporting on various human rights conferences mixed with relevant personal anecdotes, and at times the book reads like a travelogue. Much description is given to the organisational dynamics of human rights NGOs, and the personalities and processes that shaped specific outcomes, particularly as they related to the Ukrainian community in Canada. Isajiw states at the outset that the book is "[her] attempt to provide an account of the efforts and contributions of the NGOs, the lessons learned, and the accomplishments achieved so that this part of the story, this piece of the truth, take[s] its rightful place in the historical record." Well, mission accomplished, in the eyes of this reviewer.

In her capacity as executive director and later president of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) of the World Congress of Free Ukrainians (WCFU), the primary legislative vehicle for Isajiw's work was the so-called Hel-

sinki process. For those who are not aware, this followed the Helsinki Accords of 1975, which was a declaration that aimed to improve relations and increase co-operation between the Soviet Union, various Soviet satellite countries, and the West in general. The issue of human rights was a particular area of interest and concern. The agreement, even though it was not a treaty and thus not legally binding, nonetheless had a broad impact on relations between the Soviet Union and the West. A very large part of Isajiw's work was situated within the framework of the Helsinki process, of which she saw herself and the organisations with which she was affiliated as an important part.

While all of this does not always make for edge-of-your-seat reading, the reader does gain a deep appreciation for those who volunteered their time and money to hold governments accountable for human rights abuses, and comes away with a clearer understanding of why this work is so important. It is at times easy to dismiss the types of people who do human rights work as starry-eyed idealists with unrealistic expectations, but Isajiw's account shows otherwise. Indeed, the work of human rights defenders does matter and can make a significant difference and lead to real change. This is often thankless work, moreover, and certainly not well paid – by her own account, the author was perpetually short of funding, often financing international travel to various conferences and accommodation with her own money. In addition, Isajiw was regularly faced with the unenviable task of navigating the personal politics and various factions of the Ukrainian community in Canada and the United States, some of whom were plagued by, as she candidly puts it, "[a] lack of vision and unwillingness to take a business-like approach [which] exists to a lesser degree [to] this day".

The reader finishes the book with a sense that it is the combined efforts of hardworking people like Isajiw that have helped erect the legislative framework for human rights protections the world over. Whether in civil rights, political rights, or human rights more broadly, it is often groups of dedicated citizens that hold their government's feet to the fire, slowly and persistently forcing change through political pressure, whether it be through conferences, letter-writing campaigns, or direct protest – and of course these days one would have to include all aspects of social media, which simply did not exist when Isajiw was most involved in her human rights work. Without the tireless dedication and effort of individuals like Isajiw, the state of human rights in the world today would certainly not be as advanced as it is.

And even though the bulk of Isajiw's activities took place between the late 1960s and the early 1990s, there are of course many relevant implications for the present day situation in Ukraine. This account could have benefited from a closer examination of how Soviet domination and human rights abuses in Ukraine in the past is related to present day Ukrainian society, especially given the game-changing political developments of late 2013 and early 2014, the subsequent Russian takeover of Crimea, and the fighting in eastern Ukraine which is still ongoing.

Isajiw strays into the broader geopolitical implications of her work only passingly and perhaps unwittingly. This may have been a deliberate choice on her part, though more discussion of the broader implications would have increased the book's relevance for the

general reader. As it is written, the book's target audience is fairly narrow – those who work for or are intensely interested in the defence of human rights in the former Soviet space. Had Isajiw made more of an effort to link the past and present, her work could very well have a wider appeal. For better or worse, most of these connections are left to the reader to make.

Yet despite the general lack of broader historical analysis, the book does contain more than a few interesting reflective anecdotes. Isajiw notes that at the time of Ukrainian independence in the early 1990s, western delegations, and particularly the US, were "very interested in Ukraine in terms of where the east-west delineation" would fall. From the viewpoint of 2015, it seems that we are now revisiting this question. The author also reflects that her work took place in a general – and perhaps civilisational – "confrontation of right against wrong," of good versus evil. Russia's relations with the West today in regards to Ukraine and Crimea have certainly taken on this dichotomous tone to an extent not seen since the end of the Cold War. Looked at from a more historical perspective, the hostile and confrontational environment between the Soviet Union and the West in which Isajiw and her colleagues operated seems to have returned quite suddenly and more abruptly than anyone could have predicted.

