THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

SUMMER 2014

## THE DANCERS

THE HARRIMAN AND RUSSIAN BALLET

BOSNIAN SPRING SIGNALS
NEW POSSIBILITIES

HOW TO READ CHEKHOV

UKRAINE'S THIRD ATTEMPT

GARY SHTEYNGART ON
LITTLE FAILURE

## COLUMBIA | HARRIMAN INSTITUTE Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies

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Cover photo by Nina Alovert: Vera Arbuzova in *Red Giselle*, choreography by Boris Eifman (1997) Photo, right, by Nina Alovert: Yulia Makhalina, Studio, Mariinsky Theatre (1992)

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he crisis in Ukraine and protests in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) have made this calendar year an exceptionally eventful one for our region. This issue profiles Alexander Vershbow, Russian Institute alumnus, deputy secretary general of NATO, and former U.S. ambassador to Russia, South Korea, and NATO, who provided a thoughtful perspective on the crisis in Ukraine in his April 2014 speech titled, "A New Strategic Reality in Europe." In addition, Mykalo Riabchuk, a former Harriman Institute Petro Jacyk Visiting Professor, draws on various scholarly and journalistic arguments to analyze the sources of the Maidan protests and Ukraine's deeper struggle to balance Eastern and Western influences. Turning to the political unrest in BiH, Tanya Domi, adjunct professor of international and public affairs, and Jasmin Mujanović, visiting scholar at the Harriman Institute, find hope in the creation of grassroots popular assemblies to address deep political cleavages.

In these challenging times, historical perspective is in high demand and, too often, short supply. In a profile of the late Peter H. Juviler, professor emeritus of political science at Barnard College and cofounder of Barnard's human rights program, we see what it was like to travel to the USSR in 1956 as one of the first U.S. graduate students to visit the region after the Stalin years. Tom Kent, adjunct professor of journalism and of international and public affairs, who was a correspondent in Moscow during the Brezhnev years, reflects on reasons for the survival of Brezhnev's failing regime, giving us a taste of life during the last years of the Soviet Union. Then, on a more humorous note, the award-winning author, Gary Shteyngart, a Harriman faculty member, discusses his new memoir, Little Failure, and what it was like to come to the United States from Leningrad as a seven-year-old. We were fortunate to host Shteyngart for a reading and discussion this spring, and you can find photographs of the event accompanying the interview (to watch the video, go here: harriman.columbia.edu/event/reading-and-conversation-gary-shteyngart).

We also have a special treat. Last fall, we had the pleasure of mounting Nina Alovert's "The Dancers," a retrospective of her photographs of Russian ballet in the Soviet Union and the United States from the 1960s to the twenty-first century. You can find some of these photographs within the pages of this magazine. We've also profiled Stephen Reidy, a former Russian Institute student who currently sits on the board of the New York City Ballet. And, last but not least in the ballet section, we have a piece on the prominent ballet historian and Harriman faculty member Lynn Garafola, who won fellowships from both the Guggenheim Foundation and the New York Public Library's Cullman Center for the year 2013-14 to support research for her biography of Bronislava Nijinska.

In addition, Cathy Popkin of Columbia's Slavic Department recently published the new Norton Critical Edition of Anton Chekhov's Selected Stories. We are thrilled to reprint excerpts from her Introduction as well as a story from the collection. We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to hearing your feedback and ideas for future stories.

Timothy Frye

Director, Harriman Institute





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## **COVER STORY**

The Dancers: The Harriman and Russian Ballet By Ronald Meyer

A look at the Harriman Institute's ties to Russian ballet, for many the quintessential Russian art form, through the eyes of photographer Nina Alovert; former Russian Institute student Stephen Reidy, who now sits on the board of New York City Ballet; and distinguished Harriman faculty member and dance historian Lynn Garafola.

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Lynn Garafola and Her Journey as a Dance Historian



<u>Baryshnikov/Balanchine:</u>
A Profile of Stephen K. Reidy



## <u>Alexander Vershbow in Profile</u> By Ronald Meyer

Deputy secretary general of NATO Alexander Vershbow began building his expertise in arms control and security while attending a Russian Institute graduate seminar taught by Marshall Shulman. He credits his expertise on Russia and Eastern Europe, gained at Columbia, for equipping him for the broader responsibilities he shouldered as director of Soviet Union affairs and U.S. ambassador to Russia.



### <u>Peter H. Juviler, 1926–2013</u> By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

On the life and work of the the Harriman Institute's 2011 Alumnus of the Year and cofounder of Barnard's Human Rights Program—the first of its kind in the United States.







## Russia in the Late Years of Soviet Rule: Why Did Citizens Comply with a Failing Regime? By Thomas Kent

Thomas Kent, adjunct associate professor of journalism and of international and public affairs, was a correspondent for the Associated Press in Moscow from 1976 to 1978 and from 1979 to 1981. In this piece he answers an often-asked question: Why did Russians put up with the privations of life in the late years of Soviet rule?

## Bosnian Spring Signals New Possibilities for Bosnia-Herzegovina By Jasmin Mujanović and Tanya L. Domi

Can Bosnia-Herzegovina leave behind the corruption and discontent it has faced during these past two decades?

## Ukraine's Third Attempt By Mykola Riabchuk

An examination of the Euromaidan protests and what they tell us about the current situation in Ukraine.

## Anton Chekhov's Selected Stories Edited by Cathy Popkin

"How to Read Chekhov," from Cathy Popkin's Introduction to the Norton Critical Edition of Chekhov's Selected Stories, followed by Katherine Tiernan O'Connor's translation of "A Little Game."

## Gary Shteyngart's Little Failure By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

The author discusses life as a Soviet immigrant in the 1980s and the challenges of writing.

In Memoriam

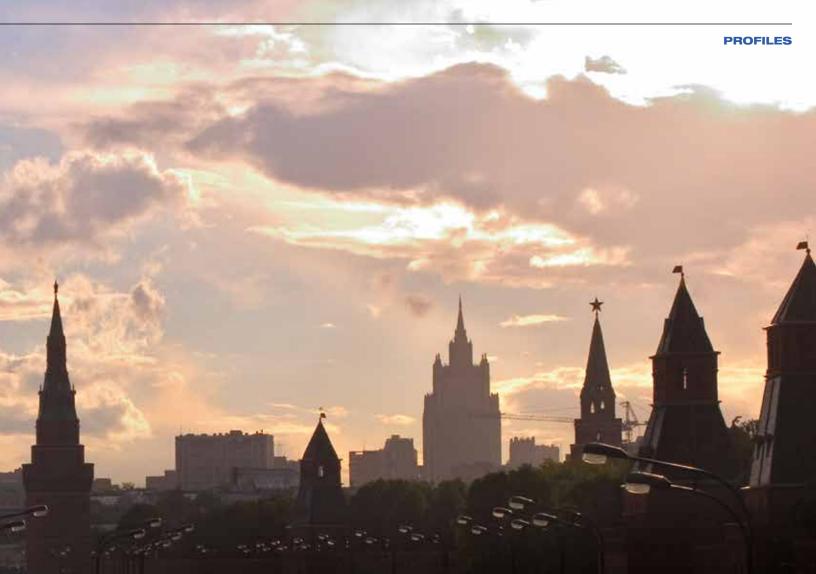
Alumni & Postdoc Notes

Giving to Harriman

The Kremlin Embankment, Moscow (photo by Dmitry Azovtsev)

BY RONALD MEYER

IN PROFILE



n April 2014, Alexander Vershbow (Russian Institute '76), deputy secretary general of NATO, delivered a speech on "A New Strategic Reality in Europe" to the twenty-first International Conference on Euro-Atlantic Security (Krakow, Poland) that opens with the statement, "For twenty years, the security of the Euro-Atlantic region has been based on the premise that we do not face an adversary to our east. This premise is now in doubt." Vershbow has devoted much of his distinguished career to the goal of building an inclusive, integrated European security system that not only put an end to Cold War divisions, including opening NATO to new members in Eastern Europe, but also provided a central role for a democratic Russia. As Vershbow points out, however, "Russia's recent actions against Ukraine have been a wake-up call for everyone in the Euro-Atlantic community. They follow a pattern of behavior that we already observed in Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The pattern is to influence, destabilize and even intervene in countries on Russia's borders, to prolong 'frozen' conflicts by supporting corrupt, separatist groups, and to thereby deny sovereign states the ability to choose their own security arrangements and to chart their own political destinies." Vershbow, an expert on issues related to missile defense and nuclear arms, notes in the same speech that even before the recent crisis, the scope of NATO-Russia cooperation had narrowed as "Moscow assumed an obstructionist, zero-sum stance on virtually all major

issues"—including missile defense cooperation, nonstrategic nuclear weapons, and military transparency.

Vershbow traces his expertise in arms control back to a graduate seminar at Columbia taught by Marshall Shulman, whom he characterizes as "one of the all-time great experts on Soviet foreign policy." At the time of Vershbow's tenure at the Russian Institute in the mid-1970s, the subject of arms control was relatively newthe first Strategic Arms Limitation Agreements (SALT) were signed in 1972, amid fears that advances in U.S. and Soviet technology would outpace the ability of negotiators to produce verifiable agreements to limit the nuclear arms race. In his paper for Shulman's class, Vershbow examined the emerging cruise missile, whose tiny size and versatility made it difficult to verify with satellite imagery. The paper, which argued for unilateral renunciation of the system in order to save the arms control process, appeared in Foreign Affairs in the summer of 1976, just before Vershbow joined the U.S. Foreign Service. The fledgling Carter administration did not adopt Vershbow's radical proposal, but the article did pave the way for him to work on nuclear arms issues in his first State Department assignment, which included several stints as an adviser to the SALT talks in Geneva (a rare experience for a first-tour officer) and facilitated a Moscow assignment for his second tour. Vershbow maintains that his political-military expertise helped prepare him for his many NATO postings, including U.S. ambassador to NATO (1998Vershbow credits the expertise on Russia and Eastern Europe that he gained at Columbia for equipping him for the broader responsibilities he shouldered as director of Soviet Union affairs in the late 1980s, and as U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2001 to 2005.



Ambassador Vershbow and his wife Lisa attend the Pushkin Ball. Below, North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries highlighted in blue (Patrick Neil / CC-BY-SA-3.0).

2001), service on the START delegation, as well as his more recent assignment to the Department of Defense (2009–11), where he served as assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs.

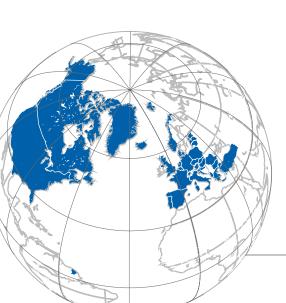
Vershbow credits the expertise on Russia and Eastern Europe that he gained at Columbia for equipping him for the broader responsibilities he shouldered as director of Soviet Union affairs in the late 1980s, and as U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2001 to 2005. His interest in Russian affairs, however, dates from when he was in the tenth grade at the Browne and Nichols School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and opted for Russian over chemistry. (When he returned to his high school as U.S. ambassador to Russia in 2003 and delivered a serious lecture on U.S.-Russian relations, his twelveyear-old nephew, sitting in the audience, said that he had convinced him "to choose chemistry.") With a 1969 summer language program in the USSR under his belt, Vershbow went on to major in Russian and East European studies at Yale, where he focused on language and history, and wrote his thesis on "The Party and Soviet Music" in the late Stalin period. The decision to pursue a career in diplomacy and public policy brought him to Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs.

From his days at the Russian Institute, Vershbow remembers most vividly his "outstanding professors"—Marshall Shulman, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Seweryn Bialer, John Hazard, Edward Allworth—each of whom presented "a different slant on how to understand the USSR and the Soviet bloc, the influence of Russian history, and the role of ideology." He learned then how the Soviet system, "while brutal and oppressive, was weaker and less monolithic than it ap-

peared." Lessons from the Russian Institute stuck with Vershbow. Twenty-five years after he finished his studies, when he was State Department director of Soviet Union affairs and charged with "the unraveling of the USSR and the emergence of conflicts in hitherto unheard of places like Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Chechnya," he was reminded of Allworth and his pioneering course on Soviet nationalities, which seemed a bit esoteric at the time. To quote Vershbow, "Some of the issues I learned about from Allworth are with us today, including the fate of the Crimean Tatars."

With more than thirty years in the Foreign Service and three major ambassadorships (Russia, NATO, Republic of Korea), Vershbow candidly admits that he did not pass the Service's exam on his first try while a Columbia graduate student. His advice to prospective candidates is "take the Foreign Service exam as many times as necessary till you get in!" The Service, according to Vershbow, is looking for both generalists and specialists, but he recommends "developing a particular regional expertise in order to get a leg up on your peers, but branch out a bit once you're in the Service."

Vershbow did indeed "branch out": after his post in Moscow, he took on the ambassadorship in Seoul. Even though he had no experience in Asian affairs, there were several connections to his previous work: for example, the Korean peninsula is the last front in the Cold War, with North Korea posing a nuclear and missile threat to the region, as well as a human rights challenge; the U.S.-Republic of Korea military alliance is almost as important to stability in Asia as NATO is in Europe; and the experience he gained in Moscow working on trade issues equipped him to play a major role in the negotiation of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. Moreover, the assignment allowed Vershbow and his wife Lisa to savor the contrasts of Korea's ancient traditions and today's hightech culture and experience the "ambitious, brash but wonderful people" in one of the "most impressive countries, both economically and culturally."



In addition to the diplomatic contributions made during his three ambassadorships, Vershbow proudly points to his work as a cultural ambassador—hosting concerts and art exhibitions (with the help of his wife, a professional artist). And he has personally contributed in his own small way through frequent performances as a rock-and-roll drummer with Russian and Korean bands, and as a member of Coalition of the Willing, "with other national security wonks."

Vershbow retired from the Foreign Service in 2008, but this was not the end of public service. Former colleagues recommended him to the Obama administration, and he was offered the post of assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs (ISA), part of the (mostly civilian) Office of the Secretary of Defense. ISA has been dubbed the Pentagon's "mini State Department" and has been headed by senior diplomats in the past, so the assignment was not as much of a culture shock as it might seem. The ISA's focus on security policy toward Europe, Russia, the Middle East, and Africa proved to be a challenging portfolio indeed. The assignment, Vershbow says, gave him greater understanding of the military as the U.S. wound down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and an opportunity to renew his engagement in NATO and Russia policy, including the "reset," NATO's new Strategic Concept, and the operation to protect civilians in Libva.

Vershbow has received numerous awards for his service, including the

Department of Defense's Distinguished Civil Service Medal (2012) and the State Department's Cordell Hull Award for Economic Achievement for his contributions to negotiations on the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (2007). He singles out, however, for particular mention the Anatoly Sharansky Freedom Award (2009), for his work in freeing the hundreds of "refuseniks" denied the right to emigrate from the USSR; the American Bar Association's Ambassador's Award (2004), for his promotion of democracy and outspoken criticism of Putin's rollback of media freedom and civil society; and the Department of Defense Joseph Kruzel Award (1997), presented to Vershbow when he was at the National Security Council, named after one of three close colleagues who were killed in Bosnia at the start of the 1995 diplomatic initiative that led to the Dayton Peace Accords.

Vershbow's experience in the Foreign Service and Department of Defense seems to have been ideal preparation for his work today as NATO deputy secretary general, since he arrived with an understanding of of the issues, the culture and working methods of NATO, and the complexities of taking all decisions by consensus. "I've also acquired a lot of experience, at NATO and in Washington, dealing with military strategy, defense capabilities, and intelligence—all part of my portfolio as deputy secretary general," he said. At the same time, firsthand experience dealing with Putin's Russia as ambassador from 2001 to

2005 has helped him to enable colleagues to better understand the challenges posed by the current crisis in Ukraine. Moreover, as NATO expands its partnerships to countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region, Vershbow's work at the Pentagon, which had a major Middle East component, and as ambassador to South Korea has given him the necessary global perspective. It is as if all the different threads of Vershbow's distinguished professional career have been drawn together as deputy secretary general of NATO.

Right now all eyes are on Russia and Ukraine. NATO, Vershbow states, will continue to engage in dialogue with Moscow in the NATO-Russia Council but will have no choice but to treat Russia as an adversary rather than a partner until it de-escalates the crisis and abandons its efforts to restore hegemony over its neighbors. NATO is redoubling its efforts to support Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and other former Soviet states—both politically and through assistance to their defense sectors—to uphold the principle that all states should have the freedom to choose their security relationships. In Vershbow's opinion, NATO will not be the main player—the bigger challenge is for the United States and the European Union to come up with an effective strategy to help these countries 







From left to right: Vershbow and President Putin (© Presidential Press and Information Office / www.kremlin.ru / CC-BY-SA-3.0); Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and Vershbow; Vershbow delivers farewell speech at the ambassador's Moscow residence.

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

## PETER H. JUVILER

1926-2013

## ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE'S 2011 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR AND COFOUNDER OF BARNARD'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM—THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE UNITED STATES

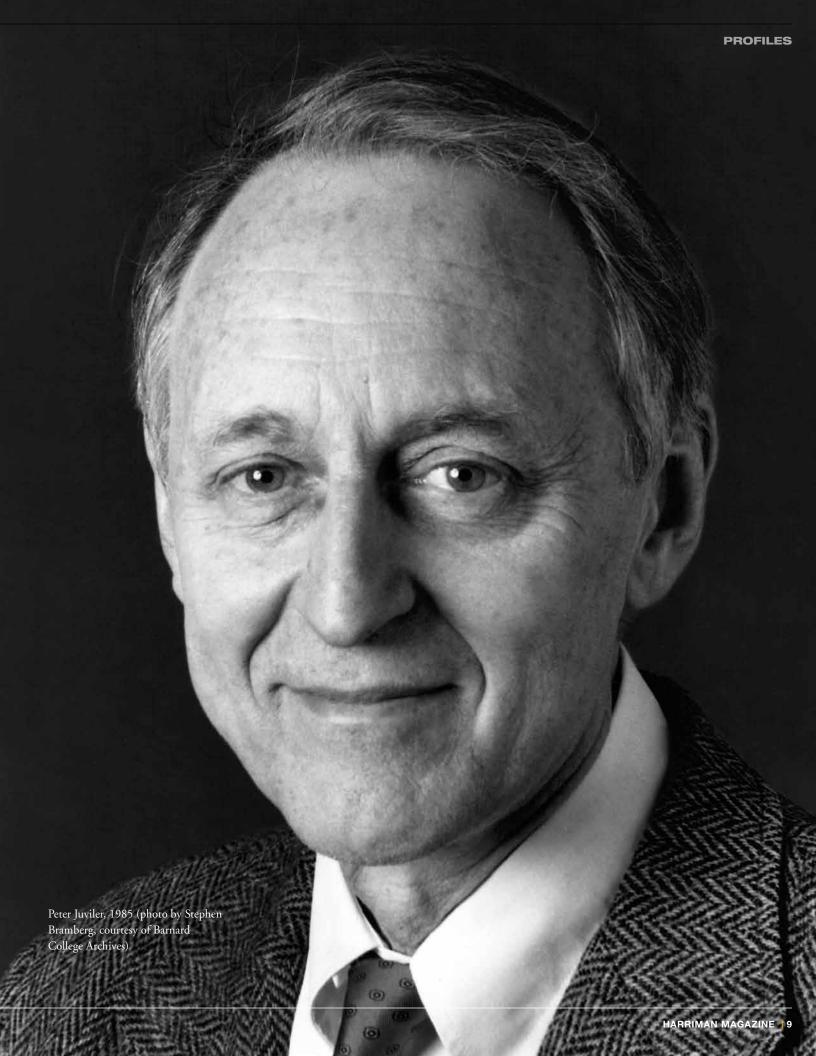
y all accounts, Peter H. Juviler was a gentleman. A man of refined appearance and tastes—blazers, pleated trousers, and an enduring passion for art and classical music—he had an insatiable curiosity about life, and the rare ability to connect and empathize with people regardless of social standing or political leanings. Though he lived through the times of World War II, and suffered discrimination as a Jew, Juviler maintained a firm belief in the intrinsic goodness of humankind. Students and colleagues remember him as a "hero," a man of unshakable principles and someone who valued their opinions, no matter how trite. Always putting himself on the line for the sake of knowledge, he studied communism at the height of McCarthyism, brought members of the radical Black Panthers Party to Barnard College in the midst of extreme racial tensions, and helped popularize the field of human rights when few scholars took it seriously as an academic enterprise.

