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KATHLEEN
HARRIMAN

WARTIME LETTERS
FROM MOSCOW

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Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies

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Kathleen Harriman, London, early 1940s

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Aralsk, Kazakhstan (2005).
Photo by Christopher Herwig.





It is on a bittersweet note that I write this introduction for the Winter 2015 issue of the *Harriman Magazine*. This is my last letter for the magazine as my term as director of the Institute ends in June 2015. One of my goals as director was to increase our public profile and strengthen ties with alumni, and the magazine has been a key part of that strategy. With its beautiful photos, revealing interviews, and timely essays, the magazine has really exceeded my expectations. Great thanks go to the editors, Ronald Meyer and Masha Udensiva-Brenner, who have been its guiding forces from the start.

It is an honor for me, and for the Harriman Institute, the proud namesake of Governor W. Averell Harriman, to feature a cover story about the wartime letters of Harriman's daughter Kathleen, written by historian Geoffrey Roberts. "Kathy" accompanied Ambassador Harriman to Moscow in October 1943, and shared with Pamela Churchill, among others, her astute observations on Russian life and the characters she encountered; her first meeting with Joseph Stalin; and her impressions of the Katyn massacre site. Special thanks to her son, David Mortimer, for the wonderful photos of his mother that accompany the article.

Another treat is an interview with Stephen Sestanovich, whose new book, *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama*, was published last year by Knopf. Sestanovich reminds us just how turbulent American foreign policy has always been—the book couldn't have been more timely. A keen observer of political dynamics, and a cherished member of the Harriman community, Sestanovich views the foreign policy challenges we are experiencing today with the eyes of a seasoned practitioner.

One major challenge we face is the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the United States. This issue profiles Gail Buyske, Harriman Institute alumna ('93) and international banking expert, who continues to travel to Russia to advise banks. She offers insightful perspectives on the Russian banking sector during a time of economic crisis. We are also fortunate to have the perspectives of our alums Nate Schenkkan ('11) and Steve Swerdlow ('03), human rights practitioners working on Central Asia, who discuss the changing human rights landscape in the region in light of recent developments in Russia, with current MARS-REERS student Casey Michel ('15).

From a cultural viewpoint, Robyn Miller Jensen, Ph.D. candidate in Columbia's department of Slavic languages, describes her experience as a stowaway on the Columbia Global Scholars Summer Workshop on socialist and post-socialist cities, "Contemporary Cities of Eurasia: Berlin, Moscow, Ulaanbaatar, Beijing," led by Charles Armstrong and Catharine Nepomnyashchy. We also have an article about our Fall 2014 exhibit, "Soviet Bus Stops," and photographer Christopher Herwig's quest to amass the largest and most diverse collection of Soviet Bus Stop photographs.

In memory of our dear colleague, Robert Belknap, we are reprinting an essay he authored for the volume *Teaching Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, based on the proceedings of a Columbia conference dedicated to him. We also have a profile of our new Polish History Chair, Małgorzata Mazurek, whom we were very happy to welcome to the Harriman Institute family last July.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to hearing your feedback and ideas for future stories.

Timothy Frye
Director, Harriman Institute



12

COVER STORY

[“Do the crows still roost in the Spasopeskovskaya trees?”
The Wartime Correspondence of Kathleen Harriman](#)
By Geoffrey Roberts

Kathleen Harriman was twenty-five when she arrived in Moscow in 1943 to be companion and assistant to her father, U.S. Ambassador Averell Harriman. While her main function was to preside over the ambassadorial residence, she also worked in the Office of War Information, where she was on the staff of the English-language news bulletin and participated in the launch of *Amerika*, the glossy U.S. propaganda magazine. These dual roles made her the perfect insider correspondent for news about Stalin’s Russia to family and friends, and her letters quickly spread beyond the immediate correspondents. Embassy gossip, character sketches of Stalin and his circle, and eyewitness reports from Katyn and the Yalta Conference all make these letters a lively and informative historical document penned by an extraordinary young woman.

4

[Applied Knowledge: How a Russia Enthusiast Became an International Banker. Gail Buyske in Profile](#)
By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

As international tensions persist and Russia struggles through a financial crisis, Gail Buyske ('93) continues to advise banks in Russia and Ukraine. Read about the trajectory of her career in corporate governance, her studies at the Harriman Institute, and her experiences as a student in 1970s Leningrad.

8

[Moscow–Beijing: A Journey across Eurasia](#)
By Robyn Miller Jensen

Jensen joins the fourteen students on the Global Studies course, “Contemporary Cities of Eurasia,” led by Professors Catharine Nepomnyashchy and Charles Armstrong, to ponder the question, “What is Eurasia and does it exist?”



24

24

[How Past Informs Present: Stephen Sestanovich Discusses His Book, *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama*, and His Thoughts on U.S. Foreign Policy](#)
By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

How did the United States come to see itself as an international problem solver? What can we learn from the policy of containment? And how should President Obama handle the rise of ISIS and the Ukraine crisis? A former diplomat's take on current affairs and the history that shapes them.

34

[On the Ground: Human Rights in Central Asia. A Conversation with Steve Swerdlow and Nate Schenkkan](#)
By Casey Michel

As Russia clamps down on civil rights, its Central Asian neighbors are doing the same. Two Harriman alums discuss their experiences in the field.



41

41

[From Warsaw to New York: In Search of the Bigger Picture. Małgorzata Mazurek in Profile](#)
By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

On growing up in Warsaw, teaching at Columbia, and taking innovative approaches to history as a discipline.

46

[Teaching Contexts](#)
By Robert L. Belknap
Introduction by Deborah A. Martinsen

Professor Robert L. Belknap reflects on memorable experiences in his fifty-plus years as student and teacher at Columbia.

55

[Forgotten Art: Christopher Herwig and the World's Largest Collection of Soviet Bus Stop Photographs](#)
By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

Annals of a fifteen-yearlong “scavenger-hunt” across the post-Soviet space.



55

62

[In Memoriam](#)

64

[Alumni & Postdoc Notes](#)

65

[Giving to Harriman](#)

A P P L I E D K N O W L E D G E

HOW A RUSSIA ENTHUSIAST BECAME AN INTERNATIONAL BANKER



Gail Buyske and colleagues at the farewell party thrown in her honor by Kazkommertsbank (2012).