The bottom line here is that aside from specialists of Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space, and human rights enthusiasts generally, *Negotiating Human Rights* will be most interesting to readers who are able to situate Isajiw's work in a broader historical context. If relations between Russia and the West continue to deteriorate, and if the situation in Ukraine becomes even less stable than it currently is, Isajiw's experience may well be worth studying –for the people of Ukraine would probably benefit from more idealists like her in the West, lobbying on their behalf.

Alex Jeffers

Perestroika: An unfinished project

После Кремля (*After the Kremlin*). By: Mikhail Gorbachev. Publisher: Весь мир (Ves Mir), Moscow: 2014.

The new book *After the Kremlin* by Mikhail Gorbachev, the former president of the Soviet Union, is an attempt to analyse the most significant events which have taken place since the turn of the century: from the political and economic crisis in Russia to global challenges such as the fight against poverty, ecology and global warming. The author, famous for his *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies implemented in the 1980s, shares with the reader his reflections on politics and society today.

Published in late 2014, *After the Kremlin* is largely dedicated to Gorbachev's public activities both in Russia and abroad. The book consists of three chapters. The first two focus on Russia's internal affairs – from Boris Yeltsin's time in power to the re-election of Vladimir Putin as president in 2012. The third chapter, called "A troublesome new world", discusses international relations and global risks. Readers

who got their hands on of Gorbachev's previous books such as, *Perestroika. New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, are well aware that his books are not an easy read. However, *After the Kremlin* is truly a pleasant experience – the reader can jump from one part of the book to another without losing the whole story. It reads more like a newspaper than a traditional book. In fact, the book is scattered with fragments of press articles, statements, speeches and parts of interviews given by Gorbachev, which sometimes can be overwhelming.

Reading Gorbachev's book is also a good way to systematise one's knowledge about Russia and better understand Gorbachev's way of thinking. The Soviet Union's last leader has had a lot to write about since he left the Kremlin. The whole of the 1990s was a period of so-called "shock therapy", the rule of oligarchs, Chechen wars and fraudulent presidential elections, such as those in 1996 in which Gorbachev himself participated. Naturally, Gorbachev defends his own political programmes of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. He claims that it was possible to save the Soviet Union and blames the power-hungry Boris Yeltsin and his associates for destroying the project of reconstruction "halfway through or even closer to its beginning". According to Gorbachev, the shock therapy implemented in Russia is to be blamed for the collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakup of the economic ties between the Soviet republics. "They [the high officials of the Yeltsin era] threw Russia into the wild market and had no idea what to do next," Gorbachev writes on the 1990s in Russia.

After the 1990s, the Putin era begins and Gorbachev, despite criticism in the media, admits that he believed in Vladimir Putin from the very beginning, sometimes even naïvely. He supported Putin's campaign against the terrorists in Chechnya. On many occasion, Gorbachev confesses his admiration for Putin's wisdom, organisational skills and ability to take responsibility for his actions and the country.

In the book Gorbachev portrays himself as a scapegoat, a politician permanently isolated by Yeltsin. Yeltsin imposed a travel ban on Gorbachev, seized the property of the Gorbachev Foundation and allowed a trial in the Supreme Court of Russia against the Communist Party. Gorbachev complains that at first he could not fairly run for president in 1996 and then, under Putin's rule, he could not register his social democratic party because he was told by state officials that they "would not allow it to happen". Social democracy, democracy and socialism are the words that frequently appear in *After the Kremlin*. The first and last president of the USSR pictures himself as the only democrat in Russia. He also explains why he did not join the anti-Yeltsin opposition. Since the early 1990s Gorbachev has seen himself as an advisor who stays in the shadows, evaluating the Russian government and criticising or supporting them. Active engagement in politics no longer tempts him.