Juviler was born in London, into a musical Jewish family. His mother, Katherine, of Russian and German descent, was a professional pianist who had studied under the British pianist Dame Myra Hess, and his father, Adolphe, a successful Polish entrepreneur who imported and sold German musical instruments. The couple led a life of art and high culture, associating with the likes of Marc Chagall and Raoul Dufy. But, in the late '30s, Adolphe fell seriously ill and lost his business. In 1939, they left London for New York with their two sons (Juviler was thirteen at the time, his younger brother, Michael, was three) in search of better medical treatment. The move was supposed to be temporary, but then World War II broke out, London was bombed for eight months straight, and many of Adolphe's kin perished in the Holocaust.

(Surviving friends and relatives visited the Juvilers in New York; the family was once evicted from a home in Queens for having too many Jewish guests.) After a period of financial hardship and constant relocation, the Juvilers settled on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Meanwhile, Juviler was growing into a scholarly teenager. He lined his walls with books like Lawrence of Arabia and spent much of the time studying at his desk. ("I was a real nuisance and constantly trying to interrupt him," remembers Michael, "but he was always very patient with me.") Having skipped two grades, Juviler graduated from the Franklin School (now Dwight) at age sixteen and received awards in nearly every subject. He enrolled at Yale, studied electrical engineering for three years, and interrupted his course work to enlist in the U.S. Navy. Stationed in Monterey, he oversaw radar on a repair ship and waited to invade Japan. One 1945 August morning, in the navy mess hall, he opened the newspaper to a surprise: the U.S. had bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He was both troubled by the use of atomic weapons and frustrated that he lost the chance to be a hero. The war over, he returned to Yale, finished his B.E. in 1948, stayed another year for an M.E., and was hired by the Sperry Corporation.

It was not long before he became unsatisfied with his career. Not only did he hate being stuck in a lab all day dealing with machines (as a Jew, he was forced to sit in the back—Sperry didn't want him interacting with the clients), but he was also discontented with his position in the context of the international climate. In 1950, as part of Truman's "containment" policy against the spread of communism, the United States entered the Korean War to defend South Korea from invasion by the USSR and China-backed North





Juviler with students in 1986 (photo by G. Steve Jordan, courtesy of Barnard College Archives)

Korean People's Army. In the U.S., the war was portrayed as a battle between good and evil: the communists against defenders of freedom. Juviler, who had spent more than two years designing equipment for military ships, questioned this simplicity. He despised the fact that he felt like a cog in a machine; he wanted to understand how the cogs worked.

In hopes of getting to the root of international tensions, Juviler quit his job and, in the fall of 1952, enrolled in a master's program at Columbia University's Department of Law and Government, where he embarked on a study of the Soviet Union at the Russian Institute. During this period he began to take an interest in the philosophies of Marx and Engels and realized that he was not entirely unsympathetic to their ideas. Unable to advertise these interests during the McCarthy era, he and fellow students disguised any books about communism in white jackets. But classroom

education took Juviler only so far. He wanted to travel to the USSR, where, since World War II, Stalin had allowed few foreigners.

"Now it's the most natural thing to go anywhere you choose," says his former classmate George Sherman. "But at that time the Soviet Union was a big blank for most of the outside world."

The atmosphere changed in March 1953, when Stalin suddenly died of a stroke. A battle for power ensued within the Kremlin, and Nikita Khrushchev, vying for succession, started advocating peaceful coexistence with the U.S. by granting interviews to the Western press. That summer, Juviler went to Middlebury College for intensive Russian language study; soon he and seven classmates wrote to Khrushchev directly, asking for visas. Khrushchev responded, but he granted only four, for travel in the summer of 1954. For unknown reasons, Juviler, along with Sherman, was denied.

"Now it's the most natural thing to go anywhere you choose, but at that time the Soviet Union was a big blank for most of the outside world." —George Sherman, former classmate

## But before they could even get to the USSR, they had to immunize their motives against McCarthyism. As a precaution, Juviler wrote a letter to the prominent Sovietologist Philip Mosley, at that time director of the Russian Institute.

When their friends returned after the monthlong trip and spoke of the wonderful time they had had, Juviler and Sherman sent Khrushchev a telegram. Their program over, Juviler, who had completed his master's thesis on the aims and organization of Soviet education, planned to enroll in the Ph.D. program at Columbia in public law and government, while Sherman went to study at Oxford. In December, Sherman took a vacation to Austria. One afternoon, Sherman remembers, he received a call, at the front desk of a ski resort, from Juviler. Khrushchev had granted them two-week visas.

They would finally have the chance to see the Soviet Union firsthand, and they wanted to play a role in easing international tensions by exposing Soviet life to the Western world. Though neither of them had any journalism experience, they pitched a series of articles about their upcoming trip to prominent newspapers, like the *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune*. Ultimately, it was the *Observer*, in London, under the liberal leadership of David Astor, that agreed to publish their accounts of ordinary life in the USSR.

But before they could even get to the USSR, they had to immunize their motives against McCarthyism. As a precaution, Juviler wrote a letter to the prominent Sovietologist Philip Mosley, at that time director of the Russian Institute. "I have no sympathy for the Soviet system," he stated, "but am undertaking the trip in order to improve my qualifications as a student, and I hope eventually, scholar of the Soviet area. It would seem that the better we know the USSR, the more surely we'll be able to guard our democratic way of life." Sherman theorizes that Juviler's letter was intended to protect Mosley in the event of any scrutiny about supporting his students in this endeavor.

The trip took place in late March of 1955 (still the dead of winter in the USSR). Juviler and Sherman landed in Leningrad and traveled straight to Moscow, where they were surprised that the living conditions of their mighty adversary were in shambles. "Words cannot convey the drabness of the gray and rundown cityscape," says Sherman. "But it made all the more striking the warmth and eagerness among many of the ordinary people we encountered." By their dress, he and Juviler were immediately identified as Westerners, and sometimes they had trouble making it past the entrance to the hotel before crowds gathered and asked them mundane questions about life in the U.S. What were their wages? Did everyone really own refrigerators? Homes? Then the police would approach and ask the crowds to move on. Juviler and Sherman would move on as well, and stragglers followed. A few blocks later, the whole scene would repeat itself.

"Not too many people know this, but my father was the most accomplished and beautiful rider—razorstraight back, calm, in total sync with and control of the animal. He and I used to ride together a lot when I was between the ages of about ten and twelve. We would rent horses and ride them in Central Park around the reservoir and also in Westchester County. I believe that riding horseback, in some way, suited a somewhat regal gracefulness of his and, as such, he was drawn to the sport . . . it was one of his very few indulgences and true loves outside of academia."—Gregory Juviler (son) HARRIMAN MAGAZINE | 11 "As a citizen in this *free* country," Juviler wrote to the postmaster in May 1965, demanding his issues of *Kommunist*, which the post office had stopped delivering, "I do not expect to find the same obstruction of my scholarly work that my counterparts experience in the Soviet Union."

In the allotted two weeks, Juviler and Sherman also visited Leningrad and Kyiv. They rarely had time to sleep and were together constantly, often charged with making stressful decisions in an unpredictable environment. But there was not a tense moment between them. As a travel companion, Juviler remained calm, reasoned soberly, and extricated them out of even the stickiest situations, speaking fluent, graceful Russian. (They frequently faced police scrutiny for taking unwanted photographs and were once forced to sign a confession for accidentally photographing a colonel swigging cognac in a café.) Smoothing things over was "one of Peter's many talents," says Sherman. "He had a great tenderness and established rapport with all types of people almost instantaneously."

Upon their return, Juviler and Sherman urged the Ford Foundation, which had funded their trip and was starting to take a prominent role in international affairs, to create a student exchange program with the Soviet Union. Three years later, Khrushchev and Eisenhower formally agreed to establish the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants, which eventually became the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and laid the foundation for future exchange programs. Juviler participated in the first exchange,

spending the 1958–59 academic year studying the Supreme Soviet at Moscow State University. While his contemporaries studied Soviet issues from a military perspective, Juviler applied himself to cultural and social issues, such as family reform, gender, sexuality, and the criminal justice system—topics that paved the way for his eventual interest in human rights.

In 1964, after four years of teaching at Hunter College, Juviler returned to Columbia as associate professor in the Department of Government (later the Department of Political Science) at Barnard College. Once again, his professional environment frustrated him. Only this time, it was U.S. government censorship he encountered as a scholar. Peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union now seemed a faraway dream: the countries had come close to destroying each other in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, and the U.S. was only heading deeper into a proxy war against communism in Vietnam. "As a citizen in this *free* country," Juviler wrote to the postmaster in May 1965, demanding his issues of *Kommunist*, which the post office had stopped delivering, "I do not expect to find the same obstruction of my scholarly work that my counterparts experience in the Soviet Union."



Juviler was deeply distressed by the Vietnam War. In early 1966, he wrote to the editors of the New York Times asking, "Are we going to continue these brutal yet ineffectual raids for the sake of some tenuous boost in South Vietnamese morale?" Privately, he opined in a letter to his more conservative neighbor Maggie, "I feel deep despair, tinged only by a touch of hope, for the next few years. Taxes for war crimes, silent assent in the most heinous acts of barbarism committed in the name of saving a country we are destroying to prove what? . . . Maggie, it's too late to say this, but read only the parts of the letter you agree with." The exchange was typical for Juviler, who welcomed conversation with those who opposed him. At his country house in Delhi, New York, where he spent weekends and sabbaticals with his first wife and their two sons, he would frequently entertain his neighbors, Republican farmers. "It was almost like he used to hold court there," says his youngest son Geoffry. "He listened, and also challenged, when discussing political issues."

In April 1968, the legendary Columbia protests broke out. Students were angry about the University's relationship with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), a think tank affiliated with the U.S. Department of Defense that supported the Vietnam War, and the school's plans to build a gymnasium, opposed by the Harlem community, in city-owned Morningside Park. Juviler initially watched the events with bemusement from Barnard, through a window that overlooked the Columbia campus. But, as students took over buildings, separating along ideological and racial lines, the tension grew palpable. As an alumnus of Columbia, a professor of Columbia students, scholar of communism, and in general, somebody quite concerned with the issues, Juviler could not stay on the sidelines for long.

One night, while at home listening to the radio, he realized there would be trouble. He walked to campus and joined other faculty members trying to mediate between the demonstrators and the administration. From then on, Juviler was a member of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group, spending days and nights patrolling in front of Low Library, separating the occupiers from those who might threaten them. On April 30, at 3:00 a.m., the police stormed occupied buildings using tear gas and hitting protesters with their clubs. An officer kicked Juviler—outside, barricading the protesters from the police—in the ribs (he ultimately had to have surgery), but Juviler, who never liked drawing attention to himself, reported it only when his testimony protected a fellow participant.

Later that spring Columbia acquiesced to the students' demands, cutting off its ties with the IDA and shelving its plans for the gymnasium, and the protests subsided. But tensions lingered. Juviler, who had voted against amnesty for protestors because it was against his principles to expect pardon after calculated acts of civil disobedience, was frustrated by the toxic environment on campus and wanted to channel these tensions into productive classroom discussion. He created Modern Political Movements, a course that would examine the intersection of "ideologies and situations" and function as a safe space for students across the ideological spectrum to discuss contemporary issues, air grievances, and gain real-life

Left (facing page): Juviler with fellow faculty in 1990 (photo courtesy of Barnard College Archives); right (below): April 23, 1968, Sundial Rally—crowd of people moving toward Low Library (photo by Gerald S. Adler)









From left to right: Faculty (with white armbands) speaking with student occupiers sitting on Low Library ledge outside President Kirk's Office, 1968 (courtesy of the Office of Public Affairs Protest & Activism photograph collection); view of gymnasium construction site in Morningside Park, 1968 (photo by Steve Ditlea); Harriman director Timothy M. Frye awarding Juviler with the 2011 Alumnus of the Year Award (Columbia University Photography)

exposure. To produce political theater, twice per semester he would invite speakers from these movements in consecutive lectures and have them offer opposing views.

Around this time, Juviler interviewed the Ghandi scholar Dennis Dalton for a position in the department. Dalton was an American who had been teaching happily at the London School of Economics. But his father had fallen ill in New Jersey, and he was planning to move back to the U.S. He was torn about taking the untenured Barnard position, until he returned to London, where a long supportive letter, sent by special delivery from Juviler, was waiting for him. "That was the clincher," says Dalton, who was immediately struck by Juviler's openness and the unique combination of charm and humility the scholar projected.

When Dalton arrived at Columbia later in the year, long after the protests had passed, he was shocked by the strained atmosphere and confessed to Juviler that he was anxious about which side of the conflict to take. Juviler listened calmly (he had the tendency to close his eyes during such moments), smiled, and said, "Dennis, just be yourself."

The two quickly became close friends, and Juviler, feeling that Dalton's interests in nonviolence and civil rights aligned naturally with his own, invited him to co-teach Modern Political Movements. They would each give five lectures, Dalton's Ghandi-centric and Juviler's delivered through the prism of his Soviet expertise. After months spent perfecting the syllabus (trading a stack of annotated, typewritten onion skin pages over snail mail throughout their summer travels), they wondered if anyone would even show up. When they walked into the classroom, it was so crowded they had trouble making their way to the podium.

Juviler was already an extremely popular professor, but Dalton had never lectured a class close to that size (there were more than 250 students). Trying to calm his nerves, Dalton asked Juviler how he was feeling.

"Well, Dennis," Juviler said, "I didn't sleep a wink last night." Juviler was an unforgettable lecturer. He had complete command of his subject, delivering information in an engaging and logical manner, and sometimes used song lyrics to illustrate his points. (Dalton calls him "a real punster" and credits much of his own teaching success to mimicking his colleague.) Modern Political Movements soon earned the moniker "The Peter and Dennis Show," and its students earned an unmatched education. A multitude of speakers visited the classroom, including the Marxist American dissident Lyndon LaRouche, followed by Ernie Brosang of the anticommunist and anarchist John Birch Society. Perhaps the most memorable class featured members of the Black Panther Party arriving at Lehman Hall in full regalia, flanked by two armed body guards, touting an ideology of "violent insurrection" and characterizing Juviler and Dalton as "incurable racists." The goal was to expose the students to as many opinions as possible, and the Panthers' presentation (they read Eldridge Cleaver's Soul on Ice, followed by a lengthy conversation with the students) was soon contrasted by an appearance from David Dellinger, a pacifist and leader of the antiwar movement. No matter how heated the classroom became (one time a student got so angry he jumped up and started chasing a speaker around the room), Juviler was "a model of civility," says Dalton. "Again and again we advocated Justice Holmes's classic judgment that we must defend 'freedom for the thought that we hate."

Teaching became the main solace to Juviler's despair about domestic politics. "More than ever I feel that the hope for our beleaguered country lies with the youth who went through the last few years with eyes opened in ways never before . . . and a new determination to make a difference as a group," he wrote to a friend in January of 1970. "Teaching, so often a frustrating experience in the short run of chaos and trouble for the schools, gains new meaning in longer perspective. Although we all have been

landed on time and again for those terrible things we teach the poor innocent students, I am really proud of the sort of people our graduates turn out to be." And he went to the ends of the earth for anyone who came through his classroom (once, after slipping on ice on his way to class, he taught a lecture, unflinching, then went to the doctor to discover that he had taught with a broken leg). "He didn't just have two children; he got tremendous satisfaction from nurturing his students through the four years of Barnard," says Juviler's son Geoffry, who remembers his father receiving calls from his pupils at all hours.

The year 1975 opened a new chapter in Juviler's career. Thirtyfive nations signed the Helsinki Accords, a compromise geared to improve relations between the West and the Communist bloc: the West would respect the East's borders, and the East would adhere to the fundamental values of human rights. This led to the creation of human rights groups, such as Helsinki Watch (eventually Human Rights Watch), throughout the world and most importantly, within the borders of the USSR. The period was both fascinating and uplifting for Juviler, who, as his former student and colleague Flora Davidson puts it, "was involved in human rights before it was even called human rights." He began to research the field in a broader sense, expanding his focus to other parts of the world, such as South and Central America and the Middle East. Meanwhile, a community of human rights scholars was emerging on the Barnard and Columbia campuses, and Juviler immersed himself in it. In the late 1970s, he became involved with the budding University Seminar for Human Rights—a discussion-based interdisciplinary seminar series—which he would eventually cochair. He also helped shape the development of the Center for Human Rights (now the Institute for the Study of Human Rights) at Columbia, serving as both a member of its Executive Committee and as codirector. In 1988, he became the first U.S. scholar to lecture on human rights in the USSR at the Institute of State and Law, the USSR Academy of Sciences, and the Moscow University Faculty of Law. And, in the year 2000, when he was seventy-four years old, he managed, despite significant opposition, to create the first undergraduate program for the study of human rights in the United States, at Barnard College.

In his quiet and gentle manner, Juviler channeled his unrelenting passion for human rights to the next generation of human rights practitioners. "People need to use human rights to empower lives," he once told his colleague, George Andreopolous, after being delayed to a meeting because of a student, "and there is no limit to the time it takes to teach them." Barnard graduate Paula Franzese will never forget Juviler's office hours, which were supposed to take place on Tuesdays from 2 to 4 p.m. A line would extend down the fourth floor hallway at Lehman Hall. Students would wait for hours, sometimes until as late as eight o'clock. When they arrived at his door wondering if, perhaps, they should reschedule, Juviler would smile and say, "I'm so happy to see you." □

### **BOOKS**

Freedom's Ordeal: The Struggle for Human Rights and Democracy in Post-Soviet States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997)

Human Rights for the 21st Century: Foundations for Responsible Hope: A U.S. Post-Soviet Dialogue, edited with Bertram Gross (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993)

Gorbachev's Reforms: U.S. and Japanese Assessment, edited with Hiroshi Kimura (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1988)

Revolutionary Law and Order: Politics and Social Change in the USSR (New York: Free Press, 1976)

Soviet Policy-Making: Studies of Communism in Transition, edited with Henry Morton (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967)

### PETER JUVILER FUND

In memory of Peter Juviler, who touched the lives of thousands of students and colleagues and who dedicated himself to the promotion of religious tolerance, responsible citizenship, and human dignity, Barnard has launched an initiative to endow a fund in support of the study and practice in the field of human rights. The Juviler Fund will ensure that new generations of Barnard Human Rights majors will continue in Juviler's footsteps, as they address ethical and practical issues in our increasingly interconnected world.