GAIL BUYSKE

IN PROFILE

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER



As geopolitical tensions over the crisis in Ukraine escalate, and Russia’s economy erodes under pressure from Western sanctions, Gail Buyske (Harriman Institute, ’93) continues to travel to Russia and Ukraine to advise the Bank of St. Petersburg and the First Ukrainian International Bank. Buyske, a slender, elegant woman with short reddish brown hair and a kind, gentle demeanor, has worked in international banking since 1979 and has been engaged in corporate governance for nearly two decades. She likens the role of a member on a board of directors to that of an amateur psychologist. “I could walk into a bank and pretty quickly figure out what the problems are, but the point is to help other people make the solutions their own,” she says. “To do that, you have to understand where those people are coming from.” Perhaps it is because of her emphasis on understanding that Buyske has not experienced major changes to her work environment, even in the face of rising international tensions. “My contribution to this is that I just keep showing up,” she says. “I try to be friendly, I try to be helpful, because life does go on for everybody and we’re just trying to do our best.”

Buyske did not always plan to go into the financial sector, nor was she always interested in the post-Soviet region. As an undergraduate, she enrolled in Middlebury College for its French program and ended up taking Russian as a second language at the recommendation of her adviser. The faculty of the Middlebury Russian Department encouraged students to “try to understand the country and its culture as a whole,” says Buyske, and its tutelage sparked her interest in the region. But the real turning point came in 1975, during her junior year, when she spent a semester in Leningrad living in a dorm room across from the Hermitage. The experience was not without its hardships, including the lack of food and the difficulty of making Russian

friends because everyone was scared to be seen with an American. The friends she did make were so squeamish about their telephones being tapped—"they always acted as if it was some magic hearing device, even if it was just next to us in the room"—that nearly forty years later she continues to be uncomfortable discussing sensitive information by phone. But Buyske was struck by the shocking beauty of the architecture and the peculiar juxtaposition of Soviet structures and the relics of tsarist times. "In some bizarre way, it felt like home to me," she says. "And I wanted desperately to understand it."

After graduating from Middlebury, Buyske envisioned herself becoming an academic or joining the Foreign Service and enrolled in a master's in public administration program at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School. Princeton was known for its strong Russian language department and two star Sovietologists—Stephen Cohen and Richard Tucker—and Buyske continued her studies of the region. But after the two-year program ended, she hesitated to embark on the path to academia. "I realized that I didn't know the world well enough, I didn't have my questions formulated, and I didn't have enough life experience to get a Ph.D.," she says. She

was accepted into the Foreign Service but decided against that too. What if she didn't like it and ended up without the transferable skills necessary to build another career? At that time, U.S. banks were just starting to expand into the international arena and seeking employees with international knowledge and aptitude in foreign languages. Master's programs in business administration were not yet prevalent, so bankers came to university campuses to recruit students with language skills and "a demonstrated interest in travel and meeting people from other countries," and put them in a yearlong training program, says Buyske. She liked the idea of working for a large, international organization, developing a network, and learning technical skills. She interviewed with Chase and got a job in the problem loan department. "It was pretty idyllic," she says.

Though she assumed her work in the banking sector would be temporary, Buyske kept landing interesting assignments and delaying her exit from the industry. Throughout the early 1980s, she worked with the senior banker leading the 1980 Chrysler bailout negotiations on a coal mine in Pennsylvania, and with a movie company in California. She also conducted a study of the nascent

timeshare industry in Florida. "I had broad exposure to a bunch of different industries and people trying to figure out how to solve problems," she says. Then she got a four-year placement in Hong Kong when it was still a British colony, shortly after the opening of China's economy. "It was just spectacular," she recalls.

Eventually, after working on the Latin American debt crisis in the mid-1980s, and as the deputy head of Chase's Soviet and Eastern European division from 1988 to 1991, she decided to enter academia full time and enroll in a Ph.D. program in Columbia's Department of Political Science. "During my days at Chase I had met all these interesting people and had all these fantastic anecdotal experiences, but I didn't have a way to put them together in my head," she says. What she wanted out of a Ph.D. program was a framework for understanding the Soviet Union. Just as she embarked on her degree, the Soviet Union collapsed. Buyske, who was fascinated by the unfolding developments, took advantage of the growing demand for Russian speakers with banking knowledge and spent her doctoral years consulting for banks from the former Soviet republics, as the post-Communist region tried to develop new banking systems. "It really helped me



From left to right: Gail Buyske (chair) and colleagues of the Board Working Group on Audit and Risk at the First Ukrainian International Bank; Gail Buyske (chair) with members of the Risk Committee of the Board of Directors of Bank St. Petersburg, visiting a construction site; Gail Buyske and colleagues at her Kazkommertsbank farewell party (2012).



Gail Buyske at the International Banking Congress in St. Petersburg.

Currently, the Russian economy is in crisis, and Buyske worries that the geopolitical overtones will hinder the financial sector's ability to learn from these events.

to define what I wanted to research,” she says. Meanwhile, Buyske’s professors—Richard Ericson and Robert Legvold, Jack Snyder and Richard Wortman, to name a few—gave her a perspective on Russian economics, politics, and history. “It was such an exciting time because everyone was trying to figure out what was going on,” she says.

After finishing her dissertation—a comparison of the banking systems in Russia, Estonia, and Hungary—Buyske went back into the financial sector to apply her knowledge. She was particularly interested in the world of corporate governance, which was key to former Communist countries trying to develop market economies. As state-owned companies privatized, and shareholders received privatization vouchers, there were no mechanisms in place to ensure that they would treat their shareholders fairly. Thus, it became necessary for each company to develop the appropriate supervisory framework and a board of directors to keep that framework in place. In 1998, Buyske moved to Moscow to join the Financial Institutions Team at the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The following year, the EBRD asked her to chair the board of directors for the Small Business Credit Bank (KMB), and she was unwittingly brought into the world of microfinance.

In the 1990s, microfinance—the practice of making “micro” loans to small borrowers, often traced back to a \$27 loan made to basket weavers in Bangladesh in the mid-1970s—was associated with poverty reduction and generally executed by churches or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in countries all over Asia, Africa, and South America; banks rarely became involved in these transactions because of the perceived inherent risk involved in lending to poor borrowers. But in Russia, where the commercial banking center was just developing, banks had no preconceived notions about microfinance and eagerly accepted the practice after

it was introduced to them by organizations such as the EBRD. While, much like their counterparts in less-developed nations, many Russian citizens were unemployed and without credit history, it worked in their favor to have a strong tradition of national education—they were able to build larger businesses on a more sophisticated scale. Microfinance became an indispensable means to creating new enterprises and sparking economic growth in Russia. Buyske, although initially skeptical, eventually became so interested in the concept and eager to debunk the stereotypes that she wrote a book about it: *Banking on Small Business: Microfinance in Contemporary Russia* (Cornell University Press, 2007). “Writing that book was a very important personal accomplishment,” she says.

Is there another one in her future? “Possibly. The challenge of writing a book is that you have to feel passionate about something and I’m still mulling about what that would be,” Buyske says. She is considering a study on the fate of borrower discipline in Russia over the past five years. Too many lenders can lead to discipline breakdown, she explains; a sole lender has more clout in setting conditions. “Has competition actually turned out to be a good thing? If it hasn’t, what lessons can we learn?” she wonders.