The author further argues that the abandonment of *perestroika* led to the corrupt rule of the oligarchs and a dramatic growth in social division. Gorbachev criticises the liberal direction of the state's development and the reforms imposed on it by the International Monetary Fund. He claims Russia needs a system based on a programme of "democratic socialism", as in the time of *perestroika*. Gorbachev concludes by citing Lenin, whom he describes as a "politician and thinker of historical importance", emphasising that the leader of the October

Revolution perceived socialism as a "creative power of the popular masses".

While *After the Kremlin* seems to be a compendium of knowledge about Russia in modern times, it is also a collection of Gorbachev's opinions on a wide range of issues. Gorbachev writes on international politics, blaming the United States for a new arms race and citing interventions in Serbia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. He also mentions the situation in Ukraine in the afterword. In Gorbachev's opinion, the current political situation in Ukraine is not the result of Russia's foreign policy: "Its roots are deep inside Ukraine. I see them in the withdrawal from *perestroika* and the mindless, rowdy dissolution of the USSR." Nevertheless, Gorbachev is a highly mythologised politician. *After the Kremlin* embeds all these myths about him in an even stronger reality but it is, however, worth a read.

Tomasz Kułakowski
Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski

Jerzy Stempowski's Ukraine

W dolinie Dniestru. Pisma o Ukrianie (*In the Dniester Valley. Essays on Ukraine*). By: Jerzy Stempowski. Publisher: Biblioteka "Więzi", Warsaw, 2014.

There are certain books which are long-awaited not because it takes the author so much time to write them – in fact they may have been written some time ago – but because circumstances at the time did not allow them to get the proper attention. They are rediscovered only after years of sitting on a shelf as a manuscript, or in a publication with a small print run. And then they suddenly show up again and illustrate how relevant they still are. This is the case with Jerzy Stempowski.

Stempowski was called the best Polish essayist by Czesław Miłosz. A forgotten émigré, Stempowski was published in the Paris-based *Instytut Literacki* founded in 1946 by Jerzy Giedroyc and his circle. Stempowski escaped Poland on September 18th 1939, a country then occupied by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and he never came back. He settled in Switzerland where he died in 1969. Because of his post-war place of residence, Stempowski – an erudite and polyglot – published also in French. In 1954 he was awarded the Bern Canton Prize for his book on the Bernese lands La Terre Bernoise. The award not only showed great respect for the author's talent but also his ability to "read the landscape". Stempowski's book revealed the cultural wealth of the surroundings of Bern which was not known to the locals. The essayist treated the landscape as a document that let him draw conclusions about the economy of the region and the lifestyle of its residents.

We can find the same method of "reading the landscape" in his other writings, such as for example his essays, which were finally published in Poland in 2014. The title of the book *W dolinie Dniestru* (*In the Dniester Valley*) is a compilation of his writings linked by one theme – Ukraine. It starts with the following sentence: "I was born to a Polish family in Ukraine in 1894." The author explains the specific character of the land of his childhood. He writes about the spaces between the seas:

The Baltic Sea, The Black Sea and The Adriatic Sea with a mosaic of peoples and languages.

The fact that Stempowski was actually born in Kraków underlines how attached he became to the places where he grew up and felt at home. In these places, the author tracked the footsteps of past civilisations and, thanks to his great knowledge of history, culture and nature, found links that were invisible to the casual observer. In his sketches on Ukraine, Stempowski does not hide his strong emotional attachment to Ukraine and his admiration for its beauty. He comes back to his childhood memories, as for example in the essay on the Berdychiv region, when he recalls a trip with his father. The story is not about the author's sentiments, but rather his social sensitivity, and his historical knowledge is what allows this essay to become an interpretation of reality. By recalling remote pictures from the past such as Jewish craftsmen from Berdychiv reading Karl Marx and comparing them with the Maurice Merleau-Ponty essay in *Les Temps Modernes*, he attempts to understand the phenomenon of the subordination of both individuals and nations to repressive political systems. The essay ends with the most telling lines: "In fact, since the times of Napoleon, the cult of discipline has been one of the most important features of the European civilisation. It has been an essential part of the wars over hegemony in Europe and it has prepared Europe, as a result, to its present-day provincial role."