The Juviler Fund will support awards for travel and research, and strengthen the promotion of the major. Over time, Barnard hopes to expand the Fund to include additional aspects, including faculty support, fellowships, internships, and financial aid assistance for Human Rights majors. The initial goal is to raise \$100,000 to endow the Fund, which will ensure that Juviler's work and legacy are memorialized in perpetuity.

To make a gift, please visit www.barnard.edu /gift and enter "Juviler Fund" in the "Restricted Funds" box. For more information, call 212-870-2569 or write Robin Roy at rroy@barnard.edu.



### BY THOMAS KENT

## WHY DID CITIZENS COMPLY WITH A FAILING REGIME?

Thomas Kent, adjunct associate professor of journalism and of international and public affairs, was a correspondent for the Associated Press in Moscow from 1976 to 1978 and from 1979 to 1981. In this piece, adapted from presentations at the Harriman Institute and Columbia College, he answers an often-asked question: Why did Russians put up with the privations of life in the late years of Soviet rule?



President Gerald R. Ford and General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev after signing the Joint Communiqué on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, Vladivostok, November 1974

o many Westerners, the last decades of the Soviet Union are a puzzle. How did a regime with so many failings survive? Most Russians were well aware that people lived far better in the West, that the dream of perfect communism, or even perfect socialism, wasn't going to come true, and that Leonid Brezhnev's leadership was ineffectual and sclerotic. In contrast to the revolutionary fervor of the 1920s, the racing industrialization of the 1930s, or the sacrifice and victory of the war years, Russia, from Brezhnev's ascent in the mid-1960s until the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev, was mainly in the business of getting by. It was a grim time of privation and ineptitude with little prospect of reward. But despite shortages of food, housing, and health care, there was never any significant threat to his rule. While Brezhnev's elderly and decrepit Politburo was the regular butt of jokes, it reigned over a docile nation.

Russians, we know from the 1990s and since, are capable of expressing discontent. So why was opposition to the regime so little in evidence despite the best efforts of the country's own dissidents to agitate for democracy and the best subversion that Western propaganda could muster? Why were there so many people who not only didn't oppose the government but actually supported it, or at least got out of bed and went to work each day more or less planning to do a good job, rarely challenging the regime that ran things?

To that question, most Westerners give the same answer. They lay the quiescence of Russians to the massive intelligence and security apparatus that had institutionalized terror since 1917. Given informers, phone taps, labor camps, how could

Russians be anything but compliant? The KGB under Yuri Andropov was a reality. However, by the time the Brezhnev regime reached its height, or its nadir, people hardly lived in a state of constant terror. Some people were given significant jail sentences on charges like anti-Soviet propaganda, but not many; most dissidents who dared to hold public demonstrations against the government were jailed for as little as ten or fifteen days. People no longer faced imprisonment for slacking on the job. Significant numbers listened regularly to Western radio broadcasts with impunity. The KGB was there, but it was not a national preoccupation: as Russians liked to say when asked about it, "I don't think about Andropov, and I certainly hope he doesn't think about me."

History suggests that in any authoritarian regime, the leadership stays in power through more than brute intimidation. Devices commonly include appeals to nationalist or religious sentiment, techniques of social organization, and a common fear of external enemies. Combined with just a shadow of repression, these factors can create a society where people not only serve the state conscientiously but feel they're doing the right thing.

So, too, in the Soviet Union. Many people were cynical of the regime to a degree—"They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work." But the prevailing mood was hardly one of terror and resentment. There was much more to the Soviet people's mindset than that. So how was society organized in the Brezhnev period? What factors kept people in line and even earned their support? Certainly it would be a mistake to entirely discount the intelligence and police apparatus. In a million little

## There were thousands and thousands of people with some connection to authority. If you liked telling people what to do (and plenty of people did), you, too, could be one of the nation's enforcers, even in your spare time.

ways, Russians knew the authorities were always there. A colleague of mine remembers going to a riverbank one January 1 to watch Muscovites jump into the icy Moscow River in the annual show of toughness and spirit. Some kind of argument started between a couple of people on the bank. A man in plain clothes stepped out of the crowd. He told them to quiet down. They did. No badge flashed, no explanation of who he was . . . but everyone knew as much as they needed to. If he wasn't a genuine KGB agent, his very stride, his controlled voice, and even his stare alone indicated he was someone someone associated with the police, someone in the party, someone from a local committee with authority. All that was important was that he represented some larger apparatus that could make things difficult for the protagonists.

There were thousands and thousands of people with some connection to authority. If you liked telling others what to do (and plenty of people did), you, too, could be one of the nation's enforcers, even in your spare time. You could join the druzhinniki, the volunteer auxiliary police. In return, you got an armband, a little stick you could hold up to stop traffic—pretty much whenever you felt like it—and plenty of connections with the real police for whatever they might be worth. You could join "comrades' courts," panels of amateur judges with the right to impose fines on neighbors for infractions like disorderly conduct. A whole additional assortment of committees based on apartment buildings, neighborhoods, trade unions, and party cells felt free to inquire into pretty much anyone's conduct, morality, and personal life.

In an exquisite arrangement, real security agents sometimes appeared at public events sporting the armbands of the humble druzhinniki or other volunteer groups. This muddied the waters just perfectly. Anybody with an armband, anybody on a committee, anybody who looked like they could be on a committee conceivably could be someone highly dangerous if crossed. For people who might get out of line, this arrangement created the impression that the forces of order were pervasive. And, most important, all those who drew even the smallest bit of power from being a druzhinnik or committee member had a personal stake in preserving the existing system.

Beyond police power lay the heavy hand of administrative control. The language of the time was rich with terms—propuski, propiski, spravki, trudovye knizhki, pasporta, and *udostovereniya*—each referring to one of the little documents that ruled where you could work, where you could live, and where you could travel. All of them took the blessing of the bureaucracy to get; offend a comrades' court today, have trouble getting a critical document stamped tomorrow. Yet those of us in the Soviet Union during the Brezhnev period felt that repression, be it police or bureaucratic, was hardly the key to the obedience and loyalty the Soviet people offered the regime.

To begin with, the regime traded on Russians' patriotism and their indisputable love for their country. This included a general acceptance of the right of Communists to lead it. Despite the cynicism of some, the idealism of the Communist revolution never quite faded in the Brezhnev period, in spite of all the promises that had failed to work out. However bad life was, Soviet citizens felt they were all in it together. Most of them lived in the same difficult situation—there was equality in their deprivation. There were no Russian capitalists profiting at their expense. (Whatever luxuries government officials enjoyed they hid well behind high dacha walls and their cars' tinted glass. Conspicuous consumption, the downfall of elites in many countries, was not a practice in the Soviet Union.)

Youth groups sometimes engaged in projects like the kommunisticheskii trudovoy semestr, a semester or summer they'd spend without pay on projects like building summer camps for children. There was a selflessness to this work (though it might help them advance in the Communist Youth League), and they felt few other countries had young people doing those sorts of things. Russians laughed at Brezhnev, but they rarely joked about Lenin. Many were convinced that despite all the unpleasant realities of the USSR, the principles Lenin espoused were still valid, still embodied their national purpose, and still legitimized the Soviet state. Beyond maintaining equality among most citizens, Soviet authorities won widespread support by lavishing attention on children. (When Westerners asserted that the Soviet leadership was living a life of luxury, Soviet officials delighted in the gotcha response, "Yes, we do have a privileged class—our

For a country with pervasive censorship, the Soviet Union claimed to publish more newspapers, journals, and books than any other nation in the world.

children!") To the extent that a basically poor country could afford it, children were well cared for and had the best of whatever medical care was available. They benefited from an extensive network of sports clubs, summer camps, and cultural activities ranging from ballet to circus.

In fact, the government devoted large expenditures to intellectual, cultural, and sports activities for everyone. For a country with pervasive censorship, it claimed to publish more newspapers, journals, and books than any other nation in the world . . . many of questionable value, but all at low prices and, from a statistical standpoint, a lot of kultura per capita. The regime also espoused the dignity of work, any work. A well-performing trolleybus driver or farmer could expect bonuses, hagiography on his enterprise's bulletin board, a free trip to a resort or spa, and maybe even a medal of the same level that political leaders wore.

Perception of a real Western military threat also bound Russians together, and to the Brezhnev regime. The United States and the rest of NATO looked threatening to ordinary Soviets. If Americans favored Mercator map projections that made Russia look like a colossus stretching across half the globe, Russia favored polar projections that showed their country ringed by U.S. bases and client states. The Soviet press regularly asserted that the United States spared no expense for weaponry. The implication was that if not for Russia's need to keep up, the nation's standard of living might be higher. When Americans in senior positions regularly denounced and threatened the Soviet Union, their words essentially confirmed for ordinary Russians

Right: Ford and Brezhnev, Vladivostok, November 1974





A military parade in Red Square marks the sixty-first anniversary of the October Revolution (November 7, 1978). (Bettman/Corbis/AP Images)

what their own government was saying about U.S. intentions.

Such sentiment peaked after Ronald Reagan's casual quip in August 1984 about bombing the Soviet Union. The president was testing a microphone before a radio address and said, just to test the sound level, "I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." Most Americans took it as a there-he-goes-again Reagan moment. Russians were horrified. For them, it was evidence not only that bombing Russia was always on Reagan's mind but that the United States—untouched in World War II while Russia was nearly destroyed—could treat war as comic material.

Soviet propagandists juxtaposed this bellicose image of the West with Russia's foreign policy. Russians were well aware of Moscow's support for a variety of Asian, African, and Latin American causes, usually portrayed as national liberation movements being opposed by the United States and other Western interests. Key among them was the struggle against apartheid, with South Africa's white government backed

by the United States and liberation figures, including Nelson Mandela, championed by Moscow. All this managed to convince many citizens that their country was indeed the world's principal force for peace and progress (there was a Soviet propaganda radio station by that specific name), while the United States was the most likely source of war and oppression. Soviet propaganda skillfully portrayed the nation's dissidents—poorly organized individuals known to most citizens only through Western broadcasts—as a fifth column inspired by the West. All this was reinforced by a huge emphasis on Russia's suffering in World War II. The Soviet state drew a straight line from the war to the Brezhnev era, encouraging veterans to wear their medals, creating occasions for them to tell children about their exploits, and jumping them to the head of the line at stores and cinemas.

Given the concept of the Soviet Union as a peace-loving state that must always be prepared for war, it was eminently reasonable to Russians that high schools should train children in handling automatic weapons. The military also enjoyed

a near monopoly on offering some of the most exciting things a young Russian could do. An automobile might be unaffordable to a Russian teenager, but if he joined DOSAAF—the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force, and Navy—he could find himself driving a car, a truck, or a tank on the DOSAAF practice grounds. Same if he wanted to drive a power boat or fly a plane. While any American teenager might drive a car or wire up an amateur radio transmitter on his own, such things were often available in Russia only through DOSAAF or groups like it-and discussion of the Western threat was always part of the curriculum. Not for nothing was it called "military-political training."

The West was also regularly portrayed as a bastion of social injustice, pornography, and labor unrest, held together only by bribery and repression. Often under headlines like *Vot ikh demokratiya*—"Such is their democracy"—Soviet reporters would visit American homeless shelters or interview bitter, jobless American workers. Strikes large and small, anywhere in the Western world, would be reported in adjoining articles in Russian newspapers,

## The West was regularly portrayed as a bastion of social injustice, pornography, and labor unrest, held together only by bribery and repression.

implying they were all part of a common wave of resistance against capitalist bosses. Soviet propaganda gave Russians plenty of reason to doubt that everything in Western countries was as good as they might have heard. It worked. Often Russians, asked if they knew about Western freedom of speech and press, would respond, "Yes. That means anyone can publish pornography, right?"

A stream of foreign visitors, including many Americans, unwittingly helped validate what Soviet propaganda was saying. A program on Soviet TV consisted of interviews with visiting foreigners who would politely enthuse about the Moscow subways, the Bolshoi Theater, or anything else they could think of to praise. Sometimes their eagerness to please extended to noting that everyone in Russia had a job when the United States had so many unemployed, and that in Russia, health care was free.

But what about assertive Russians who might genuinely be tempted by the idea of Russia's people making their own decisions about their daily life? Those who got interested in the idea on too grand a scale could be dealt with by the KGB. But at a more ordinary level, the system was hugely successful in co-opting those Russians who identified inefficiencies, petty corruption, and silly rules that trammeled daily life and sapped the economy. The Soviet press had a controlled level of investigative reporting. Poor-quality goods and pointless rules were exposed for all to see, with due credit to those who had reported them. Arrests of low-level officials for corruption were publicized widely.

To be sure, such exposés usually appeared only in regional newspapers. If reported nationally, they focused on failings in individual towns. There was never a suggestion that mismanagement and corruption were

endemic nationwide. Lacking the Internet or an unfettered press, there was little way for citizens to know whether the privations or corruption they experienced were systematic or just anecdotal to their region.

Citizens who became particularly fond of improving processes and exposing misdeeds often benefited from a faux politics that gave them some genuine power while demonstrating the advantages of coloring within the lines. Not only did the system of low-level neighborhood, trade union, and Communist Party bodies have authority over minor issues like housing and factory work rules, it also elevated smart and prudent members to city, regional, or even higher-level soviets, or legislative bodies. The Supreme Soviet in Moscow, the nation's highest lawmaking council, and national congresses of the Communist Party were rife with milkmaids, construction workers, and hundreds of others with minimal political training. Top party authorities made the real decisions. At the same time, the higher the soviet, the greater the personal privileges of membership, and the more lavish the annual meetings. One might call this true bread-and-butter politics . . . not because the soviets had authority over bread-and-butter issues, but because of the butter, salmon, and caviar canapés that the members enjoyed during breaks in the sessions. The lesson was obvious as individuals who had some authority at a local level rose in the soviets: Accepting that you had no real power over larger and larger issues brought larger and larger benefits. The effect was to retain within the system some who might otherwise have become larger-scale voices of protest.

Even if you weren't in a soviet, the road to special privileges was still open to almost every Soviet citizen. Only the elite got luxury goods from the West. But a factory

mechanic might get tickets to a first-run movie at his factory club, which he could slip to the butcher for hard-to-get sausage. The woman at the shoe store might look out for a certain size for the doctor, who would give her family priority for an appointment. The official who controlled the waiting list for apartments might give extra consideration to an Aeroflot flight attendant who brought her a scarf from Paris. Everyone, it seemed, knew a guy who could get something done in return for a small favor. This democratization of access and connections bound millions of people into a system where they had as much to lose as to gain if the system were threatened.

All these factors went into the social and political algorithm that let Brezhnev survive. Russians of the period were nationalistic, sometimes idealistic people, who worked hard enough for the regime so that it didn't fall apart completely. They realized things were far from perfect. But, like most people, they saw more good in their own country than ill. And they lived in a system that had finely honed control and reward, propaganda, and patriotism for the preservation of the Soviet state.

Tom Kent is standards editor and a deputy managing editor of The Associated Press. Based in New York, he lectures internationally on journalistic ethics, including at Russian universities and media conferences. He served with the AP as correspondent in Sydney, Australia; correspondent for NATO and the European Union in Brussels; correspondent and bureau chief in Moscow; chief of AP operations in Iran during the Iranian revolution; deputy news editor and news editor of AP's World Service Division in New York; and international editor of the AP. He graduated from Yale with a specialty in international relations and Russian.



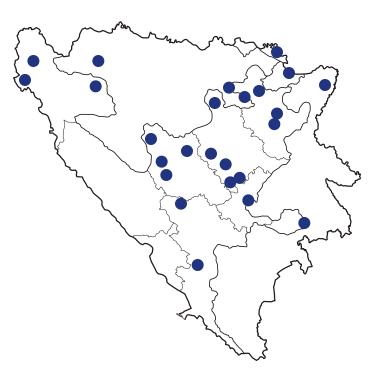
SIGNALS NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

n early February 2014, news of revolution in Ukraine and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) dominated international headlines. As Euromaidan gave way to the Russian occupation of Crimea, however, scenes of armed militias in Sevastopol pushed the "Bosnian Spring" from the front pages. In Ukraine, the revolution brought the country to the brink of war. In BiH, still recovering from the Bosnian War (1992-95), the protests created the first real possibility for change in nearly two decades.

At the heart of this possibility is the emergence of grassroots popular assemblies, locally known as the plenumi. Attended first by hundreds, then by thousands, the plena have created a space for the citizens of BiH to discuss openly and freely the one shared reality that cuts across all complex ethnic, regional, and political divisions: the country's catastrophic socioeconomic situation. More than 40 percent of the adult population, 50 percent of women, and 60 percent of young people are unemployed. Among the youth, 80 percent declare they would leave BiH if they had the means. Meanwhile, Bosnian lawmakers make six times the average wage in the country, the highest such gap in Europe.

This situation is the result of the byzantine mass of governing bodies established by the General Framework Agreement

Locations where the protests took place (map readapted from Klix.ba)



for Peace, better known as the Dayton Agreement, in December 1995. The agreement separated the country into two entities, the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS), creating a complex patchwork of institutions that employ approximately 180 ministers, 600 legislators, and 70,000 bureaucrats according to strict ethnic quotas. These elected officials and their staff constitute a privileged class that has facilitated the highest rate of corruption on the European continent. Until now, these elites have skillfully manipulated the population by using Serb, Croat, and Bosniak nationalist rhetoric to maintain postwar ethnic tensions and thus prevent united popular backlash against their rule.

But, on February 4, 2014, a crowd of several hundred unemployed workers from the collapsed Dita, Polihem, Guming, and Konjuh factories gathered in front of the seat of the Tuzla Canton. Chanting "Thieves!" they demanded the government investigate the privatizations of their former employers, the industrial giants where the majority of the population worked during the socialist era. By February 6, approximately 6,000 people gathered in the streets of Tuzla. Officials refused to meet with worker representatives, who were confronted by an increasingly hostile police presence. Running street battles ensued in which a hundred police were injured and eleven cars set ablaze.

The public anger in Tuzla touched a nerve across the country. The next day the protests spread to more than twenty cities and towns, including the major centers of Sarajevo, Zenica, Mostar, and Bihać. In Sarajevo, protestors torched cantonal offices, municipal buildings, and the seat of the presidency of BiH. In Mostar, the jewel of Herzegovina, crowds set fire to government buildings and the local party headquarters of the leading nationalist parties. In Tuzla itself, more than a hundred people were injured as angry crowds stormed and later set fire to several floors of the cantonal government building.

For BiH, everything about the protests was unprecedented: their size, their militancy, and, above all, their effectiveness. In their wake, the premiers of four cantons in the Federation entity resigned, as did the director of the Directorate for Police Coordination, a state-level body. In the RS, a panicked scramble by the authorities resulted in an offer for snap elections, as well as a campaign of intimidation against local activists.