Currently, the Russian economy is in crisis, and Buyske worries that the geopolitical overtones will hinder the financial sector’s ability to learn from these events. She also fears that state-owned banks will dominate the weakening economy and hinder the development of privately-owned ones. “That will lessen the opportunities for economic innovation, and I would hate to see it happen.” But, despite the commotion, the banking system continues to function, says Buyske. “Bankers are trying to do their jobs, and my job is to help them.” □

MOSCOW


A JOURNEY ACROSS EURASIA

This past summer fourteen students participated in the Columbia Global Scholars Program Summer Workshop on "Contemporary Cities of Eurasia: Berlin, Moscow, Ulaanbaatar, Beijing." The course was a joint collaboration of the Harriman Institute, Weatherhead East Asian Institute, the Office of Global Programs, and the Columbia Global Center, East Asia. In four weeks the group traveled from Germany to China, exploring the theme of socialist and post-socialist cities. The course was led by Catharine Nepomnyashchy, professor of Russian literature and culture and chair of the Barnard Slavic Department, and Charles Armstrong, Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Studies in the Social Sciences. They were assisted by Edward Tjerman, currently term assistant professor in the Barnard Slavic Department. I was able to join them for part of the journey.



medieval city made up of ring roads and narrow lanes that Stalin punctuated with massive highways, Moscow does not always yield itself kindly to pedestrians. I arrive in Moscow ahead of the group and set off in search of our hostel. Although the hostel is close to the metro stop, no clear path reveals itself. Eventually, I find that if you travel through the tunnel of an underpass where the eternal babushka sells wild strawberries, ascend a flight of stairs, traverse the edge of an elevated highway, and descend another set of stairs, you will have effectively crossed the road. I'll later be reminded of this oblique route (and others) when a woman in Yekaterinburg quips, "In Russia, there are no roads, only directions."

For dissident writers in the Soviet Union, the direction to go was west. In Moscow we have tea with Vladimir Voinovich, who emigrated to West Germany in 1980 and published his satirical works abroad. He tells us about how he helped to smuggle a microfilm copy of Vasily Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* from the Soviet Union to the West. But we are heading east. We are to travel by train to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, with a stop in Yekaterinburg in the Urals. In 1891, work began on the Trans-



BEIJING

BY
ROBYN
MILLER
JENSEN

View from the Trans-Siberian Railroad en route from Ulan Ude, Russia, to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Photos by Robyn Miller Jensen.

Siberian Railway to connect the two Russian capitals with the Far East. While in Moscow, we meet with a delegation from Russian Railways, who have graciously secured our group tickets for the train. One of their plans for the future includes building a tunnel from Russia to Alaska to create a railway system that would connect Eurasia to America.

What is Eurasia and does it exist? Spanning two continents, Russia has often faced the question of whether it is European, Asian, or some third term that collapses the two. To insist on the difference between Europe and Asia suddenly became an ideological imperative for Russia during the westernizing reforms of the early eighteenth century. The Asiatic part of Russia was to be recast as the colonial periphery. But while other European empires were physically separated from their colonies by bodies of water, no distinct demarcation existed between the two landmasses. The geographer Vasily Tatishchev proposed that the border be drawn at the Ural Mountains, a natural boundary that lends a rather neat division to Russia.

We will cross the Urals to reach Yekaterinburg. After our first full day and night on the train, many of the students get up early in hopes of catching a glimpse of the obelisk at the

Europe-Asia border. They've been reading about it in Valentin Kataev's production novel *Time, Forward!* (1931–32) set in Magnitogorsk, an industrial city in the Urals. Suddenly I hear the boys chanting "ASIA! ASIA!" in the compartment next to mine. We've crossed the border. The others are disappointed that they missed it. But what has really changed? On either side stretches the same unending swath of trees, quietly unaware of a cartographer's markings.

In Yekaterinburg, we ask Lyudmila, who has offered to accompany us around her native city, what she thinks of the term *Evraziya* (Eurasia). I prefer *Aziopa*, she jokes, conflating the Russian words *Aziya* and *Evropa* in a way that belies the absurdity of these labels. We are technically now in Asia, but Yekaterinburg feels like Moscow, only more relaxed. It is a city famous for its Constructivist architecture, for being the site of the Romanov family's execution, and for the Ural Machine-Building Plant *Uralmash* that made Sverdlovsk, as it was then called, a closed city under the Soviets. At dinner, meanwhile, Lyudmila and her friends boast that Yekaterinburg has one of the shortest metro lines in the world. Their metro was opened in 1991, just a few months before the collapse of the Soviet



Clockwise from left: John Junho Kim peeks his head out the train window to look at the steppe; Mary Grigsby and Gabrielle Dressler in Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, Mongolia; students explore the Beijing hutong with Professors Catharine Nepomnyashchy and Charles Armstrong (front, far right), photo by Edward Tyerman.

Union. When we were in Moscow, the students had marveled at how the socialist realist statues and frescoes still remain part of the metro, that people daily encounter these icons of an ideology from a previous era.

Across the nine time zones of Russia, all trains run on Moscow time. And so even though our train is scheduled to leave Yekaterinburg at 2:00 a.m., this translates to an actual departure time of four in the morning. With time to spare and the prospect of not bathing for four days on the Trans-Siberian, we make a late-night visit to the banya. The banya holds a special place in Russian culture. *The Primary Chronicle* gives us one of the earliest descriptions of these bathhouses. In the first century, as legend has it, Andrew the Apostle journeyed as far north as contemporary Novgorod, where he observed the bathing rituals of the Slavs. Astounded by their practice of sweating in the steam room, beating each other with branches, and then dousing themselves with cold water, he remarked, “They make of the act not a mere washing but a veritable torment.”¹ The banya we visit resembles an old-fashioned wooden hut, but the complimentary leopard-print polyester towels are an undoubtedly post-Soviet touch. In the

steam room, we find the notorious birch branches. Dipped in warm water, the branches make a hushing, windswept sound as they hit your back—not at all the torment that Saint Andrew described.

Back on the train, the days begin to blend together. When discussion sessions aren’t being held in our small sleeping compartments, we can be found in the dining car where the view is better. The woman in charge spends all day watching Russian films on her laptop. It’s hard to imagine the eye not being drawn to the scene framed by the windows. I can’t even explain why—in many ways, the landscape is irrepressibly monotonous for much of the journey, and yet the eye wants more. One morning we wake up to a view of Lake Baikal. We travel along the shore for hours, and I think that I will never tire of the sight of the soft gray mist shrouding the water. When the train veers south at Ulan-Ude toward Mongolia, the landscape experiences a drastic change. If you peek your head out the window, you can see the front of the train cutting south through the steppe.