In Stempowski's compilation, we have a chance to meet people who come from Ukraine or who are somehow connected with Ukraine. An essay titled "Baggage from Kalinivka" is dedicated to Joseph Conrad who was born in Berdychiv. This great text serves as a starting point for the reflections on the work of the author of *Heart of Darkness*. Stempowski even makes an attempt to reconstruct Ukraine as seen through Conrad's eyes. Another essay tells us about Igor Stravinski and his house in Volhynia. There are also articles about a Ukrainian poet, Yevhen Malaniuk, as well as the Polish writers and poets, Teodor Parnicki and Józef Łobodowski.

Jerzy Stempowski was perfectly aware that the key to understanding the historical experience of Eastern Europe was not only certain events from the past but something much more solid – a cultural continuity. However, in looking at the landscape, he discovered the opposite: attempts to erase the trails of somebody's presence, so he persistently tracked all cultural activities, struggling with this practice. Sifting through archives and yearbooks, Stempowski discovered choirs working uninterruptedly for over 500 years. These choirs accompanied not only religious ceremonies but also events such as weddings or harvest festivals and were an integral part of the local community.

Stempowski presents the complex culture of this region, but he does not idealise it. He tries to understand complications and animosities that marked relations between Poles and Ukrainians in the pre-war period. He is hostile towards generalisations. All the great processes, such as national movements or modernity, are analysed by Stempowski in a concrete and precise way. This is why he is interested, for example, in the co-operative movement of the time or the education system. "The role of Ukrainian agrarian associations in Poland's economic life," as he writes in one of his essays, "came forward in the time of

crisis, when, after a drop in the world's grain prices, Polish agriculture had to switch from the production of grain into breeding in order to maintain export potential. The Ukrainian dairy co-operative 'Maslosoyuz', thanks to the rapid specialisation of production, started to be a key exporter in the field of agriculture products." He also describes the Ukrainian society *Ridna Shkola*, a Ukrainian education association which took care of 35 schools in Eastern Galicia. It also ran its own library and funded its entire operations from the contributions of its members.

Stempowski cultivated his own, original, way of thinking. It allowed him to accommodate the outdated attitudes of historians with a predisposition to analyse phenomena in a very innovative way. Such innovation is now practiced by new branches of human sciences like cultural history, economic history or anthropology. Stempowski's correspondence adds also another dimension to the book – the author's engagement in politics. He discussed Polish-Ukrainian relations with Aleksander Ładoś, a minister in the emigree government of Władysław Sikorski, as well as with other prominent figures of the Polish political elite in exile. Stempowski, aware of the ongoing events, declared his readiness to help in seeking Polish-Ukrainian co-operation.

In October 1939 he wrote: "The Bolsheviks have already started to nullify Eastern Galicia to the level of Soviet Ukraine. The fate of this country will be horrible." Letters to Adam Zieliński, a diplomat and lawyer, revealed gloomy political scenarios that were considered in the early 1940s. When it comes to Polish-Ukrainian relations, there were two main contradictory ideas: first, to create strong national states; and second, to create a federation or other form of a commonwealth of nations. These two concepts were considered as an alternative to the scenario in which Ukraine is subordinated to the Soviet Union. The issue of a settlement of Polish-Russian relations on a common Ukrainian policy was also discussed by the author. An interesting thread is dedicated to the issue of deportations of people. In this case, as in the others, Stempowski tried to analyse it from a broader perspective. He perceived the deportations as a tool of politics familiar since ancient times. The book gives us a unique insight into the process of the shaping of political ideas and makes us reflect on how political discussions should look– not an attempt to push forward personal views but rather a multi-dimensional reflection.

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