Clearly terrified at what appeared to be a rejection by the BiH citizens of the political establishment as a whole, all three nationalist camps began to blame sinister foreign "centers of power" for the unrest. Moreover, representatives of the leading nationalist parties explained that the socioeconomic complaints of the protestors were only a mask for their true anti-Bosniak, anti-Croat, and anti-Serb agendas. The ethnic narrative was predictable. But, only days after the worst of the violence, a Valicon poll released on February 12 illustrated how detached this "ethnic spin" was from the public's perceptions: 88 percent of respondents in BiH supported the protests, 93 percent in the FBiH, and 78 percent in the RS. Despite



Zenica-Doboj Canton building the day after the riot in February 2014

the popular support, the spontaneous emergence of the citizen plena has been an unlikely development in a society where few institutions, schools and public utility companies included, are not ethnically segregated and mutual suspicion is meant to inform virtually every aspect of daily life.

The plena have demanded the resignations of entity and cantonal governments, audits of public spending, investigations of failed privatizations, and the creation of nonpartisan, expert governments appointed to be in dialogue with the plena themselves in the period leading up to the October General Elections. In Tuzla, Sarajevo, and Una-Sana cantons, the local authorities have largely acquiesced to popular demands by passing legislation that will cut years-long "severance pay" for officials no longer even employed by the government, for instance. However, authorities in both the FBiH and RS governments remain aggressively obstinate, refusing to meet or even acknowledge the citizens' demands.

What does this eruption of democratic consciousness tell us about BiH? The implications are paradigmatic. To begin with, there is clearly widespread national disillusionment with the existing political process. Second, Bosnians and Herzegovinians are able and willing to organize across ethnic lines, *especially* on concrete socioeconomic concerns that the political establishment refuses to address. And, perhaps most importantly, the citizens have shown *themselves* to be able to produce and articulate clear demands and policy suggestions regarding how to further this process.

Cynical local (and partisan) commentators have suggested that the meetings constitute an attempted coup d'état or an attack on the electoral process. After the 2010 General Elections, however, it took sixteen months for a governing coalition to be formed at the state level—one that collapsed quickly thereafter. Since then parliamentary sessions have frequently dissolved into farcical theatrics; it is still not entirely clear which is the ruling coalition and which the opposition. Given the impasse, new elections should have been called years ago. A provision for such elections, however, does not exist in BiH.

Thus, the plena are actually a *deepening* of the possibilities entailed by democratic politics. The aim of the plena is to establish permanent dialogue between elected officials and ordinary citizens, and as such they represent an accountability and transparency mechanism, moreover, one devised by the people of BiH themselves. The logic is one born of nearly twenty years of disappointment: change comes through meaningful, citizen-led democratization not the periodic rearranging of hitherto unassailable and entrenched political elites.

While the plena offer the potential for a democratic transformation in BiH, substantive and lasting change will require a multipronged approach by both local and international actors. On the local level, a truly autonomous and organized civil society that is willing and able to hold accountable the political establishment is still only emerging. Ultimately, civil society initiatives will depend on the appearance of new, genuinely democratic and progressive parties and leaders within the context of established political institutions. Without such parties acting to turn popular will into effective law, the country risks sliding into a permanent conflict between elites



Government building of Tuzla Canton burning

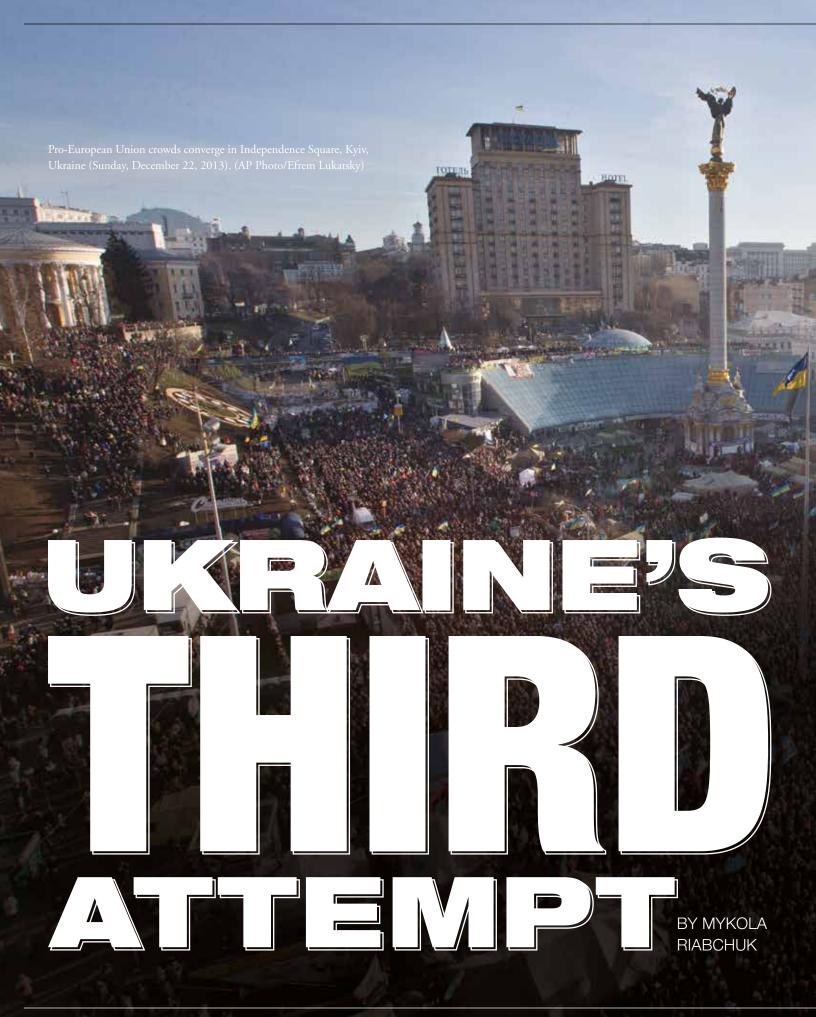
and masses, one where street violence could become a frequent and dangerous occurrence.

The Office of the High Representative (OHR) still has the authority to sanction, penalize, and remove corrupt and obstructionist officials according to the Bonn Powers granted to that office in 1997. Rarely used since 2006, despite being the most volatile postwar period to date, the Bonn Powers must once again become a tool in the OHR arsenal. Indeed, given the disastrous situation in the country since 2010, in particular, it is time for a new High Representative—a fresh, newly empowered agent to assist in BiH's long-obstructed democratization process. All these steps require a concerted reengagement on the part of the U.S. and EU. The inevitability of constitutional reform must be made clear if BiH is ever to be a serious candidate for EU and NATO membership. The country requires a rational and democratic constitutional order, one rooted in established human rights norms and practices. Robust minority rights and protections must replace ethnic quotas.

The international community has long been waiting for the people of BiH to come up with a popular initiative like the plena. Now, the citizens of BiH need international assistance to make their hard-won victories permanent by pushing through critical and urgently required reforms. Failure to accomplish these goals may irreversibly destabilize the heart of southeastern Europe for decades to come.  $\Box$ 

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On the local level, a truly autonomous and organized civil society that is willing and able to hold accountable the political establishment is still only emerging. Ultimately, civil society initiatives will depend on the appearance of new, genuinely democratic and progressive parties and leaders within the context of established political institutions.





or many Westerners, especially those increasingly skeptical of the European Union (EU), the mere fact that thousands of young Ukrainians went to the streets in the frosty winter of 2013 to defend an agreement with the EU that did not promise any immediate gains may look strange. Timothy Snyder, in his *New York Review of Books* blog, asks: "Would anyone anywhere in the world be willing to take a truncheon in the head for the sake of a trade agreement with the United States?" Certainly not. And Snyder of course knew the answer to his rhetorical question: it was not the agreement per se that mobilized the protesters but rather their hope for a "normal life in a normal country," which the agreement had symbolized. "If this is a revolution," he wrote, "it must be one of the most common-sense revolutions in history."

In November, after the government absconded with people's hopes for a "normal life," Ukrainians felt deceived not merely about this single case but also about their entire lives, about the country's development that had been stuck for twenty-two years in a gray zone between post-Soviet autocracies to the east and increasingly democratizing and prosperous neighbors to the west.

There had been too many hopes and too many disappointments over the past twenty-two years, beginning with national independence endorsed by 90 percent of the citizens in 1991 but eventually compromised by the predatory elite, and ending perhaps with the 2004 Orange Revolution that also failed to deliver on its high promises. Things only went from bad to worse with the 2010 election of Viktor Yanukovych as president and the dismissal of

the feckless Orange government. Within a few years, the narrow circle of the president's allies, nicknamed "the Family," usurped all power, destroyed the court system, amassed enormous resources via corruption schemes, and encroached heavily on human rights and civil liberties.

The dire results of their rule became evident not only in economic stagnation and the virtual collapse of the financial system under the burden of international and domestic debt, but also in Ukraine's dramatic downgrading in various international indicesfrom the rank of 89 in 2009 to 126 in 2013 on the Press Freedom Index; from 107 to 144 on the Corruption Perception Index; from 142 to 152 on the Doing Business Index; and from a "free" to a "partly free" country in the ranking by Freedom House. But probably the most damaging consequence of their misrule became the public's complete distrust in all state institutions, particularly those that ensure legality and law enforcement. By the end of 2013, only 2 percent of respondents fully trusted the Ukrainian courts (40 percent declared no trust at all), 3 percent trusted the police, the prosecutor's office, and parliament (controlled by Yanukovych's supporters), and 5 percent trusted the government. The only institutions with a positive balance in the trust/distrust equation appeared to be the church, mass media, and NGOs.

Indeed, as Michael Zantovsky argued in *World Affairs* last November, it might be a blessing in disguise that the Ukrainian government shelved the agreement and that a country with this sort of ruling elite was not brought into Europe. But the problem

is that people in the government and their oligarchic cronies have already long been in Europe—with their villas, stolen money, and diplomatic passports that make a visa-free regime for the rest of their fellow citizens unnecessary. Ironically, they have fully benefited from the rule of law and property rights in the West, while systemically undermining these very rights in their own country. It was not they who were excluded from Europe, but Ukraine and its 46 million people, whereas the ruling elite continues to enjoy la dolce vita in what they domestically call "Euro-Sodom" a Putinesque-style nickname for the European Union.

For many Ukrainians, the association agreement was the last hope for fixing things peacefully, that is, to make their rulers abide by the law and to get the EU's support in an attempt to reestablish the rule of law in the country. Most of them had little if any illusion about the ruling clique, and the last thing they wanted was to see them in Europe. But for many the agreement had two clear meanings. On the government side, it meant a commitment not to steal, lie, and cheat so much and so unscrupulously. Whereas on the EU side, it merely meant helping Ukrainian citizens, whenever possible, to enforce this commitment not to steal, lie, and cheat.

Viktor Yanukovych's refusal to sign the agreement represented a moment of truth, and the mass protests in Kyiv and other cities were simply a reaction to that truth—a farewell to illusions and the recognition of reality. Maidan meant, in fact, the confrontation of two different worlds, two political systems and sets of values—so-called "Europe" embodied in the EU and so-called "Eurasia" embodied in Putinist Russia, Yanukovych's "Family," and the hired thugs that harassed protesters.

Maidan, indeed, was neither a "nationalistic mutiny" nor an "election technology" applied by the opposition, as Viktor Yanukovych and his Kremlin patrons claimed. Rather, it was a classical social revolution, an attempt to complete the unfinished business of the 1989 East European antiauthoritarian and anticolonial uprisings. As Anatoly Halchynsky, a renowned Ukrainian economist, argued in Dzerkalo tyzhnia (January 17, 2014), "the goals of 1991, of Maidan-2004, and of Euro-Maidan are the same. They are of the same origin, related not only to the assertion of Ukraine's national sovereignty but also to putting an end to the Soviet era and freeing Ukraine's mentality from the remnants of totalitarianism. European integration is merely an indicator of these changes."

## Halchynsky praises Maidan's nonmercantile character, which, in his view, is fully in line with global trends moving from economic determinism to moral and spiritual values. Importantly, he contends, it is not a Bolshevik-style revolution of the lumpenproletariat. On the contrary, it is being carried out primarily by educated people, the middle class, students, professionals, and businessmen (according to the Democratic Initiative Fund's sociological surveys, nearly two-thirds of Maidan protesters have a higher education). Maidan resembles, in a number of ways, the 1968 democratic revolutions that spread across Europe and the globe, introducing a radically new, nonmaterialist agenda.

If these observations are correct and a gradual shift from materialist to post-materialist values is taking place in Ukraine, any attempt to install a full-fledged authoritarian regime in Ukraine is doomed from the start. To the extent that Ukrainian society is becoming a "knowledge society," and new generations grow up taking survival for granted, an increase in demands for participation in decision making in the economic and political life is inevitable.

One may refer here to the analysis by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel of the cultural links between modernization and democracy and, in particular, their two-dimensional map of cross-cultural variations that reflects correlations of a large number of basic values drawn from the extensive data of the World Value Surveys. (Ukraine was the object of these surveys in 1995, 2000, and 2006.)2

The WVS Cultural Map positions each country according to its citizens' values. One dimension reflects the predominance of Secular-Rational values versus Traditional values; another represents the shift by different countries from Survival values to Self-Expression. The former shift coincides primarily with the process of modernization and industrialization; the latter is typical primarily for postindustrial development. This is reflected also, as Welzel and Inglehart posit in a June 2010 article for Perspectives on Politics, in a substantial

### National Ukrainian Survey 20131

	Education		Ethnicity		Age	
	Basic	Higher	Russian	Ukrainian	60+	18–29
Does Ukraine need more democracy or a "strong hand"? (%)	9/75	32/55	14/66	28/58	19/67	32/52
Does Ukraine need more freedom of speech or more censorship? (%)	31/27	47/25	21/40	47/24	36/31	49/22
Should Ukraine develop market relations or return to a planned economy? (%)	23/46	58/25	32/44	54/28	35/43	61/19
Do you regret the loss of the Soviet Union? (yes/no)	62/20	31/57	55/31	38/47	61/27	20/60

difference in both dimensions between less-educated and university-educated members of the same society.

Yaroslav Hrytsak, a prominent Ukrainian historian, argues in Zbruc (December 26, 2013) that Ukraine does not support Welzel and Inglehart's pessimistic conclusion that the peculiar set of values entrenched in the mentality of the post-Soviet people renders all these countries very unlikely to achieve a trajectory of sustainable development in the foreseeable future. He refers to the noticeable shift in values in the Survival/ Self-Expression dimension that occurred in Ukraine in the past decade—in sharp contrast to the virtual stagnation of the 1990s.

Indeed, even though the most recent WVS figures date from 2006, the latest Ukrainian surveys confirm that the country's shift in values, however slow and at times incoherent, is persistent and probably irreversible. First of all, it is most noticeable in the attitudes of different age groups to various value-charged issues. Last year's national survey reveals a strong correlation between the respondent's age and attitude toward some fundamental issue, such as "democracy vs. 'strong hand," "freedom of speech vs. censorship," "planned economy vs. free market," and, the most general, "regret/no regret for the Soviet Union." But one may also discern a significant correlation between all those issues and people's ethnicity as well as education (In the table to the left only "yes/ no" answers are shown, whereas "difficult to say/no answer" is omitted. In addition, only the youngest and oldest age groups are shown. The middle groups are omitted and the middle group of Russophone Ukrainians—those that fall between ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, and all the middle groups between those with higher and basic education).

This clearly demonstrates that Ukraine is divided, but certainly not split. The conspicuous differences between the proverbial West and East are mitigated by (a) the vast intermediate regions of Central Ukraine and (b) the heterogeneity of any sociologically significant group that makes intra-group

## **Fundamental issues like** human rights, civil liberties, and rule of law cannot be solved by a simple majority vote.

differences and cross-group similarities nearly as important as inter-group differences and dissimilarities. For example, as we see from the data above, ethnic Russians are much more prone to regret the loss of the Soviet Union than ethnic Ukrainians. But this represents merely a statistically significant correlation and not ironclad dependence and determinism. Whereas 47 percent of Ukrainians express no regret for the Soviet Union, 38 percent express it to various degrees; whereas 55 percent of Russians (in Ukraine) regret the loss of the Soviet Union, 31 percent do not. Both groups are as divided internally as they are externally among themselves. The same intra-group divisions can be discerned in people's attitudes toward other political options.

Ethnic Russians and/or Russian speakers are more likely to support a "strong hand" vs. democracy, censorship vs. freedom of speech, or planned economy vs. free market. But this is only likelihood, not determinism. The reason is simple: it was much easier for Russians and Russophones to internalize Soviet ideology as "ours" than for Ukrainophones, who strove to preserve their cultural identity under the pressure of Russification and therefore had more reason to distance themselves, to various degrees, from Soviet officialdom.

Many other important differences cross regional, ethnic, or ethnocultural divides. Higher education is one crucial factor: in all groups and regions it strongly correlates with a pro-Western, pro-democratic orientation and increased civic behavior. The same correlation also holds with age: the younger the respondent the more likely she or he is to support Ukraine's European integration and everything it entails.



Photo by Vitalii Liamichev

Nicu Popescu, a senior analyst at the EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris, aptly recognized the complexity of Ukrainian divides when he contended at the very beginning of the Maidan uprising that "the fault line runs not just between east and west but also within the Yanukovych support groups. Some of them will continue supporting him, and some of them are disappointed by the way he misgoverned Ukraine over the last, almost four years." Indeed, even though Ukrainians are still divided about geopolitical orientation, there is something approaching a national consensus about ousting Yanukovych. (In a recent poll by the GfK Group, 94 percent supported it in the west and 70 percent in the south and east; by the same token, 91 percent of Westerners and 70 percent of Easterners condemned the Russian invasion of Crimea.)

This might be a good time to rid ourselves of propagandistic stereotypes and to reconceptualize Ukrainian cleavages as primarily ideological rather than ethnic or regional. "There are two political nations, with different values and development vectors, that cohabitate in Ukraine," Vitaly Portnikov, a renowned Jewish-Ukrainian journalist, argues in Gazeta.ua. These

two overlapping nations—the Soviet and anti-Soviet, Eurasian and European, the nation of paternalistic subjects and of emancipated citizens—bear the same name but are fundamentally divided by the very idea of what Ukraine is and should be. All this makes the reconciliation of "two Ukraines" highly problematic. For two decades, as another Ukrainian author, Yevhen Zolotariov, comments, two social realities, Soviet and non-Soviet, had coexisted in one country side by side, in parallel worlds, encountering each other only during elections. Non-Soviet Ukraine won a minimal but never decided victory over its Soviet rival every time. President Yanukovych managed within a few years to reestablish most Soviet practices and symbols. The problem, however, is that Soviet Ukraine has no raison d'être nor resources to exist beyond the USSR or some sort of substitute.

American journalist James Brooke employed the same metaphor of "two Ukraines" with a remarkable parallel to the U.S. conflict between the abolitionists and slave owners (even though he ascribed, contrary to Zolotariov, some reconciliatory intentions to the Ukrainian ruler): "For three years as president, Viktor Yanukovych has tried to balance the two sides, roughly comparable to the way pre-Civil War U.S. presidents tried to keep America's house together by waffling on slavery... Time will tell if President Yanukovych can keep Ukraine's two nations under one roof," he wrote in Voice of America last December.