After four days, we step off the train in Ulaanbaatar where two dusty vans await to take us to the dormitory. Emblazoned on

What is Eurasia and does it exist? Spanning two continents, Russia has often faced the question of whether it is European, Asian, or some third term that collapses the two.



Students walk toward the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.

the rear window is a motto about “VIP style” that ends with the line, “We’re trying to make your dignity more LUXURIOUS.” It is the kind of enigmatic message that only Google Translate could achieve, and yet when I read it I can’t help but think that it baldly reveals the mechanism at work in most consumer capitalist marketing techniques. After the revolution in 1990, Mongolia adopted a market economy, which has dramatically changed its nomadic culture. And as is often the case in times of transition, the city is being transformed to reflect Mongolia’s current vision of its history. When we visit Sükhbaatar Square in the center of the city, we learn that the toponym is currently the subject of debate. Damdin Sükhbaatar, one of the leaders of the People’s Revolution of 1921, with the help of the Red Army, ended the Chinese occupation of Mongolia. But now, after the democratic revolution of 1990 that ended socialism in Mongolia, there is a push to rename the square after Chingis Khan. A massive statue of the founder of the Mongol Empire now sits outside the parliament opposite the statue of Sükhbaatar astride his rearing horse. Just as Moscow once again embraces its imperial past, so too, it would seem, does Ulaanbaatar.

From Ulaanbaatar to Beijing we fly over the Gobi Desert. The reddish sands of the desert disappear as we approach Beijing and the thick smog obscures our view. We take a bus tour of part of the city, but it is nearly impossible to see anything at a distance. It is only later on an improbably clear day that we see how mountains surround us. We visit the studio of the conceptual artist Xu Bing, whose work explores the collision of traditional

Chinese culture with the transnational world of global capitalism. In a series called “Square Word Calligraphy,” Xu Bing uses the traditional brush strokes of Chinese calligraphy to write in English. What first appear to be Chinese characters are actually English phrases. In apprehending his work, there is something like the sudden revelation of the mountains circling the city, of a veil being lifted.

Walking around Beijing, I am reminded of Moscow. The city was once a maze of alleyways, called *hutong*, which connected the traditional courtyard residences. Since 1990, however, these *hutong* neighborhoods are rapidly being razed. But you can still occasionally slip into the narrow lanes hidden behind the grid made up of highways, skyscrapers, and a Tiananmen Square that is no longer a public space (you have to queue for hours to gain entry). When Walter Benjamin visited Moscow in 1926, he remarked: “There is one thing curious about the streets: the Russian village plays hide-and-seek in them.”² In the *hutong*, just as in the Russian *dvor* or courtyard, the life of the village lies tucked away from the din of the modern city. □

¹ Serge A. Zenkovsky, ed. and trans., *Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* (New York: Meridian, 1974), 47.

² Walter Benjamin, *Moscow Diary*, trans. Richard Sieburth, *October 35* (Winter 1985): 67.

Kathleen Harriman with Major General A. R. Perminov, the Soviet officer in charge of the joint U.S.-Soviet shuttle operation that allowed U.S. bombers to land on Soviet territory (Poltava, June 2, 1944).

Photos courtesy of David H. Mortimer.



BY GEOFFREY ROBERTS

“DO THE CROWS STILL ROOST IN
THE SPASOPESKOVSKAYA TREES?”

THE WARTIME CORRESPONDENCE OF KATHLEEN HARRIMAN¹



When Kathleen Harriman arrived in Moscow in October 1943, one of the first people she met was Ivy Litvinov, the English wife of Maxim Litvinov, the former foreign commissar. “I hear that you and your father enjoy bridge. Isn’t it too bad we can’t play with you,” said Mrs. Litvinov. “My education on life in Moscow,” recalled Kathleen many years later, “had begun.”²

Kathleen met Ivy a few times during the war. “She’s sort of a bitch but rather an amusing one and certainly worth cultivating,” she told her sister Mary.³

Another of Kathleen’s acquaintances was Polina Zhemchuzhina, the wife of Litvinov’s archrival and successor as foreign commissar, Vyacheslav Molotov. Kathleen—or Kathy as she usually signed her letters—liked Polina, too, although she felt uncomfortable when the Soviet grand dame insisted on holding hands. “Mme. Molotov is a sweet little thing,” Kathy reported to Pamela Churchill. “She plays the harp, I gather. Is middle-aged with large quantities of braided undyed blond hair.”⁴ By the end of the war the two women had become almost intimate. At a Kremlin banquet in May 1945, Polina sent a bottle of “vodka” across the table to Kathy: “She met my eye, and we drank a silent toast. The bottle she sent me contained Narzan water. Friendship of the first order!”⁵

Kathy also liked Polina’s husband. “Moly,” as she called him, had “a hellova sense of humor and nice twinkling eyes.” She thought it a hoot when a deadpan Molotov made a joke at Stalin’s expense about sycophantic toasts at a dinner party for Winston Churchill in October 1944:

There were toasts to everyone and Stalin was very amusing when Moly got up and raised his glass to Stalin with a short conventional phrase about “our great leader.” Stalin, after he’d drunk, came back with “I thought he was going to say something different about me!” Moly answered with a rather glum: “It’s always a good one,” which I thought was very funny.⁶

Kathy was impressed when Molotov personally delivered the news of President Roosevelt’s death to the house of her father, the American ambassador. “For all that can be said about M. being an impersonal, cold man, he, that night, showed good instincts. Ave said that he was much upset—shocked—as I guess everyone was.” She also thought Molotov was “rather sweet” when he sat next to her at the memorial service for Roosevelt in Moscow.⁷

Unbeknownst to Kathy, there were personal and political tensions between Litvinov and Molotov, which sometimes bubbled to the surface in relations between the two wives. At an all-female tea party hosted by Polina in June 1945, “Mrs. Litvinov behaved abominably... She lambasted everything brought to



From left to right: Kathleen pins a German Iron Cross on U.S. General Ira Eaker; Kathleen works as a journalist in London; Kathleen cuts the ribbon to open an exhibition at VOKS on USAF bombing, with Averell Harriman and Vladimir Kernenov, head of VOKS.

us... Towards the end, Mrs. Moly got exasperated ... Mrs. Litvinov gave the impression of literally being slightly mad—a change that has taken place in the last few months. I’ll be surprised if she is ever again produced at such a function.”⁸ This happened at a time when Ivy’s husband was becoming ever more isolated and marginalized within the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.⁹

Kathy was twenty-five when she arrived in Moscow. For the previous two years she had worked as a journalist in London where her father, Averell Harriman, was Roosevelt’s lend-lease coordinator. In London, Kathy met Winston Churchill, the press baron Lord Beaverbrook, the Minister of Information Brendan Bracken, and many other eminences of the British war effort.

As her father’s companion and aide, Kathy spent a lot of time with sophisticated, older people; she had little time for the frivolities of her own generation, especially if they didn’t share her passion for the allied cause. “This past week,” she wrote to Mary in June 1941,

I spent most of my evenings being entertained by younger generation guards. They all remind me of the perennial Southern country gentlemen of the pre-Civil war days—very dashing, good looking ... but not very intelligent—in fact, intensely boring after 10 minutes.... Perhaps I’m being a little cruel. When the time comes, they’ll probably all be very brave and die fighting. But actually for dinner I’d rather have an interesting older man to talk to. I hope that doesn’t sound too strange.¹⁰

Kathy was disgusted by a letter from Mary in November 1941 that reported some of her friends back home wanted the Nazis to win. It “made me see red,” she wrote in a furious response.¹¹

One person of the same generation who did influence Kathy was Pamela Churchill, the wife of the prime minister’s son, Randolph. Pamela, Kathy wrote to Mary soon after her arrival

in London, was “a wonderful girl; my age, but one of the wisest young girls I’ve ever met—knows everything about everything, political and otherwise.”¹² Famously, Pamela had an affair with Kathy’s father during the war, a romance that was rekindled in the 1970s when she became Mrs. Harriman.¹³ Kathy knew about the wartime affair—since the three of them shared an apartment in London, she could hardly not. It was not a subject of general discussion, but there is one explicit reference to the affair in Kathy’s correspondence with Pamela during the war and she sometimes alluded to it in her letters to Mary—“the funny thing about England is that age makes no difference. Tonight Pam is dining with a guy who is Ave’s age.”¹⁴

Writing letters was Kathy’s alternative to keeping a diary. She wrote hundreds of them about her experiences in London and Moscow, her encounters with members of the Soviet-Western military-political elite, and her trips during the war to Italy, North Africa, Sweden, Yalta, and the killing grounds of Katyn. Political as well as personal, her letters are full of astute and often funny observations about the historical events she witnessed. They provide a vivid and sometimes offbeat picture of life in the upper circles of the Grand Alliance as well as insights into Moscow life during the latter stages of the war.

Many of the letters were written on the hoof and retain a raw, visceral quality. But Kathy also wrote with an eye to posterity and in the knowledge that some of her letters would be shared or summarized to family, friends, and acquaintances. When she was in Moscow many of her letters were posted via diplomatic bag (others went via personal couriers), so they had to be read and okayed by her father. Some of Kathy’s letters to Pamela Churchill had a wider circulation. In April 1944, Winston Churchill’s wife Clementine wrote to Kathy that “Pam has shown me the delightful long letters you have written to her... I think your letters ... will make a wonderful book one day—not, however, to be published just now!”¹⁵

Unlike some of her contemporary counterparts, Kathleen wrote no memoirs¹⁶ and resisted the idea the letters should be published, at least in her lifetime. She was scathing about those whom she felt had cashed in on their brush with fame during the war: “As peace returned many underlings of the war leaders sprang into print. I felt they abused their wartime privilege (& luck) of being on hand as history was made & swore I’d not do likewise.”¹⁷

The existence of Kathleen Harriman’s wartime correspondence is no secret. It has been known to historians at least since the publication in 1975 of *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*—Averell Harriman’s war memoirs, coauthored by Elie Abel. As part of his research, Abel asked Kathy for copies of her letters, which he then quoted extensively in the book. Some of the things that Kathy wrote in her letters are now part of the folklore of the Grand Alliance. For example, Stalin’s response to a toast to the Big Three as the Holy Trinity that Churchill must be the

Holy Ghost as he flew around so much. Unrecorded by Kathy was whether Stalin thought that if he was God, then Roosevelt must be Jesus!¹⁸

Rather than hand over copies of her original letters to Abel, Kathy retyped and edited them. It was the edited versions that were placed in the chronological files of the Averell Harriman Papers in the Library of Congress (LC), opened to historians after Averell’s death in 1986. According to the LC guide to the Harriman collection, the letters written by Kathy are “filled with

“I think your letters ... will make a wonderful book one day—not, however, to be published just now!”

—Clementine Churchill

The horse named Boston, a gift to Kathleen from Stalin, had served in Stalingrad.





the narrative detail generally absent from the ambassador's memoranda and letters."

I came across the letters in September 2001, on my very first trip to the United States. As the 9/11 drama unfolded I was combing through the Averell Harriman Papers looking for material to include in my book about Stalin and the Grand Alliance. The letter of Kathy's that hooked me was her description of the nature of diplomatic reports, written soon after she arrived in Moscow:

These are lengthy and usually manage to say nothing at all of importance. If you don't say anything you don't get blamed for creating an impression which at some future date will be proven false. So, to cover up this failure to say a damned thing worth saying, the writer resorts to verbiage. The guy on the receiving end can't understand what the hell the report is about, but since the words are strung at impressive length, he figures he should be impressed and to cover up his failure to be so, he files the report away and all is forgotten.

To this letter Kathy added a PS: "On re-reading, I've discovered I'm in a very blasphemous mood. So please for God's sake read this letter and tear it up and don't show it to anyone."¹⁹

After that I began systematically to seek out and copy her letters, which were dispersed throughout the hundreds of "chronological files" in the Harriman collection. As a Soviet specialist I found especially intriguing her perceptions of Soviet leaders and the communist system, which often confounded Western Cold War stereotypes. Kathy evidently went to Moscow with an open mind. Early on she decided that being in Russia was not as bad as she feared and more interesting than she expected. "Maybe I haven't made life in Moscow as enticing as I intended. But by comparison to what critics painted it to be, it's damn near paradise."²⁰ On another occasion she wrote: "You know the Russians are such nice people—if only we could get to know them—then perhaps I might be able to begin to understand them."²¹

Kathy's moods and attitudes toward Russia did wax and wane, generally in sync with the ups and downs of Soviet-American relations during the war. High points were Tehran and Yalta and low points the controversy about aid to the Warsaw Uprising and the post-Yalta wrangling over the composition of the Polish government. "The war is going wonderfully well again now," she wrote to Mary in March 1945, "what with the offensive on the Western Front. Gosh it's exciting. But the news is slightly dampened here by our gallant allies who at the moment are being most bastard-like. Averell is very busy—what with Poland, PWs, and I guess the Balkans. The house is full of running feet, voices and phones ringing all night long—up until dawn."²²

Kathy was determined to avoid what she called the "Moscow rut"—living in a diplomatic enclave cut off from the country and its people, resentful and alienated from the communist regime

“You know the Russians are such nice people—if only we could get to know them—then perhaps I might be able to begin to understand them.”

and having little idea of the life and attitudes of the great mass of the population. Moscow was an impersonal town but “for all its apparent impersonality, it’s got atmosphere. It’s a town where foreigners get depressed, because they can’t become part of the town.”²³

Resolved to become part of the town, Kathy spent a lot of time learning Russian and became socially functional in the language, able to make polite, if stumbling, conversation at receptions, propose toasts, and translate those of her father. She tried as much as she could to interact with the world beyond Moscow’s diplomatic circles, visiting Soviet schools and hospitals, for example. She also had her own interests—skiing and riding (she was a top-class performer at both)—which she pursued vigorously. Kathy became something of a minor celebrity in Russia during the war. According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, she was the best-known American woman in the Soviet Union after Eleanor Roosevelt and the Hollywood musical star Deanna Durbin.