Vitaly Nakhmanovych, a Ukrainian historian and Jewish-Ukrainian activist, argues in the January 2014 issue of Kritika that the reconciliation between these "two nations" is barely possible in the foreseeable future, because the shift in values will take place slowly if at all. Instead, he contends, Ukrainian politicians should think about accommodation. It might be possible if one group manages to guarantee some autonomy for the other group, with due respect to its values. It is very unlikely that authoritarian Ukraine can provide such autonomy for democratically minded Europe-oriented citizens. But it is quite possible that democratic Ukraine could find a way to accommodate its paternalistic, Sovietophile, and Russia-oriented fellow countrymen. This is actually what both Latvia and Estonia have accomplished rather successfully for their Sovietophile/Pan-Slavonic fellow residents.

In a value-based context, all the arguments that Maidan and the post-Maidan







Photos from the Euromaidan by Vitalii Liamichev (left and right) and Sofia Riabchuk (center)



Photo by Sofia Riabchuk

government do not represent Ukrainian society as a whole and instead deepen Ukraine's ideological divide and political polarization, make little sense. Fundamental issues like human rights, civil liberties, and rule of law—everything we subsume under the catchall rubric of "European values" cannot be solved by a simple majority vote. To be blunt, no majority can legitimize slavery, and no split in society can justify the preservation of totalitarian values.

"The real political divide in the country is not that which supposedly separates Ukraine's western and eastern regions," contends Russian political analyst Igor Torbakov. Instead, Torbakov sees a fault line, on one side of which we find a number of new and assertive identities (for example, liberals, champions of a Ukrainian civic nation, nationalists both radical and less radical) and on the other side those who cling to a post-Soviet identity, which extends unevenly across Ukraine, but is concentrated primarily,

but not entirely, in the east and south.

Torbakov believes that the best framework for analyzing Ukrainian developments is not a West vs. East, or Ukrainophones vs. Russophones paradigm, but a withering away of the post-Soviet foundation upon which a peculiar system of authoritarian political practices and crony capitalism rests. He defines this as "Putinism" because it was Putin who perfected the system and made it not just exemplary, but also

mandatory for all post-Soviet authoritarians. Ukraine's break with the system poses an existential threat for the Kremlin and Putin himself. Hence the hysterical reaction of the Russian media and the Russian military's brutal invasion of Ukrainian territory. "The toppling of the Yanukovych regime," Torbakov argues, "created an opportunity for a bold political experiment, one largely aimed at accommodating Ukraine's multiple identities and opening up political and economic possibilities to a much broader slice of society. This desire to open up society is what strikes at the very heart of Putinism, a philosophy that needs a tight lid to be kept on political expression and economic opportunity."

Russian aggressive actions may seriously frustrate Ukraine's current attempt at de-Sovietization and the implementation of profound reforms. But the very persistence with which Ukrainians, time and again, attempt to complete the unfinished business of the 1989 East European revolutions implies that Ukraine's westward drift is all but irreversible, and the best thing Russia can do is to follow the move rather than try to obstruct it.

Mykola Riabchuk, a political and cultural analyst based in Kyiv, is currently a visiting EURIAS research fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. He is also vice president of Ukrainian PEN. His most recent book, Gleichschaltung: Authoritarian Consolidation in Ukraine, 2010-2012, was published in both Ukrainian and English. Riabchuk is a former Harriman Institute Petro Jacyk Visiting Professor.

- <sup>1</sup> Source: Кілька тез про ціннісні орієнтації українців. Соціологічна група «Рейтинг», Травень 2013, р. 8, 11, 14, 18; http:// ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG \_Orientyry\_052013.pdf.
- <sup>2</sup> The WVS Cultural Map of the World, http:// www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder \_published/article\_base\_54.
- <sup>3</sup> As quoted in Robert Coalson, "Yanukovych's Base Eroding In Ukraine's Russophone East," RFE/RL Newsline, 3 December 2013; http://www.rferl.org/content/yanukovych -east/25188519.html.
- <sup>4</sup> Євген Золотарьов, Формула революції 2014 - від протесту до спротиву, 17 січня 2014, http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles /2014/01/17/7009810/.
- <sup>5</sup> http://eurasianet.org/node/68102.

# THE DANCERS

The three pieces that make up this section showcase the Harriman Institute's ties to an art form to which Russian artists have made extraordinary contributions. The pantheon of Russian dancers, choreographers, and designers truly dominated ballet in the twentieth century and continues today. The distinguished accomplishments of eminent dance historian Lynn Garafola were recognized last year by the Guggenheim Foundation and New York Public Library's Cullman Center, both of which awarded her fellowships for 2013-14 to support her research for a biography of Bronislava Nijinska. Nina Alovert has been photographing dancers, with

a particular emphasis on Russian artists, since the 1960s. The Harriman Institute had the good fortune in fall 2013 to mount an exhibition of her astonishing photographs ranging from early Baryshnikov in Leningrad to contemporary dancers in twentyfirst-century St. Petersburg. Finally, the profile of Stephen Reidy, a Russian Institute student in the 1970s, documents his ballet education that began in Leningrad with a performance by Baryshnikov, photographed, as it happens, by Alovert. Today, Reidy sits on the board of New York City Ballet.



"Red Giselle: Arbuzova is dressed in a bloodred costume, which is simultaneously curtain, banner, and scenery. In this bright, minimalist (the entire photograph is held together only by the color red) work we see in concentrated form what distinguishes Alovert from other ballet photographers. In this one work we see how the artist keenly and deeply feels the profound nature of two completely unrelated art forms: photography and ballet. In this work we sense the tradition of the great ballet photographers Barbara Morgan and Max Waldman, and the influence of ballet masterpieces by Martha Graham and Pina Bausch."

-Mark Serman, in his review "Nina Alovert's 'The Dancers' at Columbia University," published in Russian Bazaar, November 21-27, 2013.

BY RONALD MEYER

# THE DANCERS A PHOTO EXHIBITION BY NINA ALOVERT

ina Alovert's "The Dancers," a brief survey of her dance photographs beginning in the mid-60s and early '70s in Leningrad and ending with work from the twenty-first century taken in New York, Paris, and St. Petersburg, was on view at the Harriman Institute during the fall 2013 semester. Reviewing "The Dancers" for the *Wall Street Journal*, William Meyers writes: "Her pictures are distinguished by their style and precision; like sports photographers, dance photographers must anticipate and have the instantaneous reflexes to capture it. Again and again, the dancers in her photos are caught at the apogee of their leap and seem to be floating in air."

Alovert, a native of Leningrad, began her career as a photographer of the ballet in the 1960s, when she documented the early performances of future stars Nikita Dolgushin, Natalya Makarova, Alla Osipenko, and Yury Soloviev. In 1968 Alovert photographed the young prodigy Mikhail Baryshnikov. When the two met soon afterward, Alovert made a present of the photographs and the two became fast friends.

Alovert, with her mother and two children, immigrated to the United States in 1977. She faced the usual obstacles adjusting to her new life, even though Baryshnikov, who had defected to the West three years earlier, helped to smooth the way. Soon after her

arrival, Alovert's photographs appeared in the New York Russian daily *New Russian Word*, and she later became a regular contributor to influential dance publications such as *Dance Magazine*, *Pointe*, and *Ballet Review*.

Alovert's first book, *Baryshnikov in Russia*, was published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston in 1984 and was soon translated into many languages. This was followed by another seven books, published in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, devoted to dancers Vladimir Malakhov, Yulia Makhalina, and choreographer Boris Eifman, among others. In addition, her work appears in a number of volumes about dancers and the dance. Photographs by Alovert are in the collections of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, the Theater Museum (St. Petersburg), the Public Library (St. Petersburg), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and several private collections.

"The Dancers" is part of the Institute's ongoing series of exhibits of art from and about the region that has been running under the direction of Associate Director Alla Rachkov for more than a decade. The exhibit was curated by Natasha Sharymova (New York Plus Plus) who earlier brought to the Harriman shows of photographs of the writers Joseph Brodsky and Sergei Dovlatov, the latter of which also showcased photographs by Alovert.  $\square$ 











Reidy first saw Baryshnikov in Leningrad in the Soviet ballet *Creation of the World*, a performance captured by the young photographer Nina Alovert. Irina Kolpakova and Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Creation of the World* (Petrov/ Kasatkina, Vasilyov), Kirov Ballet, Leningrad, 1971 (photo by Nina Alovert).

# BARYSHNIKOV BALANCHINE

# A PROFILE STEPHEN K. REID'

BY RONALD MEYER

tephen Kroll Reidy has spent the last twenty-five years as a venture capital investor, serving since 1987 as a general partner at Euclid Partners in New York City. Prior to Columbia Business School (M.B.A. '78), Reidy earned his master's degree in international affairs ('74), also at Columbia, taking courses at the Russian Institute from luminaries Zbigniew Brzezinski, Seweryn Bialer, and Marshall Shulman. When not studying Soviet politics and history, the young graduate student, who now sits on the board of the New York City Ballet, took in ballet performances by the Joffrey Ballet, the resident ballet company at City Center during what is now considered the company's golden era.

Reidy's ballet education had its beginnings during his spring semester as a CIEE (Council on International Educational Exchange) student in Leningrad, living in a student dormitory near the Winter Palace. It was the first trip to the Soviet Union for Reidy, a Russian studies major at Middlebury College, who had chosen the school because of its famed Russianlanguage program. Reidy viewed learning the language as a crucial step to studying the country's history, politics, and culture; the fact that the Russian Department boasted the most flamboyant faculty and held the best parties was merely a bonus. In Leningrad, near the Winter Palace, he became acquainted with an elderly

woman selling theater tickets on the street, mostly for the ballet and opera, both of which were novel for the young student from working-class Boston. His ticket seller counseled him to try various performances and would save tickets for him. He fell in love with the ballet and very quickly focused on that. The first time he saw Mikhail Baryshnikov perform was in the full-length Soviet ballet The Creation of the World. His girlfriend at the time, Carolyn, who is now his wife, followed Reidy to Leningrad that summer and bought tickets from the same woman.

After graduating from Middlebury, Reidy moved to New York in the fall of 1972 for his graduate studies in international affairs. While still a first-year student he happened upon a job announcement posted at the Russian Institute for USIA (United States Information Agency) exhibit guides in the Soviet Union. He landed the job after a telephone interview in Russian and a follow-up meeting in D.C. The USIA had chosen the theme Outdoor Recreation for the 1973-74 American Exhibit to the USSR, and Reidy, a skier, was assigned to the section on winter sports. The assignment took him to Moscow, Ufa, and Irkutsk, with two months in each city,

> followed by a week for independent travel. The guides were responsible for setup and striking the installation for shipment to the next city—a process that brought them into close contact with the locals and showed them a different side of Soviet life. The USIA American Exhibits, which had begun in 1959, were enormously popular. Reidy remembers that Outdoor Recreation logged 900,000 visitors in Irkutsk, a city with a population of one million. Nevertheless, it was a chance to speak to Americans and about America that packed the halls, rather than information about sports in the United States.

Living conditions outside of Moscow were "atrocious." Food was hard to come by outside of the capitals—only cucumbers and potatoes in the stores in Irkutsk-

and it was getting cold. Medical services seemed backward. So much so that when a fellow guide fell seriously ill in Irkutsk, he was evacuated to an army hospital in Germany aboard Henry Kissinger's plane, which flew from Moscow to fetch him. Foodstuffs received through the diplomatic pouch, which the guides pooled for festive potlucks, provided some relief from the deficits. The other source of relief came from the Russian people. Reidy recalls spending evenings in Irkutsk with a mathematician and his mother, also a mathematician, talking about the United States, the Soviet Union,



Russia, and how those evenings made "cold, snowy, muddy, awful" Irkutsk almost bearable. Likewise, in Ufa, a fellow guide introduced Reidy to the mother of Rudolf Nureyev, the ballet dancer who had defected to the West a decade earlier.

The final adventure of this tour of duty ended with an unauthorized plane trip to Khabarovsk. Five of the guides wanted to leave the USSR through the Soviet Far East for Japan, rather than the approved route of returning to Moscow and flying home from there. Clutching airplane tickets purchased for them illegally by a Soviet guide, the group of Americans left their hotel after dark and boarded the evening flight to Khabarovsk. Even though they arrived at the only hotel in Khabarovsk without travel documents or reservations in the middle of the night, the frightened attendant let them in. They managed to catch the first plane to Japan.

Back in New York in January '74, Reidy was named an International Fellow at Columbia and completed his degree that May. Once again the bulletin boards at the Russian Institute served as his employment bureau, and he found an announcement of openings for Russian speakers to work in the Munich bureau of Radio Liberty. He worked in the Political Department as a kind of censor, whose

job it was to ensure that broadcast scripts tallied with U.S. foreign policy. But all those courses on politics had not prepared him for the infighting among the three groups of Russian émigrés at the bureau: the Old Guard from the postrevolutionary days, the World War II refugees, and the current third wave of Jewish émigrés. The upside of the Munich assignment was that the city was awash in ballet and opera. Reidy soon realized, however, that the radio job was a temporary assignment for him—and indeed, he was downsized out of a job the following year. Meetings with an economist whose interest was economic development under various economic regimes served to interest him more and more in that field.

Returning to Columbia for Business School seemed the next logical step. He moved back to New York in 1976, now married to Carolyn, who was starting out in publishing—she's currently CEO and president of Simon & Schuster. A literary agent who was representing Russian authors introduced the Reidys to two older gentlemen, connoisseurs of the ballet and opera, whose collection of memorabilia included a signed photo of Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn's ballet shoes. Their new friends, who lived close to Lincoln Center, introduced them to both art forms in New York



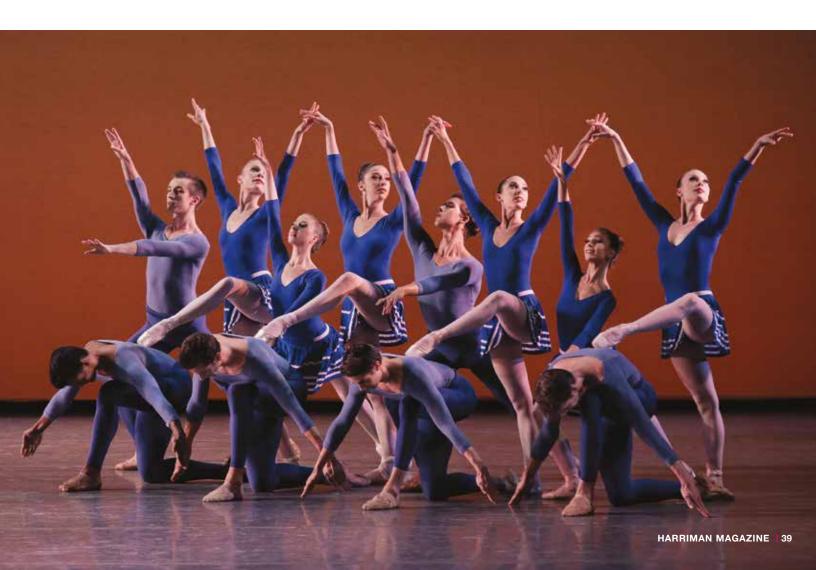
City, which for them meant the Met and George Balanchine's New York City Ballet (NYCB). They also knew Russia and had been following Balanchine since his arrival in New York, so they had great stories and were in a position to help Reidy and his wife understand what they were seeing and how to see it. The two couples became friends and went to the theater together.

"In 1976, when I met these gentlemen, NYCB became my lodestar. There was a Russian underpinning to it all, from which I started to explore," Reidy said. Having become a devotee of Balanchine, he started to look back to Diaghilev, the Ballets Russes, and all the Russian performers and ballets in the interwar years that became the source of what Balanchine would eventually bring to New York and his creation of NYCB.

The transformational figure for Reidy is Balanchine, who wanted to make something distinctly American or that took advantage of distinctly American talents and sensibilities about movement, perhaps seeing the fusion of his Russian roots and this American potential as the future of ballet. Now thirty years after Balanchine's death, there is a body of work that builds on that source and with dancers associated with developing it—all of which prompted

Reidy to become a member of New York City Ballet's New Combinations Fund, which has supported the making of 140 new ballets in the last twenty years, 120 of which are in the NYCB repertory. The Twenty-First Century Choreographers program in the current 2014 spring season at New York City Ballet is largely comprised of work, both old and new, supported by the New Combinations Fund. Reidy firmly believes that new choreography is essential to the continuation of ballet as a growing art form. NYCB will always be "Mr. B's" company but new dances build on this Russian-rooted foundation. The idea is not to replicate but to create.  $\square$ 

Opposite page: Principal dancer Sara Mearns and Company in George Balanchine's *Serenade* (photo by Paul Kolnik, courtesy of New York City Ballet); below: New York City Ballet in Justin Peck's *Year of the Rabbit*, a production made possible in part by generous contributions from members of the New Combinations Fund (photo by Paul Kolnik, courtesy of New York City Ballet)





BY RONALD MEYER

# LYNN GARAFOLA

### AND HER JOURNEY AS A DANCE HISTORIAL

his past academic year Lynn Garafola, professor of dance at Barnard College, held fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and New York Public Library's Cullman Center to support her research for a biography of Russian choreographer Bronislava Nijinska, sister of Vaslav, the legendary dancer of the Ballets Russes. For the Guggenheim Fellowship she was among 175 artists, scholars, and scientists chosen from a group of almost 3,000 applicants.

Prior to sitting down with Garafola in April 2013 to talk about her work in progress on Bronislava Nijinksa, I had observed her guest teach a class on Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and its place in Russian art. The low-tech presentation (color Xerox handouts of stage sets and costumes, VHS tapes instead of PowerPoint) did not get in the way of the polished delivery of a capsule history of Diaghilev's innovations in ballet (for example, that it was Diaghilev who established the prominence of the choreographer, which we take for granted today, or that he hired easel painters to design costumes and décor)—with unscripted asides on a wide assortment of topics ranging from the first production of Sleeping Beauty in 1890 to the Joffrey repertoire in the 1970s. It was quite a performance!

A native New Yorker, Garafola studied ballet as a child with a Russian teacher. who ultimately turned out to be of Armenian descent—but of course the premium, then as now, was on ballet as a Russian art. Later, as a Spanish major at Barnard College,

Garafola took classes in modern dance and jazz, but there was still no connection between "a practice I enjoy and the larger question of dance." That connection would come when Garafola enrolled in the graduate program in comparative literature at CUNY. She was struck, for instance, by the startling coincidence that two towering figures of modernism, Joyce and Proust, met for the first time after a performance of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1922. Garafola started going to a great deal of ballet while a grad student and says that she truly discovered ballet in the 1970s, which, as it happens, was a golden age for ballet and dance in general in New York. There seemed to be an endless supply of downtown dance, modern dance and balletand tickets were relatively cheap, which was important for a graduate student earning her keep translating legal briefs and documents from the Romance languages.