Kathy’s main function in Moscow was to act as her father’s hostess and to preside over Spaso House, the grandiose but dilapidated residence of the American ambassador, which was located in Spasopeskovskaya Square in the Arbat district. Her task was not without its challenges in the face of wartime shortages and the arcane nature of Soviet bureaucracy. Kathy also had to cope with numerous American visitors to Moscow during the war—Harry Hopkins, Dwight Eisenhower, Lillian Hellman, James Conant, Bill Donovan, James F. Byrnes, to name but a few. “I still think I ran a reasonably successful boarding house,” she recalled.²⁴

Kathy had a day job, too, with the Office of War Information (OWI) in Moscow, where she helped to produce a daily English-language news bulletin and worked on the launch of *Amerika*—a glossy U.S. propaganda magazine aimed at ordinary Soviet citizens. In her London letters Kathy wrote a lot about her work as a journalist, but she rarely mentioned the OWI in her Moscow correspondence, presumably because the job was not that interesting compared with her other activities.

I don’t suppose I was the first historian captivated by Kathy’s letters but I had what was, perhaps, a novel idea: that they should be published as an independent source and record of her experiences, not merely serve as an appendage to her father’s career.

As a historian who specializes in dead people, it did not occur to me that Kathy might still be alive until after I got back to Ireland. To my delight she was, and in November 2001 I wrote to her making my pitch for an interview:

At first I read [the letters] for light relief, and with no little amusement. I often found myself laughing aloud at your descriptions of incidents and personalities. Then I became captivated by your picture of diplomatic life in Moscow during the war. It finally dawned on me that your observations on the times and its politics offered unique insights and evidence that ought to be available to a wider public. The letters are an invaluable source of information on your father’s mission to London and Moscow. They illuminate the character and personality of wartime politicians and diplomats. . . . The letters are astutely observed, well-written, lively, graphic, personable, very human . . . what more can I say?²⁵

And so I was granted a face-to-face meeting and was able to talk to Kathleen for several hours in her New York apartment in March 2002. Conducted as an open-ended conversation rather than a formal interview, my purpose was to find out more about the letters, the circumstances in which they were written and to fill any gaps in my knowledge. What I didn’t anticipate was that Kathy would do her homework before the meeting and, for the first time in years, reread the letters. From my point of view that was not such a good idea. I was seeking additional information, not what I could read in the letters myself. As I often tell my students, it was a classic example of the perils of oral history. You think you are getting access to the person’s memory when, in fact, you are the beneficiary of their research! But during the course of the conversation—most of which I tape recorded—I found out quite a lot from Kathy, and I left New York well-satisfied with the results of my research.

I wasn’t the first person to talk to or interview Kathy about her wartime experiences, but I had the impression that previous interviewers had been more interested in her father, or Yalta, or even George Kennan, than they were about her.

A favorite topic for other interviewers was Katyn, which Kathy was keen to talk to me about as well. In January 1944, three months after she arrived in Moscow, Kathy went with a group of American journalists to Smolensk to inspect the mass graves at Katyn, which the Red Army had recently recaptured from the Germans. Kathy had some firsthand experiences of war from

Left (facing page): Portrait of Kathleen by Cecil Beaton.



From left to right: Sarah Churchill Oliver, Anna Roosevelt Boettiger, and Kathleen Harriman at the Yalta Conference (Livadia Palace, February 1945).

her time in Britain but nothing that could have prepared her for what she witnessed at Katyn.²⁶ Shortly after she returned from Smolensk she wrote to Elsie Marshall, her former governess:

Everything was swell—a whole private train just for the press.... The trip was on the gruesome side but most interesting and I thoroughly enjoyed it—and the chance to see some countryside other than Moscow for a change. I imagine one of these days I'll get round to sitting down and typing out for you what happened etc. At the moment it's a bit late & I'm too sleepy.²⁷

Four days later, on January 28, 1943, she wrote a long account of her trip in a letter to Mary and Pam:

The Katyn Forest turned out to be a small measly pine tree woods. We were shown the works by a big Soviet doctor who looked like a chef in white peaked cap, white apron, and rubber gloves. With relish he showed us a sliced Polish brain carefully placed on a dinner plate for inspection purposes. And then we began a tour to each and every one of the seven graves. We must have seen a good many thousand corpses or parts of corpses, all in varying degrees of decomposition, but smelling about as bad. (Luckily I had a cold, so was less bothered by the stench than others.) Some of the corpses had been dug up by the Germans in the spring of '43 after they'd first launched their version of the story. These were laid in neat orderly rows, from six to eight bodies deep. The bodies in the remaining graves had been tossed in every which way. All the time we were there, the regular work of exhuming continued by men in army uniform. Somehow I didn't envy them! The most interesting thing, and the most convincing bit of evidence, was that every Pole had been shot through the

back of the head with a single bullet. Some of the bodies had their hands tied behind their backs, all of which is typically German. Next on the program we were taken into post mortem tents. These were hot and stuffy and smelt to high heaven. Numerous post mortems were going on, each and every body is given a thorough going over, and we witnessed several . . . personally. I was amazed at how whole the corpses were. Most still had hair. Even I could recognize their internal organs and they still had a good quantity of red colored "firm" meat on their thighs . . . You see, the Germans say that the Russians killed the Poles back in '40, whereas the Russians say the Poles weren't killed until the fall of '41, so there's quite a discrepancy in time. Though the Germans had ripped open the Poles' pockets, they'd missed some written documents. While I was watching, they found one letter dated the summer of '41, which is damned good evidence.²⁸

On the basis of the reports from Kathy and other members of the group, the U.S. government accepted the Soviet version of events that the Germans had shot the Polish POWs in 1941. After the war Kathy was called before a congressional committee to explain her role in the Soviet cover-up of the fact that they were the real culprits. But I wasn't too interested in interrogating Kathy about Katyn because it seemed to me that there was little to say other than that the Soviets had put on a good show to fool her and other observers. But I did suggest to Kathy that her (second) letter about Katyn had been a bit flip in the circumstances, as if she was using dry humor to distance herself from the horror of what she was seeing. To which she raised an eyebrow and replied: "Yes, well what would you expect me to do—try and get closer?"