Mikhail Baryshnikov defected in 1974, following in the steps of two earlier Soviet dancers: Natalia Makarova and Rudolf Nureyev. With Baryshnikov and Makarova at American Ballet Theatre, and across the plaza at Lincoln Center another Russian émigré, George Balanchine, creating American ballet for the twentieth century, set to music by his fellow Russian Igor Stravinsky, among others, the Russianness of ballet was not in dispute. A few blocks south, the Joffrey Ballet, the resident ballet company at City Center, presented an interesting repertoire for the future historian of the Ballets Russes, with good



Portrait of Lynn Garafola by Daria Rose Foner

# One of the great new pieces to the puzzle was Bronislava Nijinska's *Early Memoirs*, interesting both as the last memoir of a major figure from the Diaghilev circle and as a life story penned by a woman.

productions of *Petrushka*, *Afternoon of a Faun*, and eventually the reconstruction of *Rite of Spring*—works that were not being mounted by ABT or in the repertoire of the touring Soviet companies. All this served to engender a real interest in the Diaghilev period and Garafola's desire to understand that sensibility.

Upon realizing that all her free time seemed to have very little to do with her graduate work, it became clear to Garafola that perhaps a study of the picaresque was not what she should be doing. The Joyce-Proust meeting at the Ballets Russes prompted her to rethink her subject. A close friend suggested over a glass of wine that perhaps she should consider working on something about dance and literature, and, in Garafola's words, that marked the "beginning of my journey as a dance historian." Her dissertation was to be an influence study, typical of comp lit dissertations at the time, that would focus on responses by English and French writers and intellectuals

to Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. She began reading broadly among the writers of the period and came to the conclusion that the writers most influenced by the Ballets Russes, for example, Jean Cocteau and the Sitwells, were not the ones she wanted to write about.

She then managed to get a grant to travel to England and France to conduct research in archives and libraries. She read deeply in the Bloomsbury Group and other circles that were a part of the Ballets Russes world, including a serious reading of a number of British writers on ballet, and discovered that what we in the West perceive as the Diaghilev wisdom, in fact comes from this group of British writers on ballet that had become something of a coherent group in the 1930s. Having installed herself in the British Library, she read the Dancing Times, an extraordinary monthly magazine published from 1908 until 1930, that is, a year after the collapse of the Ballets Russes. The magazine consisted of a potpourri

of all matters dance: concerts, the ballet stage, revues, performances in the West End, letters from New York and Paris, and even advertisements—all of which taken together gave Garafola an idea of what was happening in the world of dance and the place of the Ballets Russes in that world.

After her initial research in Paris, London, and New York, Garafola came to the realization that a new history of the Ballets Russes was called for—not the influence study she had originally proposed to her dissertation committee. She was faced with constructing a new edifice and realizing new limitations; in other words, to realize the utter inadequacy of the story as it had always been told. She began her work in the important dance archives, including the Dance Division of the New York Public Library, but since she had no training as a historian, she did not quite know how to cope with an archival collection. She read newspapers on microfilm—and still refers to these copies that are now approaching their half-century. Garafola was moving into uncharted territory about which there were no secondary sources. Her reading helped to broaden the story, yet at about the same time she realized that she was up against a brick wall—the Russian language. Taking time out to learn Russian was not an option—that would come later. Meanwhile, she was already reviewing







Left to right: Posed group of dancers in the original production of Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*, showing costumes and backdrop by Nicholas Roerich (1913); Vaslav Nijinsky in *Afternoon of a Faun* (1912) by Leon Bakst; portrait of Serge Diaghilev by Valentin Serov (1909)

and writing about dance to have a bit of an income, not to mention that she was already quite far along in her dissertation. But in order to understand where all this was coming from, she could do the next best thing: read the publications of Slavists who had themselves researched in the Russian archives, and in that way fill in the background and give herself a sense of "other stories."

One of the great new pieces to the puzzle was Bronislava Nijinska's Early Memoirs, interesting both as the last memoir of a major figure from the Diaghilev circle and as a life story penned by a woman. Here was an absent voice that came to light during the height of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, which Garafola now was in the position to incorporate into her history of the Ballets Russes.

Garafola's dissertation committee, seeing how far removed her work was from the usual comp lit dissertation, was hesitant to let her go forward to the defense stage. But she was wisely counseled to stick to her guns, and indeed she defended her thesis and "the next day was off and writing about the Futurists."

Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (Oxford University Press, 1989), the book based on Garafola's dissertation, at once established her credentials as a dance historian, with equal emphasis on both parts of that label. It is



Bronislava Nijinska, upon graduation from the Imperial School of Ballet, St. Petersburg (1908)

#### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005)

Dance for a City: Fifty Years of the New York City Ballet, editor (with E. Foner) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

José Limón: An Unfinished Memoir, editor (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1999)

The Ballets Russes and Its World, editor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999)

Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet, editor (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1997)

"Of, By, and For the People: Dancing on the Left in the 1930s," editor, Studies in Dance History 5(1) (Spring 1994)

"The Diaries of Marius Petipa," editor and translator, Studies in Dance History 3(1) (Spring 1992)

André Levinson on Dance: Writings from Paris in the Twenties, editor, with J. Acocella (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1991)

Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)

#### **AWARDS AND HONORS**

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow, 2013-14

Culliman Center Fellow, Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, New York Public Library, 2013-14.

Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2005)

Kurt Weill Award, for The Ballets Russes and Its World (2001)

Independent Publishers Book Award, for Dance for a City: Fifty Years of the New York City Ballet (2000)

CORD Award for Outstanding Scholarly Dance Publication, for José Limón: An Unfinished Memoir (1999)

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship (1993–94)

Scholar in residence, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (1991-92)

De la Torre Bueno Prize, for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1990)

Social Science Research Council Fellowship (1978-79)

Fulbright Fellowship, Ecuador (1968-69)

characteristic of her approach to dance history that Garafola begins her study by setting the scene in Russian history—the striking workers converging on the Winter Palace, on January 9, 1905, Bloody Sunday—and then moves to the student strikes at the Conservatory of Music. The critics were not slow in recognizing Garafola's historical approach: "At last, the muse of history tests all her modernized apparatus on Serge Diaghilev's Ballets" (Alastair Macaulay, *New York Times*); "breathtaking array of new documentary materials, . . . a breakthrough, an epochmaker" (Richard Taruskin, *New Republic*).

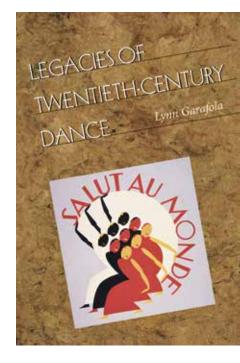
Six books followed Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. I will mention only a few. Dance for a City: Fifty Years of the New York City Ballet, edited with her husband, historian Eric Foner (Columbia University Press, 1999), was published in conjunction with a major exhibition at the New-York Historical Society, for which Garafola served as guest curator. Garafola has also curated exhibits on Jerome Robbins, Diaghilev, and Italian dance for the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. She is the editor of José Limón: An Unfinished Memoir (Wesleyan University Press, 1999), for which she received the CORD Award for Outstanding Dance Publication. Garafola's most recent book, Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance (Wesleyan University Press, 2005), gathers together her essays and reviews. And while the topics are wide-ranging, there's a certain underlying sense of mission that holds the disparate pieces together. As Legacies makes clear, while she never left the Ballets Russes far behind, she became equally well known for her work on American dance and the intersection of politics of the Left and dance, in particular, as well as the issue of women and gender and ballet.

In connection with the centennial celebrations of the ballet, Garafola has recently made a special study of *The Rite of Spring*, lecturing in both the United States and Europe on "A Century of Rites: The Making of an Avant-Garde Tradition." In spring 2013 she took part in the Bolshoi Theater's "Century of the *Rite of Spring*—Century of

New Art." The festival presented different versions of the ballet on stage and published a lavishly illustrated volume on the cultural impact of Nijinsky's ballet, to which Garafola contributed an essay on the century of "Rites."

Which brings us back to Nijinska and Garafola's current work in progress. Though it is a new project, it represents a return to a figure that piqued her interest in the 1970s, but then the timing had not been right and Nijinska's papers were still in family hands—they are now housed in the Library of Congress.

In her article "Bronislava Nijinska in Revolutionary Russia," Garafola quotes Carolyn Heilbrun's observation that well into the twentieth century "it continued to be impossible for women to admit into their autobiographical narratives the claim of achievement, the admission of ambition, the recognition that accomplishment was neither luck nor the result of the efforts or generosity of others" (Writing a Woman's *Life*). Nijinska wrote herself into ballet history through her famous brother, and she presents a varnished version of their relationship. It is well known that Nijinska was originally cast by her brother as the Chosen Virgin in his Rite of Spring and that she was removed from the cast because of her pregnancy. What is not generally known is that she danced during that same period in other ballets—just not in her brother's work. It was not Nijinsky's concern for her health that motivated her dismissal. It is Garafola's intention to tell the real story and to recognize properly the extraordinary achievements of one of the twentieth century's great choreographers, the creator of Les noces and Les biches, ballets that are still performed today. □



Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance Lynn Garafola Wesleyan University Press (2005) ISBN 978-0-8195-6674-4

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, directly from the publisher, and select bookstores.



#### INTRODUCTION

Cathy Popkin, Jesse and George Siegel Professor in the Humanities, is the editor of the new Norton Critical Edition of Chekhov's Selected Stories, published in early 2014. A thick brick of a book, the new Chekhov delivers 735 pages of stories, letters, criticism, chronology, and bibliography, all prefaced by Popkin's "Introduction," from which we print two sections below: "How to Read Chekhov" and "How to Read Chekhov in English." What truly distinguishes this new Chekhov is Popkin's strategy of highlighting the art of translation. The fifty-two stories are the work of twenty-one translators. Twenty-seven translations have been chosen from the rich history of Chekhov in English translation, and the remaining twenty-five were commissioned expressly for this volume. To emphasize the

importance of the art of translation, Popkin follows her "Introduction" with comparison passages taken from various translations and short biographies of the translators, with notes on their translation practices, rather than the usual practice of acknowledgments hidden in tiny type on the copyright page. Annotations to the individual stories also highlight key differences among the translators' strategies.

As an example of the newly commissioned works, we offer Katherine Tiernan O'Connor's "A Little Game." O'Connor, best known for her translation of Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita, co-translated with Diana Burgin, insists that "contrary to popular belief, Chekhov may be more difficult to translate than Bulgakov." —Ronald Meyer

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From the "Introduction" by Cathy Popkin

#### **HOW TO READ CHEKHOV**

Any work of literature worth its salt will accommodate, even reward, a variety of approaches and inspire a wide spectrum of interpretations. Even so, the how-to-read question reasserts itself with particular insistence in the face of Chekhov's short stories for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the idiosyncratic form of the stories themselves.

For one thing, they can be disconcertingly short, especially the early pieces published in humor magazines, with strict word counts for quick laughs—and prompt payment. Should these be read as serious literary works? Physical dimensions aside, some of the stories also catch readers off guard because their subject matter can be, well, so trivial. A clerk sneezes; someone disposes of a cockroach—what's so interesting about that?

Then there are Chekhov's formal innovations. If we are accustomed to short stories beginning with an *exposition*, shaped by *rising action*, culminating in an *event*, and concluding with a *dénouement*, we may find ourselves temporarily derailed by Chekhov, who advised aspiring writers to throw away their opening pages, whose action may just as well repeat as escalate, whose events are frequently a matter of dispute, and who has been credited with cultivating the so-called zero ending. Where do these stories take us, and where do we go from there?

His stories are open-ended in another respect as well: more intent on posing questions than on answering them, disinclined to preach or prescribe, Chekhov made no secret of his reluctance to stake out clear positions vis-à-vis the world he depicts with such care. Even when a story's events are dramatic and the outcome decisive, the meaning of what has happened usually is not: judgment is withheld, no moral is implied. It's not the writer's business to make such pronouncements, Chekhov averred. Let the readers act as jurors and figure things out for themselves.

If Chekhov leaves his jury to deliberate without the benefit of an explicit charge, it is only partially because determinations of this sort are not in his job description; they are also beyond his purview.

Why read Chekhov's stories? Because they enlarge our capacity for understanding and awaken our compassion.

Famously speculating about the nature of human knowledge, Chekhov noted more than once that, much as we crave certainty and (especially moral) clarity, life confronts us on far more ambiguous and tentative terms and places us on shakier ground. Between the certainty that God exists, for instance, and the opposite conviction that there is no God, Chekhov envisions a huge expanse, a wide, wide field spanning the distance between those two antithetical and unequivocal positions. It takes wisdom and courage to negotiate the murky middle, to tolerate the infinite complexity and shades of gray in the amorphous space between guilt and innocence, sickness and health, atheism and belief. For readers unnerved by such ambiguity, Chekhov's stories cannot help but force the issue of how they should be read.

Paradoxically, though, despite all these potential stumbling blocks, Chekhov's stories are not at all hard to read; indeed, they make for remarkably enjoyable—even seamless—reading. At first glance, anyway, they seem clear and uncomplicated. And if they are short on pages or scope or details or dénouements, neither do they throw up a lot of obstacles along the way—nothing tendentious or dogmatic, no extraneous verbiage; they look to be perfectly straight-forward (if inconclusive) tales.

The devil, it seems, is in the details, especially the odd ones that crop up with no obvious relevance to the story and that feel particularly incongruous in Chekhov's super-spare prose. Why, for instance, should Chekhov specify that a chair in someone's attic is missing one leg ("Sweetheart")? Or that a girl happened to be carrying a piece of dark blue cloth when her suitor came to propose ("The Teacher of Literature")? Chekhov's earliest critics pointed to extraneous details such as these as evidence of the writer's lack of discernment. Increasingly, though, scholars have come to view such puzzling elements as key—but the key to what?

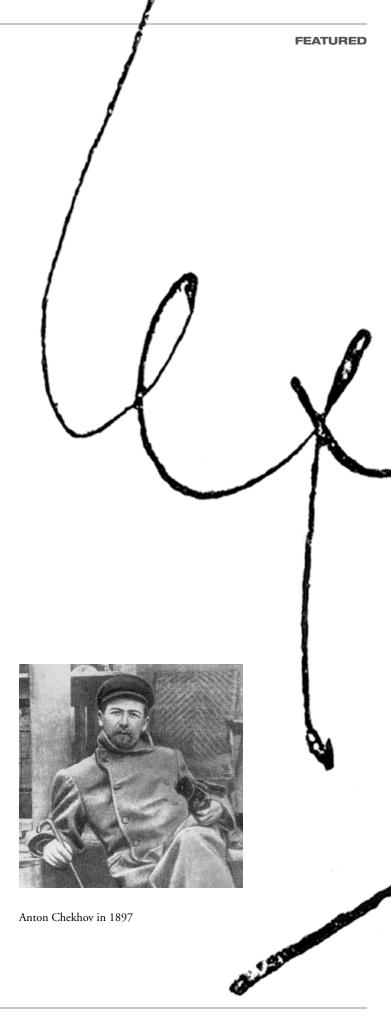
Some scholars argue that, given Chekhov's characteristic reticence, if something appears in the text, he must have put it there for a reason; we are justified in assuming, in other words, that every element we encounter in his streamlined tales is intentional and therefore purposeful. After all, Chekhov is reported to have remarked (albeit about drama) that if there's a gun hanging on the wall in Act I, it had better go off by the closing curtain, or it ought never to have been hung there in the first place. And if every gun is meant to be there, then every gun must be meaningful; nothing is included by accident, and nothing superfluous is included. "No detail is without meaning in Chekhov's great masterpieces," maintains Robert L. Jackson. To read Chekhov well is thus to consider every word, even the apparently random ones, to scrutinize the story for patterns and clues, to unearth subtle references, to delve beneath

the deceptive simplicity of the surface for access to the complexity at play in the depths; or even to consider the effects of the language itself, to attend with care to the verbal surface for its sounds and cadences and etymological rhyme, reading the prose essentially as one might read a poem—for what it does, the effect it has, and for what each component—every piece of dark blue fabric—contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

Others object to this "totalizing" approach on the grounds that the operative principle in Chekhov's prose is just the opposite randomness—and if something in one of his stories looks unrelated to anything else, that's because it is. Sometimes a gun is just a gun, an incidental piece of the material world signifying nothing beyond its own existence; it's hanging there because it's there, and it would be perverse to hang a meaning on it. The function of Chekhov's eccentric detail, in other words, is not to mean but to be-and in this stubbornly "meaning-free" existence to model something about the nature of existence itself. His prose embodies his own radically new worldview, an understanding of life in the world as chaotic, subject to accident and entropy. Chekhov's liberation from the shopworn assumptions of unity and purposefulness is the very quality that makes his art modern and non-dogmatic, argues Alexander Chuda- kov; to transform everything into a symbol or a sign of something else would be to miss the very point.

Whichever view is closer to the truth, both are onto something. And in spite of their antithetical assumptions, they are united in a common preoccupation with how the stories work; this, in fact, is the basis of their respective arguments, and it has lent both force and substance to the debate. The works of criticism excerpted in this volume come from both sides of the critical divide as well as everywhere in between, and have been selected expressly for their salient contributions to the ongoing controversy about how to read Chekhov well. The first section, "Approaches," contains essays that address this question explicitly. But arguing about Chekhov's prose in the abstract can only get you so far; Chekhov himself abhorred sweeping generalizations, and his work resists them. Not coincidentally, some of the liveliest scholarship on Chekhov consists of close readings of individual stories. Thus, the second cluster of essays, "Interpretations," has been compiled to demonstrate what such concrete readings might look like—and in some cases a single story looks strikingly different from divergent points of view. Whatever their perspective, all of these inspired readings confirm that interesting things emerge when you pay exquisite attention. The most engaging interpretations are re-readings, considerations that read "against the grain" and suggest not only that things may not be as simple as they seem, but also that Chekhov's stories work in mysterious ways.

If the meaning of a single detail triggers such fruitful disagreement in the context of an individual work, questions about the relationship of the part to the whole arise with equally interesting results in considerations of how any single story by Chekhov might relate to all his other ones. Indeed, for maximum enjoyment and





appreciation, readers are urged to read both in detail and in plural, to consider both how these "motley" stories work and how they work together. They certainly awaken our awareness of recurrent motifs, sounds, structures, and allusions; we also sense that we are in the presence of abiding ethical questions. Each story connects in suggestive ways to all the others, and every one of them resonates more vibrantly when viewed in connection with everything else.

Then again, the present volume comes nowhere close to containing "everything else." Furthermore, although it includes a whole spectrum of representative works—from shorter to longer, from first to last, from the frankly comic to the positively lyrical—not even a comprehensive selection is neutral. In choosing the stories and letters that appear here, I have no doubt produced a certain Chekhov, one that I particularly like, since the fifty-two works in this volume represent some combination of acknowledged masterpieces and personal favorites. Happily, Chekhov's stories illuminate one another in any combination, not to mention the light they shed on the complexity of human relations and the wonders of life in the world. Note that Chekhov's keenest insights come in understated forms, and the stories especially reward quiet focus and sustained attention. While his prose goes down easily, do not confuse an easy read with a quick one. These may be small bites, but they are not fast food. Every story is remarkably rich and deserves to be savored.

Enjoyment is very much to the point, as it happens, and figuring out how to read Chekhov goes beyond the rarified concerns of academics who compile anthologies or produce scholarly interpretations. To pursue honest inquiry, to puzzle our way through, to engage constructively with the other, to gain access to somebody else's pain, to recall that we are all part of—not separate from—the whole: this is part of what Chekhov's storytelling strives to do. For those who read Chekhov because they are writers themselves, this sense of relatedness reveals his artistry. For those who read Chekhov for pleasure, this relatedness is surely its source.

Why read Chekhov's stories? Because they enlarge our capacity for understanding and awaken our compassion. Because they call upon us to make connections of all sorts. Because connecting the dots and making sense reminds us of the potential for meaning and beauty. Because trying to work out what gives a story shape and orders its material—the very activity of constructing and construing meaning—enriches our existence. Because figuring out what counts in (life) stories reminds us to think about what is important, however unprepossessing it may appear at first blush. Because precisely in wondering how to read Chekhov productively, we are already living deeply and well.

#### **HOW TO READ CHEKHOV IN ENGLISH**

First, with a high degree of confidence. Of the fifty-two stories collected here, twenty were cherry-picked from published translations by Rosamund Bartlett, Peter Constantine, Ann Dunnigan, Constance Garnett, Ronald Hingley, Patrick Miles and Harvey

Pitcher, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, and Avrahm Yarmolinsky. Each one is, in my judgment, about the best there is. Another twenty-five are brand-new translations, commissioned expressly for this volume from Hugh Aplin, Carol Apollonio, Rosamund Bartlett, Antonina W. Bouis, Robert Chandler, Peter Constantine, Jamey Gambrell, Anna Gunin, Michael Henry Heim, Jerome H. Katsell, Ronald Meyer, Katherine Tiernan O'Connor, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, plus a few that I've done myself. The remaining seven are Constance Garnett's translations that I have revised substantially.

Second, the stories can be read with or without reference to the notes on translation. The translations stand on their own and require no apparatus. Any commentary that accompanies them is meant for readers who want to know more about the specific form in which Chekhov is being delivered to them in a given translation, or are looking for a bit of insight into the process that produced the English text. For readers with particular interest in translation, the Translators and Their Work section (p. xlix) provides a more detailed introduction to the individual translators and their respective goals and strategies.

The twenty-one translators represented in this collection bring widely divergent priorities, purposes, and presuppositions to their translation work. Their approaches range from, toward one end of the spectrum, the most "text-directed"—those that place the highest premium on remaining as close as possible to the original, framing fidelity in terms of replication of the original text (even at the cost of sacrificing smoothness in the target language)—to the most "reader-directed" approaches at the other end—those that aim to bring the text to the greatest possible extent into the target reader's orbit, willing if need be to sacrifice fidelity to text in the interest of reproducing the original reader's experience of it. What is more important—retaining the original word, or using one that will get the kind of laugh the original one did? Ideally one would be able to do both; but if not?

Temporal distance presents additional challenges; some translators, worried about anachronism, scrupulously avoid words that have come into use only after the work was written; others view updating the language as an essential part of a translator's job. Some maintain that a translation should retain a measure of strangeness, that readers should not be hoodwinked into forgetting that the text is foreign and that they are reading in translation; others are determined to make the English prose as transparent and natural as possible—sometimes even when the original was neither. Some are attentive to sound, rhythm, and punctuation and attempt to convey the musicality of Chekhov's prose; some, conversely, are insistent that sound translations cannot work and ought not be attempted. Others sense that attempting to replicate anything at all only dooms a translator to failure and that translating calls less for fidelity than for creativity. None of the translations here lie at any of these extremes, but they do occupy just about the whole continuum in between them.

#### The devil, it seems is in the details, especially the odd ones that crop up with no relevance to the story and that feel particularly incongruous in Chekhov's super-spare prose.

Far from being problematic, these differences are a resource. Some translations stay so close to the original and reproduce its idiosyncrasies so faithfully that they are tailor-made for close readings. These are especially useful for instructors who do know Russian teaching students who may not. And while these also read well, others might contain even livelier prose.

Quite aside from the opportunity these differences create for us to choose translations that suit our varied purposes—differences born of the diverse ways these translators understand the purpose of their task—lurks the thorny question of how the translators understand the purposes of the texts themselves. Translation, like any other form of reading, is an act of interpretation. I cannot think of a better reason, especially in a Norton Critical Edition, that two translators might be better than one.

#### ANTON CHEKHOV A LITTLE GAME<sup>1</sup>

Translated by Katherine Tiernan O'Connor

A clear winter noonday . . . The frost is hard, it crackles, and Nadenka, who is holding me by the arm, has a silvery glaze coating the curls on her temples and the down on her upper lip. We are standing on a high hill. Stretching down from our feet to the ground below is a sloping plane that reflects the sun, just like a mirror. Beside us is a small sledge<sup>2</sup> upholstered in bright-red cloth.

"Let's go down, Nadezhda Petrovna!" I beg. "Just once! I promise vou we'll remain safe and sound."

But Nadenka is afraid. The distance from her small boots to the bottom of the ice hill seems terrifying to her, like a fathomlessly deep abyss. She freezes and holds her breath when she looks down, when I simply invite her to get into the sledge, for if she takes the risk of flying into the abyss, what will happen! She will die, she'll go out of her mind.

"I beg you!" I say. "You shouldn't be afraid! Don't you see, that's faintheartedness, cowardice!"

Nadenka finally gives in, and I can tell by her face that when she does, she's in fear for her life. I seat her, pale and trembling, in the sledge, put my arm around her and together we plunge down into

The sledge flies like a bullet. The shattered air beats in our faces, roars, rips, whistles in our ears, painfully and maliciously stings

us, wanting to tear our heads off. The force of the wind makes it impossible to breathe. It seems as if the devil himself has seized us in his claws and with a roar is dragging us down into hell. Surrounding objects blur into one long, madly rushing streak . . . In just another minute, it seems—we'll perish!

"I love you, Nadia!" I say under my breath.

The sledge starts making less and less noise, the roaring of the wind and the hissing of the runners are no longer so terrifying, we can breathe again, and finally we're at the bottom. Nadenka is half-dead. She's pale, barely breathing . . . I help her get up.

"I won't go down again for anything," she says, looking at me with wide, terror-stricken eyes. "Not for anything in the world! I almost died!"

In a short while she recovers and now looks into my eyes in a questioning way: did I say those four words, or did they just come to her from the rush of the wind? And I stand next to her, smoking and studiously examining my glove.

She takes my arm, and we take a long stroll near the hill. The mystery, apparently, is giving her no peace. Were those words said or not? Yes or no? Yes or no? It is a question of pride, honor, life, happiness, a very important question, the most important in the world. Impatiently, sadly, Nadenka looks at me in a penetrating way, gives disconnected answers, waits to see if I'll say something. Oh, what a play of emotions on that sweet face, what a play! I can see her struggling with herself, needing to say something, to ask me something, but she can't find the words, she feels awkward, terrified, hindered by her joy...

"You know what?" she says, without looking at me.

"What?" I ask.

"Let's . . . go down again."

We go up the steps to the top of the hill. Again I seat the pale, trembling Nadenka in the sledge, again we fly into the terrible abyss, again the wind roars and the runners hiss, and again when the flight of the sledge reaches its noisy peak I say under my breath:

"I love you, Nadenka!"

When the sledge is coming to a stop, Nadenka looks back at the hill we have just come down, peers into my face, listens attentively to my voice, aloof and emotionless, and her whole being, everything about it, even her muff and her hood, expresses extreme bewilderment. And written on her face is:

"What's going on? Who uttered *those* words? Did he, or did it only seem that way?"

This uncertainty unnerves her, makes her lose patience. The poor girl doesn't respond to my questions, frowns, is on the verge of tears.

"Isn't it time for us to go home?" I ask.

"But I . . . I like doing this," she says, turning red. "Can't we go down another time?"

She "likes" doing this, but meanwhile, as she gets into the sledge, she is, as she was the previous times as well, pale, breathless with fear, trembling.

We go down for the third time, and I see her looking at my face, studying my lips. But I press a handkerchief to my lips, I cough, and when we are midway down the hill, I manage to get out:

"I love you, Nadia!"

And the mystery remains a mystery! Nadenka is silent, thinking about something . . . I take her home from the ice park, she tries to walk more softly, slows her steps, waiting all the while to see if I'll say those words to her. And I see how her soul is suffering, how it is an effort for her not to say:

"It can't be that it was the wind speaking! And I don't want it to have been!"

The next morning I receive a note: "If you're going to the ice park today, then come get me. N." And from that day on, I begin each day by going to the park with Nadenka and then saying the very same words every time we fly down in the sledge:

"I love you, Nadia!"

Soon these words become a habit for Nadenka, like wine or morphine. She cannot live without them. True, she's just as afraid as she always was to fly down the hill, but now the fear and the danger lend a special fascination to the words of love, words which, as before, constitute a mystery and torment her soul. The same two suspects remain: the wind and I . . . Whichever of the two of us is making her a declaration of love she does not know, but it is likely at this point that she no longer cares; it matters not which cup you drink from, so long as you become intoxicated.

Once at noon I went alone to the ice park; mingling with the crowd, I see Nadenka approaching the hill, her eyes searching for me . . . Then she timidly goes up the steps . . . She's terrified to go alone, oh, how terrified! She's as pale as the snow, trembling, she walks as if she's going to her execution, but walk she does, without turning around, with determination. Obviously, she had decided, finally, to carry out a test: will she hear those astonishing sweet words when I'm not there? I see her, pale, her mouth agape with horror, as she sits down in the sledge, closes her eyes, and then after saying farewell forever to the earth, she starts to take off . . . "Hissss . . ." go the runners. I don't know if Nadenka hears those words . . . I see only that when she gets up from the sledge she's exhausted, weak. And it is clear from her face that she doesn't know herself whether she heard something or not. Her terror, while she was hurtling downward, made it impossible for her to hear, to distinguish sounds, to understand . .

But now it's March and spring is here . . . The sun is becoming gentler. Our ice hill darkens, loses its luster, and finally melts. We stop going sledding. Poor Nadenka no longer has anywhere where she can hear those words, and no one to say them, since no wind can be heard, and I am getting ready to go to Petersburg—for a long time, probably forever.

Once, a day or two before my departure, I am sitting at dusk in the small garden that is separated from the yard where Nadenka lives by a tall nail-studded fence ... It's still fairly cold, there is still snow underneath the manure,<sup>3</sup> the trees are dead, but the scent

of spring is in the air, and the rooks, settling in for the night, are cawing loudly. I go over to the fence and peer through a crack in it for a long time. I see Nadenka come out on the porch and cast a sad, yearning glance up at the sky . . . The spring wind blows directly into her pale, despondent face . . . It reminds her of that wind that roared at us those times on the hill, when she heard those four words, and her face becomes sad, very sad, a tear falls down her cheek . . . And the poor girl stretches out both her arms, as if imploring this wind to bring her those words one more time. And I, having waited for the wind, say under my breath:

"I love you, Nadya!"

My God, what is happening to Nadenka! She lets out a cry, smiles a huge smile and stretches her arms out to the wind, joyous, happy, so very beautiful.

And I go off to pack . . .

This happened a long time ago. Nadenka is married now; she was married off, or got married herself—it makes no difference to the secretary of the Board of the Nobility,<sup>4</sup> and she already has three children. The time when we used to go sledding together and the wind brought her the words "I love you, Nadenka," has not been forgotten; it is now the happiest, most moving and beautiful memory of her life . . .

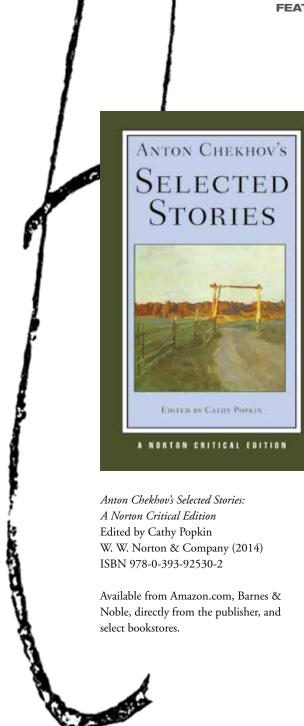
But now that I'm older, it's a complete mystery to me why I said those words, why I played such a game . . .  $\square$ 

1886 (revised 1899)

<sup>1</sup> By maintaining the narrator's persistent use of present tense, O'Connor reproduces the sensation that readers are experiencing everythingincluding flying downhill at terrifying speed—right as it is happening, together with the narrator and Nadenka.

The title, Shutochka, is usually translated literally as "A Little Joke." O'Connor renders it as "A Little Game" instead, feeling strongly that "Joke" implies something far too one-sided to correspond to what is actually being "played" in the story. The new title, along with O'Connor's lexical choices emphasizing that each of the characters has a "mystery" to confront, reorients us, allowing us to consider who is playing at what—and with whom.

- <sup>2</sup> **Sledge**: a conveyance that slides on runners. Commonly refers to a horsedrawn sleigh of the sort that replaces carriages on wheels during the winter snows. The sledge in this story, however, is small and toboggan-like, with upholstered seats, mounted on runners and used for downhill sledding.
- <sup>3</sup> In garden plots, **manure** was spread on top of the snow so that when the snow melted the fertilizer would be absorbed by the soil.
- <sup>4</sup> Elected body that appointed trustees for the estates of nobles legally prohibited from controlling their property—minor heirs, debtors, the insane.

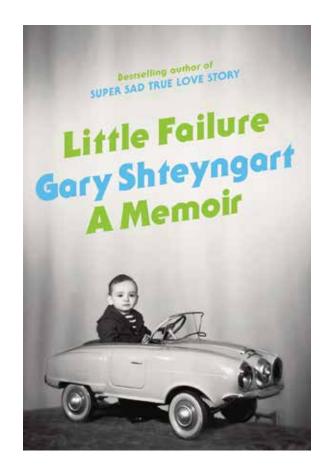




BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

ary Shteyngart, the award-winning author of three critically acclaimed novels—The Russian Debutante's Handbook, Absurdistan, and Super Sad True Love Story-recently published a memoir, Little Failure. Titled after a nickname given to the author by his mother, the book takes us on a simultaneously heart-wrenching and hilarious journey through Shteyngart's childhood and young adulthood. Born in Soviet Leningrad, where he spent seven years as a sickly, asthmatic child fiercely devoted to Lenin and his *rodina* (motherland), he immigrated with his parents to New York as a Jewish refugee in 1979. The family settled in Kew Gardens, Queens, where he discovered the evils of the Soviet Union and the glory of Ronald Reagan. Shteyngart's parents, raised as secular Jews, enthusiastically embraced the Jewish faith upon immigrating and sent him to a local Hebrew School, where his peers tormented him for his Soviet heritage, strange clothing (often fur), and the tendency to mutter in Russian under his breath. He made it through the experience, earning at least minimal respect from his classmates by writing satirical tales and reading them aloud in school. When he enrolled in Stuyvesant High School—his first day there was one of the first times he'd set foot in Manhattan he soon realized the folly of his Republican values. He later went to Oberlin College, majored in political science to please his parents, and started writing The Russian Debutante's Handbook. He finished the book nearly ten years later in New York, while working as a writer of brochures for the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA). It was published in 2002, when he was thirty years old.

I met Shteyngart, a member of the Harriman Institute faculty teaching in the M.F.A. writing program at Columbia's School of the Arts, on February 11, 2014, at the Columbia Journalism café, just a month after publication of Little Failure, and three months after the birth of his son, Johnny. Tired from flying around the world—it was Day 49 of his 158-day book tour—he feverishly unwrapped a cough drop. "This is my best friend, this Halls mentholyptus eucalyptus something or other," he said, popping it into his mouth, "Mmmm . . . ahhhh . . . bring it on!"



Little Failure: A Memoir Gary Shteyngart Random House (2014) ISBN 978-0-679-64375-3

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, directly from the publisher, and select bookstores.



Gary Shteyngart talking with Harriman director Timothy Frye (right) in Frye's office before the author's reading and discussion at the Harriman Institute (photo by David Dini, Columbia University Photography)

**Masha Udensiva-Brenner:** You mentioned on NPR's "Fresh Air" that your goal for this memoir was to create an "almost historical record of this bizarre generation" that left the Soviet Union for the United States. Can you elaborate?

Gary Shteyngart: There really was a kind of iron curtain that doesn't exist anymore. Current immigrants from the middle class have access to the same crap we have—the iPhones, the iPads, the same kind of clothes. We had no inkling of what to expect. What we had was an ABBA cover band record—one of those *plastinkas* [records] that look like they're made out of some kind of rubber—and the song "Money, Money, Money." Nowadays people come, many of them know English, many of them are wealthier, they have a lot of access to the idea of the West, and not to mention the actual goods, the actual records, but we didn't. And that kind of immigration is very rare. Even back then. Certainly if you were middle class in India you still had an idea of what Western goods looked like. So, there will never be anything like that again.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Until people start emigrating from North Korea.

**Shteyngart:** Exactly, that may be the last one left. It would be interesting to see. Even immigrating from North to South Korea—and there've been a lot of studies on the people that escaped—the adjustment period is very difficult. Both in the way the South Koreans perceive them [North Koreans], and their inability to function in a hugely technological society.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** What kinds of things were you surprised to find in the U.S.?

**Shteyngart:** The new Pan Am Terminal. It was so different from the crappy Leningrad airport, Pulkovo—this tiny, cramped space.

All of a sudden you land and there's a flying saucer waiting for you. And the cars; the Chevrolet Corvette . . . it looked like an airplane missing its wings! Cereal—in the book I talk about cereal quite a bit—the fact that it comes in this little container. Amazing!

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Did you have any idea that these things existed? Did your parents prepare you for it?

Shteyngart: They didn't know. Who knew? Nobody had any idea.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** As a kid you admired Lenin. Then, once you immigrated, your parents told you you'd been duped about Lenin and the greatness of the Soviet Union. How did you feel?

**Shteyngart:** Great betrayal. But, you know, you start looking for other stuff to fill the void. Soviet immigrants, whether they are young or old, are brought up with this idea of power being very important, and when we moved to America we became entranced with Republican politics, for example, or conservative politics in Israel, like Likud. There was always this very great respect for what's considered strength. I remember as a child my parents would make fun of Jimmy Carter because he was perceived as a weak leader. When I came to America, I was also, like all of the people around me, quite in love with Reagan.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** You've said you wrote this memoir partly in order to get a better understanding of your parents. What did you discover?

**Shteyngart:** Well, I had the overall feeling of reconciliation with the past. Growing up—it was tough. I didn't know why they behaved the way they did. I didn't understand where their insults came from, the general feeling of depression and anxiety. In returning to Russia you sort of see the root of those emotions—it's a

depressing and anxious country. Just walking down the street you see people look angry for no good reason, or vacant, or upset in a way that few people in America would look unless they just found out they have cancer. It's a very difficult existence. America is a much softer country than Russia, but my parents remained tough people. That's why they had so much difficulty in my becoming a writer. My mother was so adamant that I become something else, a lawyer . . . And that's where the term "little failure" was coined.

Udensiva-Brenner: When you were five, your grandmother encouraged you to write. She paid you with a slice of cheese for every page you produced and you ended up with a 100-page novel called Lenin and His Magical Goose. How much did that experience contribute to your becoming a writer?

Shteyngart: The most important thing was reading. The fact that I was reading Nils and the Magical Geese [The Wonderful Adventures of Nils by Selma Lagerlöf] at the time, that was probably even more important. I loved the way the language worked and I wanted to do the same thing. That's how it starts; you want to imitate. But the fact that I was being rewarded and that somebody loved me for doing this was very important. I think that's why so many writers do this—you want to be validated.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** And writing helped you validate yourself in Hebrew school.