My conversation with Kathy coincided with another important development on the research front. The Pamela Harriman papers (she died in 1997) had recently been deposited in the



From left to right: First U.S. food ship in Britain under Lend-Lease. Kathleen on far right with Lord Woolton and Averell Harriman (1941); Atlantic Charter Conference. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill aboard the *HMS Prince of Wales*, at far left, Averell Harriman talking with Harry Hopkins (1941); Yalta Conference. Seated: Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin; Harriman, standing behind Stalin (1945).

Library of Congress. They were not yet open to scholars, but I had special permission from her son, Winston, to make copies of the letters that Kathy had written to Pam during the war. Many of the letters that Kathy wrote to Pamela were copies of ones she'd sent to Mary and vice versa. She was also in the habit of writing more than one version of what was essentially the same letter. But there were plenty of letters in the Pamela Harriman collection that were unique to that source. There were also copies of letters that Pamela had written to Kathy during the war, which were pretty boring. Pamela was on record as saying that you should never commit anything too revealing to print, and it showed! The strange thing was that Kathy was always writing to Pamela about how wonderful her letters were and asking her to send more. She said the same to other correspondents but, with a very few exceptions, she did not keep any of these letters. After the war she retrieved letters she had sent but not copies of the incoming correspondence. The Kathleen Harriman correspondence is a strangely one-sided source.

Perhaps the most interesting find in the Pamela Harriman papers was some new letters to her from Kathy that she wrote while attending the Yalta conference.²⁹ Kathy was one of three women at Yalta, along with Anna Boettiger and Sarah Oliver, respectively the daughters of Roosevelt and Churchill. Kathy got to make the trip in order to keep Anna company, which worked out fine because the two women got on well together.

Kathy traveled to Yalta two weeks before the conference to help with preparations.³⁰ She went by train, a journey that took three days. As she wrote to Mary afterward, she passed through so many completely flattened towns and villages that she became immune to them.³¹ On the way the party stopped at Kharkov, a city that “was far less destroyed than most big towns,” she wrote to Pam on January 30. In this same letter Kathy described a conversation she had with her father in Moscow before they

left for Yalta: “one evening Ave & I sat up for hours and hours talking about you & he & Marie [Harriman’s wife and Kathy’s stepmother]—he was more or less thinking out loud and needless to say got nowhere. He just can’t make himself make a decision while the war’s on & life’s so unsettled—and I rather imagine Marie feels the same way, too.” As far as I can tell this is the only direct reference to Pamela’s affair with Averell in Kathy’s correspondence.

The conference began on February 4, and on February 7 Kathy recounted this incident to Pamela:

A couple of days back an amusing thing happened. Sarah & Anna & I were standing in the entrance room, outside the conference hall, waiting for things to break. They did quickly—Vyshinsky & UJ [Uncle Joe, i.e., Stalin] came out ... in search of a John. UJ was shown to one & came out quickly—washroom without toilet. By that time the PM was occupying the next nearest John so one of our embassy boys took Stalin ’way the hell down the hall to the next nearest toilet. In the shuffle, Stalin’s NKVD generals got separated. Then there was havoc—everyone running around whispering. I think they thought the Americans had pulled a kidnapping stunt or something. A few minutes later a composed UJ appeared at the door & order was restored!

Kathy’s letters reflected the mood of the conference, especially American perceptions of progress in the negotiations. Referring to the agreement on the establishment of the United Nations, Kathy wrote to Pam on February 8 that “there was great rejoicing last night they sold UJ on Dumbarton Oaks. Very good indeed.”

It was Kathy’s first meeting with President Roosevelt and he was a great hit with her. “The Pres is absolutely charming, easy to talk to on any subject.... The Pres is getting a big kick out

of presiding over the meetings (he's the youngest you know)." Kathy was equally impressed with Stalin:

He was in top form—a charming, gracious, almost benign host, I thought, something I'd never thought he could be. His toasts were sincere and most interesting—more than the usual banalities. He insulted no one ... but kidded Gusev [Soviet ambassador to Britain] for being such a gloomy man.

In another letter Kathy wrote:

At times, Stalin just sat back and smiled like a benign old man, something I'd never thought possible. Anyway, I was much impressed. He toasted Churchill as the great war leader who'd taken command when England was without fighting allies. His tribute to the President is harder to explain. Stalin talked about America miles from the war and her leader who prepared her for that war.³²

When she got back to Moscow (by air this time) Kathy wrote to Pam that "as you must have gathered, the conference was a terrific success—I think it surpassed everyone's hopes & expectations—even those who to date had but small dealings with our friends." She added a note of caution, however: "You can imagine how elated Ave is—though Lord knows what trouble his new job as Polish government conciliator will bring."

As I had promised, I made a copy for Kathy of her letters to Pamela, and she was delighted to be able to reread them after nearly sixty years.

The letters to Pamela added yet another layer of interest to the research, but my main mission was stymied by Kathy's continuing veto on publication, notwithstanding my efforts to persuade

her of the difference between publishing contemporaneous letters—warts and all—and self-serving memoirs. Nor was she impressed by my suggestion that publication of the letters would turn her into a twenty-first-century feminist icon! She was happy to let the copies she had made reside in the Library of Congress and to leave it at that. "You are absolutely correct my interest in publishing my letters still nil," she wrote to me in 2003. But she did add an enigmatic coda: "You're welcome!"³³ A couple of years later Kathy had a stroke and our communications ceased. I had other projects, which was one reason for the long delay in this article about her letters. Another reason was that I was not convinced that a description and analysis of the correspondence would be an adequate substitute for publication of the letters themselves. After her death in 2011, I revived my interest and in April 2014, I was given access to Kathy's private papers by the family and discovered that the story of her correspondence was more interesting and complex than even I knew.³⁴

For a start, only half the surviving letters—or versions of them—are in the Library of Congress in either the Averell Harriman or the Pamela Harriman Papers. There are a large number of additional letters among her private papers. In total there are about 200 letters amounting to some 200,000 words of text.

Kathy wrote to many different people during the war, but the main part of her correspondence has three distinct, albeit interwoven, strands, each with its own characteristics.

First, there are the letters to her sister Mary. These are the most "political" letters and the ones she expected to have a wider circulation among family and friends. In these letters Kathy most often adopts her role as an observer of peoples, places, and events. The feeling is that she is writing for an audience, and for posterity, or at least for her father's future memoirs, which is mentioned as a possible use for the letters.