Shteyngart: It really helped. It moved me away from this complete Russianness and hatred to this kind of, you know, this crazy writing guy. I mean they were Jews after all, so humor and storytelling mattered. That was good.

Udensiva-Brenner: You first entertained your classmates with a science fiction novel called The Chalenge [sic] based largely on your Republican politics. Did they catch on to the Republican connotations?

Shteyngart: You know it's interesting; those kids were mostly from Democratic families. Did they catch on? I don't remember. I know as we got older and toward high school that I would constantly get into these arguments with . . . there were a lot of cool girls who were Democrats. It seemed like fun, almost.

Udensiva-Brenner: A defining moment for you in school was when you wrote the Gnorah—your own, humorous version of the Torah. Can you tell me a little bit about how it felt to finally be at the center of attention?

Shteyngart: Well, the way writing works is that you're at the center for a few weeks, a few months, and then it really moves on to the latest Cyndi Lauper album, or something. It was a good introduction to the fact that writing can have an impact, but a limited impact. And then the world sort of clicks back into place, the class system, and people being who they're supposed to be.

Udensiva-Brenner: Did you feel that way after your first book, The Russian Debutante's Handbook, was published?

**Shteyngart:** I was shocked that it has had the shelf life that it has. That, you know, people would actually show up to my readings. And that it was translated into many languages. I was living in Rome after it came out, so I would tour to different countries. I remember reading in Prague—that's where Russian Deb was based—and thinking, it can't be! I was walking through the streets and there was a writers' festival, and my name was on the list with, you know, Nadine Gordimer and all these other people, and I was thirty years old, maybe thirty-one, and I was just shocked that that could happen.

Udensiva-Brenner: Your parents read Russian Deb, which contained many autobiographical details, and said: "Wow, we had no idea you had such an unhappy childhood." How did they feel about the memoir?

Shteyngart: I sent them a copy, but they haven't said anything yet. When there's a Russian translation we'll talk about it.

Udensiva-Brenner: Do they get upset when you write about this sort of stuff?

**Shteyngart:** I don't think they understand it. My father in particular. To him, being Jewish is the highest value. He doesn't understand how Hebrew school could have been traumatic for me. These are my people. "Don't write like a self-hating Jew"—that will always be my father's mantra.

Udensiva-Brenner: Why did you decide to omit from the memoir pretty much everything after your first book deal?

Shteyngart: The memoir thrives on conflict—any story you write thrives on conflict—and after the publication of my first book the conflict began to end. Not completely, but not in a way that I think would make for terribly interesting work.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** You've been going to psychoanalysis four times a week for almost twelve years . . .

Shteyngart: It's almost over. The memoir was a kind of good accounting of my life until now; the child is a good indication that I can progress, and you know, move on in the world. Things are pretty stable. Now it's a long process of disengagement called "termination."

Udensiva-Brenner: How has psychoanalysis affected your writing?

**Shteyngart:** Almost everything I wrote in the memoir was said in analysis, sort of publishing things into the air—it was a nice test run.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** How many drafts of it did you go through before you submitted it to your editor?

**Shteyngart:** Just one.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Did you have to revise much after that?

**Shteyngart:** No! And my editor is a tough cookie. With *Super Sad* we went through God knows how many drafts and the whole thing was completely reworked and restructured. So many sci-fi elements and other things were cut, but here he did work, but it wasn't a lot at all. I mean, with a novel like *Super Sad*, there are so many plot elements. Here I know the plot; it's my life.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Have you ever fought with an editor?

**Shteyngart:** It's never been an issue, I have to say. It's strange, but my editor at Random House is terrific—he teaches at Columbia too. Sometimes there are space constraints in a magazine article and things have to be cut. That's sad, but you know, what are you gonna do? You can say, "I think I prefer this section to that if you're gonna cut it," but overall it's been great. I've never fought.

When I was just starting out, there was a piece commissioned about the invasion of Iraq in 2003. And it wasn't just me who was commissioned, it was a bunch of us, and I'm not gonna name the newspaper—let's just say that it was a very well-known one. And, from what I was told, they cancelled the whole thing. All of us. We had all written for them. And what I was told was that they did it because it would be a disaster for their relations with the Bush White House. But that was the only time that anything I'd ever written had been cancelled like that. Those were scary times.

Udensiva-Brenner: Is it true that you never get writer's block?

Shteyngart: Yeah.

Udensiva-Brenner: So you just sit down and get right into it?

**Shteyngart:** No, I do a lot of research. This book required a lot of research talking to my parents, obviously, my friend Jonathan, friends from high school and college, looking through all the letters that I'd sent to JZ, my college girlfriend, and she had thankfully kept a lot of them . . . I was so stoned at Oberlin it was hard to remember anything.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Do you face *any* challenges while you're writing?

**Shteyngart:** Well, time. I teach one semester at Columbia. Do a lot of travel writing, which I find helps. And I'm always giving lectures or whatever at other universities.

Udensiva-Brenner: What's your writing regimen?

**Shteyngart:** Four hours a day.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Every day?

**Shteyngart:** No, I mean look, 150 days I'm running around like a crazy. You know, out of a four-year cycle publishing a book, one year is publicity and about a third of the year is either teaching or travel writing or touring or reading at other universities. So you get two-thirds of three years; so that's about two years of actual work for every four-year cycle. That's at about two pages a day, so let's say that the first draft is 400 pages; so about 200 days for the initial draft, and then however long it takes to do the editing.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Do you go back and edit your daily two pages after you write them?

**Shteyngart:** Yes, I do. It's like, if you shoot a film, you go through this reel first, so you can go in to see what you're gonna shoot the next day. The dailies they're called. So something like that. You edit the two pages you wrote before, and then you write two new ones, and then the next day you edit them.

Udensiva-Brenner: Do you outline?

**Shteyngart:** It depends. With the memoir, obviously not; it was just linear, a straight shot. *Absurdistan* had a huge outline because I didn't know what was gonna happen. *Super Sad* I thought about it,

"With satire you hide so much behind humor and you can always get away from things if you don't feel comfortable. With a memoir . . . you can't hide from the truth. With a satire you lead with humor. Here, humor was just one of the things in my arsenal."







Gary Shteyngart (left and right) and Timothy Frye (center) during the reading and discussion at the Harriman Institute (photos by David Dini, Columbia University Photography)

but then when the two parts sort of started speaking to one another it became much easier. I kind of let Lenny and Eunice run with it.

Udensiva-Brenner: How was the switch from fiction to memoir?

Shteyngart: Well, with satire you hide so much behind humor and you can always get away from things if you don't feel comfortable. With a memoir . . . I mean I hope the memoir is still funny . . . but a lot of it, you can't hide from the truth. With a satire you lead with humor. Here, humor was just one of the things in my arsenal.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** What's your favorite of the books you've written so far?

Shteyngart: I like them all for different reasons. The first one was the most tender to write, because I was so young. And I didn't know if it would get published or not, so I was writing for either anyone or no one, and it felt like this holy task. With the second book it became work, you know, deadlines. But I enjoyed writing Absurdistan because it was my most out and out satire. It was really more a work of journalism; so much of it, the parts in the Caucasus, was based on meeting crazy people.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** So you went to the Caucasus before you wrote it?

**Shteyngart:** I spent a summer there. The book was as grounded in reality as anything I'd ever written. People say, "Oh my God, it's like duck soup or something," but it wasn't; this is the sad reality on the ground. All of it is true. Hookers looking for "Galiburton" at the Hyatt in Baku, being threatened with a kindjal in Tbilisi,

some deputy of the Ministry of Privatization trying to get me to steal funds from some California charity, on and on.

And then Super Sad was fun to write because it was my first departure from the Russian-Jewish voice. Cause there was a Korean-American voice in there. That was so enjoyable; I would like to do something like that for the next one. Not necessarily Eunice's voice, but a woman's voice, and somebody who's not Russian, definitely.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** You've mentioned plans to write an international thriller . . .

**Shteyngart:** Yup.

**Udensiva-Brenner:** Will it be humorous?

**Shteyngart:** Everything will always have humor in it, but how much humor is the question. The humor is what makes the tragic parts stand out. They help each other. To write one without the other is beyond my imagination.

Udensiva-Brenner: Do you feel pressure when you start writing a new book to live up to your last one?

**Shteyngart:** Oh yeah, it never ends. There's a scene in the *Sopranos* where Paulie is not making enough money and he goes to Silvio and he says, "But Tony and I go way back." And Silvio says, "You're only as good as your last envelope." And that's what being in the creative arts is like: you're only as good as your last envelope. □



Robert L. Belknap

The Robert L. Belknap Dissertation Prize will be awarded as merited to dissertations in the Slavic Department that are of exceptional quality. Himself a brilliant scholar, Bob Belknap promoted excellence in others. To his students as well as to many other members of the field, he was a wise mentor, a pragmatic adviser, a perceptive critic, a trenchant editor, an erudite commentator, a scintillating interlocutor, and a true advocate. We establish this prize to honor Bob Belknap for his work and to recognize dissertations of great distinction. Donations toward the establishment of this prize may be sent to the Department of Slavic Languages, Columbia University, 1130 Amsterdam Avenue, Mail Code 2839, New York, NY 10027, attention: John Lacqua. Checks should be made out to Columbia University with "Belknap Prize" in the memo line.

### In Memoriam

#### Robert L. Belknap, 1929-2014

Robert L. Belknap, professor emeritus of Russian in the Department of Slavic Languages, died on March 17. Professor Belknap was a magisterial teacher of literature in true Columbia tradition, a guiding intellect and scholar in the field of Russian literature, a committed educator who devoted his energy and vision to making Columbia an institution to be proud of. From start to finish, he was a man of integrity, wit, wisdom, and good will. He will be sorely missed and fondly remembered by all who have had the honor of knowing him and learning from him.

A native New Yorker, born December 23, 1929, Robert Belknap was educated at Princeton University, the University of Paris, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) State University, and Columbia University (Ph.D. in Slavic languages and literatures, 1960). Known the world over as an expert on Russian literature, on Dostoevsky, in particular, he was the author of two major studies on Dostoevsky's masterpiece: The Structure of "The Brothers Karamazov" (1967, reprinted 1989) and The Genesis of "The Brothers Karamazov" (1992), both of which appeared in Russian translation. Literary Plots, based on the Leonard Hastings Schoff Memorial Lectures that Professor Belknap delivered in 2011, is forthcoming from Columbia University Press. Together with Columbia colleague Richard Kuhns, Robert Belknap wrote Tradition and Innovation: General Education and the Reintegration of the University (1977), which reminds us that interdisciplinary understanding, tolerance, and humility are central to a whole—or, as they put it, reintegrated—university. Indeed, one of Robert Belknap's special strengths was his ability to draw people

from different disciplines together in a common intellectual enterprise.

The intellectual excitement that Robert Belknap generated in his classrooms is legendary. His repertory ranged over the canon of Russian literature. He taught Literature Humanities in the Columbia Core Curriculum for more than fifty years. Students chose him for the Van Doren Great Teacher Award in 1980, and alumni chose him for the Society of Columbia Graduates Great Teacher Award in 2010. He is justly known for the lasting impact he had on students—from first-year undergraduates in Literature Humanities to dissertation advisees. Teaching Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Belknap, a volume edited by Deborah A. Martinsen, Cathy Popkin, and Irina Reyfman, is a tribute to his profound influence on the academic field.

Over the course of his career, Professor Belknap assumed leadership roles in a number of realms at Columbia: He served as the chair of the Slavic Department, the director of the Russian (now Harriman) Institute, the acting dean of Columbia College, the chair of Literature Humanities, and the director of the University Seminars. As an administrator, he had a talent for getting the job done well and for creating a spirit of cooperation.

He is survived by his wife, Cynthia Whittaker, a Russian historian, and other family members.

A memorial service will be held at Columbia on Friday, September 12, at 2 p.m. in St. Paul's Chapel.



William E. Harkins

William Harkins was an expert in many areas and a versatile and innovative Slavist. In honor of his multifaceted contribution, we are establishing a colloquium that celebrates the cultural as well as disciplinary variety within the Slavic field. The new Harkins Colloquium, run by graduate students, will provide a forum beyond the classroom in which they pursue their intellectual interests. The aim is to reimagine Slavic studies both by drawing our own faculty and students together and by enhancing our links to individuals and groups beyond the department. Funds will be available for graduate students to pursue initiatives of collective interest, host speakers, gather informal groups, or organize more formal events. Donations toward the establishment of this colloquium may be sent to the Department of Slavic Languages, Columbia University, 1130 Amsterdam Avenue, Mail Code 2839, New York, NY 10027, attention: John Lacqua. Checks should be made out to Columbia University with "Harkins Colloquium" in the memo line.

#### William E. Harkins, 1921-2014

William E. Harkins, professor emeritus of the Department of Slavic Languages at Columbia University, died on May 17, 2014, at the age of 92. Among Slavists, Bill Harkins was a true renaissance man: an expert on Russian prose, a specialist in Slavic folklore, one of the first American scholars to do serious work in Czech literature, the author of a monograph on Karel Čapek, a translator from Czech, the author of the Dictionary of Russian Literature, the author of a Czech language textbook and coauthor of a widely used textbook of Russian grammar, and a promoter of regional studies. Generations of Columbia students remember him fondly for his contribution to their training on all these fronts, as well as for his good will, his attention to their development as writers, and his having made them attuned to the interplay of word and image in Slavic culture. In 2000, his students and colleagues in the field honored him with a Festschrift volume entitled Depictions: Slavic Studies in the Narrative and Visual Arts (edited by Douglas M. Greenfield). His colleagues were profoundly grateful to him for his generous service to the Slavic Department, the Russian Institute, the University, and the Slavic field at large. He played an important role in making Columbia an important center for Slavic studies.

Born in 1921 in State College, Pennsylvania, William Harkins received his B.A. degree from Pennsylvania State University. After military service, he did his graduate work in the Slavic Department at Columbia and received his doctorate in 1950. His dissertation, published as a book, was The Russian Folk Epos in Czech Literature, 1890–1900. Professor

Harkins taught in the Slavic Department at Columbia for the next forty years. One colleague who had worked with him for forty years described Bill Harkins as "absolutely honest" and "always kind," noting that Bill "always bore far more than his fair share of the burden, administrative, pedagogical, and emotional, of working together with a group of people different enough from one another to make a strong department." At Columbia, Bill Harkins was chair of the Slavic Department and director of the Russian (now Harriman) Institute, in addition to serving in or on a number of other organs, including the University Senate and the Committee on Instruction. He was very active in professional associations in the Slavic field at large and served as president of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. His work in promoting Czech studies at Columbia and at large deserves particular mention.

Bill Harkins's commitments and activities extended beyond the Slavic field. He had a special interest in Japanese prints and served twice as the president of the Japanese Art Society (formerly Ukiyo-e Society).

Survivors of William Harkins include Hideo Kidokoro, his longtime companion; John W. Harkins, his brother; two nieces, Mary Ann Williams and Rebecca Candelario; and many cousins and grandnieces and grand-nephews.

A memorial service will be held at Columbia on Friday, October 17, at 3 p.m. at the Harriman Institute, International Affairs Buildings, 420 West 118th Street, 12th Floor.



Mark Pekala



Katherine E. Young



Justin Gilstrap



Alexa Voytek

### Alumni & Postdoc Notes

Mark Pekala (M.I.A. and Harriman Certificate, 1983) has been the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Latvia since 2012. In his twenty-five years with the State Department, Mark has served in Warsaw, Brussels (at NATO), Tallinn, Paris, and now Riga. In Washington assignments, Mark has served on the Russia Desk, in the State Department Operations Center, as director for Russian affairs on the National Security Council staff, and as a deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. He also taught graduate courses at Georgetown University on U.S.-Russia relations and European security. Mark's most recent publication is "Latvia: Out of the Crisis, Coming into Its Own" in the Fall 2013 issue of The Ambassadors Review.

Katherine E. Young's (M.I.A./Harriman, 1985) Day of the Border Guards, a collection of poetry about Russia and the former Soviet Union, was selected for publication as part of the 2014 University of Arkansas Miller Williams Prize series. In the summer of 2013, Young was invited to speak on translation theory at the Translator's Coven, convened by Robert Chandler and Oliver Ready at St. Anthony's College, Oxford. Young's translations of poet Inna Kabysh are forthcoming in a dual-language iPad edition that includes text, audio, and video. You can find more information about Young on her website: www .katherine-young-poet.com.

Justin Gilstrap (SIPA/Harriman Certificate, 2008) is currently managing the fellowships component of the U.S.-Russia Social Expertise Exchange, facilitating U.S.-Russian collaboration in twelve areas of pressing interest (www

.usrussiasocialexpertise.org/#fellowships). Since graduation, Justin has worked on issues including interethnic relations in Serbia and journalism and the rule of law in Russia. He and his wife live in Washington, D.C., where they recently had a son.

**Alexa Voytek (MARS, 2013)** is working at the international corporate practice at Ketchum, doing PR work and providing communications counsel for the Russian government and Gazprom.

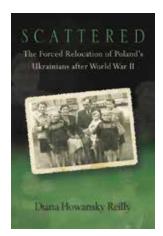
Jessica Teickenson (née Teicher) (Human Rights/Harriman Certificate, 2009) currently works as the human resource specialist at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Transition Assistance (OTI) in the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). Teickenson serves as a technical expert in OTI's Management and Operations Division. She guides OTI staff through HR benefits and regulations, manages the office's performance evaluation process, facilitated the first-ever OTI Training for Supervisors of United States Personal Service Contractors (USPSCs), and organized the first-ever PSC Benefits Fair. In 2012-13, Teickenson served as vice president of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) and Pride in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA), the officially recognized employee resource group of LGBT and allied employees in U.S. foreign affairs agencies, and works to achieve full equality (in policy, treatment, benefits, etc.) for its members serving in the United States and abroad. Teickenson provided USAID leadership with essential post–Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) guidance, which later served as a model for broader Office of Personnel Management (OPM) LGBT policy for the broader federal government. Before USAID, Teickenson worked at the Public Interest Law Institute, now PILnet, where she coordinated PILnet's fellowship program for human rights advocates from Russia, Serbia, Nigeria, Cameroon, China, Nepal, and Indonesia.

We also want to congratulate **Diana Howansky Reilly**, former staff associate for the Harriman's Ukrainian Studies Program and graduate of the Columbia Journalism School, on the publication of her well-received monograph *Scattered: The Forced Relocation of Poland's Ukrainians after World War II* (University of Wisconsin Press,

2013), which is shortlisted for *ForeWord Review's* 2013 Best Book of the Year Award (Adult Nonfiction History). The reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* writes: "The context for *Scattered* is complex and remains controversial in both Poland and Ukraine. Yet Reilly's narrative, written in short vignettes, is clear and balanced, and she successfully weaves the wider history into a rich fabric containing details of everyday life. . . . The result is a short, but skillfully crafted synthesis of family memoir and micro-history that is as interesting for its uncovering of a neglected tragedy as for its portrait of a little-known culture."



Jessica Teickenson



Diana Howansky Reilly

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