From left to right: Kathleen skiing in Sun Valley, early 1940s; Kathleen and Stanley Mortimer at the Arden Field Trials, 1951; Kathleen Mortimer surrounded by her family. Standing: Gigi, James, Avie, David, Shelley, Prue, Jay; seated: Lily, Nick, Max, Kathleen, Harry (Christmas Eve, 2008).

“[Stalin] was in top form—a charming, gracious, almost benign host, I thought, something I’d never thought he could be. His toasts were sincere and most interesting ... ”

Second are the letters to Pamela Churchill. These letters are more private, personal, and revealing, written to an intimate friend as opposed to sister, even though she was evidently close to Mary. These had a wider circulation, too, but I am not sure that Kathy expected that.

Third are letters to Elsie Marshall or Mouche as she was called. Mouche was Kathy’s childhood English governess and remained a Harriman family retainer. These letters are the least political—more practical than personal—and filled with requests for things Kathy wanted sent to her or for Mouche to do on her behalf. A recurrent request was for more silk stockings not only for Kathy herself but to give as gifts. One lucky recipient in Moscow was Mme. Maisky, wife of the former Soviet ambassador to London, Ivan Maisky. However, she sent the stockings back with a note saying: “I do not require stockings. I have plenty of my own. Good stockings are so precious nowadays that I am sure you will find someone of your American friends who will need them.”³⁵

By no means were all the letters to Mouche of a practical character. It was to Mouche that Kathy wrote about the Victory Parade in Red Square in June 1945, an event she and Averell came close to boycotting on the spot when they arrived to find they were expected to stand next to the Japanese ambassador. They were found another place to stand, but the Japanese stayed because the Soviet Union had yet to enter the war in the Far East.

Zhukov took the salute on a white charger, Kathy reported. “Everyone was beautifully trained—the whole thing most effective. Rokossovsky—the other mounted marshal, almost came to grief. His horse wasn’t the best trained.” An interesting detail was that in Kathy’s perception, the German military banners famously piled against the Kremlin wall “were flung at Zhukov’s feet—a swell idea.”³⁶ Stalin was supposed to be the star of the show and he would not have been just pleased by such an image, nor is it one that features on Soviet newsreel of the event.

The Victory Parade is sometimes confused with the May Day parade in Moscow that year, led by the Chief of the General Staff Alexei Antonov, who also rode a horse, which, according to Kathy “was a beautifully trained animal—as Antonov was obviously no horseman!”³⁷ I’m not sure that Kathy attended the May Day parade, but a month later she was at a dinner with Averell and Stalin. A newsreel of the parade was shown, and Averell expressed interest in the horse that Antonov was riding, which developed into a more general conversation about horses. This led to Stalin giving Averell and Kathy a horse each. Kathy’s horse was from the Don Basin and had served at Stalingrad. Called Boston by the Soviets, the horse was shipped to the United States

after the war—an event that received a lot of publicity.

There is a large tranche of letters to Mouche in Kathy’s private papers³⁸ together with many additional letters to Mary, especially from the time she was in London. These show even more clearly than those already in the Library of Congress what an important, formative influence Kathy’s London period was and how it prepared her for the personal and political challenges of Moscow.

When the tape recorder was switched off, I asked Kathy what was missing from the letters deposited in her father’s papers in the Library of Congress. The retyped letters are full of ellipses so there was no secret there had been lots of omissions. She told me that it was personal stuff and family business, not matters of public interest. Her answer satisfied me. It was her private correspondence, and what she had decided to make public in the letters was revealing enough, both about herself and the people she had met.

It emerged that her self-censorship was quite extensive, including the unfortunate omission of some vivid descriptions of places she visited during the war. Most of the omissions were, as she said, of a personal nature. Comparing the original letters in her private papers with the edited versions in the LC, I found Kathy omitted a lot of incidental remarks (“I’m bored with writing now so I’ll guess you’re bored reading this. My love to you all—Kathleen”)³⁹ as well as what I would call “girlie” talk about perfume, clothes (“that’s the most divine nightie I ever owned. Pam thinks it is respectable enough for evening dress”),⁴⁰ and magazines (“read the New Yorker from cover to cover, it’s the joy of my existence”).

In the LC versions of the letters there are numerous references to “boyfriends” (none of them serious, it seems), but quite a few such references were omitted. In Moscow the Soviets fixed Kathy up with a Russian boyfriend—a veteran of the siege of Sebastopol—but she had that situation well under control, as she did all her other dalliances. In particular, Kathy was wooed by a number of older men during the war, but there is no evidence that anyone succeeded in winning her. Her sex life during the war was not an issue I was inclined to pursue when I interviewed her but—off tape—I gently suggested she must have been the recipient of many approaches from men during the war. She claimed not to have been “hit on” very much, but the letters tell another story.

More important were Kathy’s redactions of critical remarks about people who were not public figures and had a right to their own privacy (this is the 1970s, remember, and those concerned may well have still been alive). For example, Kathy’s description

of the nineteen-year-old daughter of the Mexican ambassador in Moscow: “Daughter is pretty—talks a blue streak and loves ‘boogie-woogie’ dancing. She wants to have dancing parties every week. Looks like trouble to me.”⁴¹ On the other hand, public figures, especially politicians and celebrities, were fair game, including the Mexican ambassador whom she described as a sex maniac. Among the joys of Kathy’s letters are the sketches and put-downs of famous people. One favorite of mine is her description of Tito, whom she met on a trip to Italy in August 1944:

Tito himself is small and heavy set. Very handsome with a strong face. Slit steel blue eyes that were cruel and hard looking but when he smiled or laughed, as he frequently did,

his whole face lit up and made him appear less foreboding. What surprised me most was his hands—they didn’t fit in at all, being smooth and well-kept, the hands of a pampered politician rather than a guerrilla chieftain.... He’s a good answerer of questions, does it directly without hedging, but seemed to lack the creative imagination to expand. He’s very literal, with a good sense of humor and likes about the same kind of joke a Russian would. In other words, he’s very easy to talk to.⁴²

Kathy could be kind, too, especially to heroes. Omitted from an edited letter in the LC was this description of her meeting with Sir Hugh Dowding, the head of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. She met him at his London club and

“What surprised me most was [Tito’s] hands—they didn’t fit in at all, being smooth and well-kept, the hands of a pampered politician rather than a guerrilla chieftain.... He’s a good answerer of questions, does it directly without hedging, but seemed to lack the creative imagination to expand.”

¹ Based on a talk at the Harriman Institute in April 2014, with thanks to David Mortimer for giving me access to the private papers of his mother, Kathleen Harriman Mortimer.

² K. Harriman Mortimer, “Do the crows still roost in the Spasopeskovskaya trees?” unpublished memoir, nd.

³ Kathleen to Mary, March 8, 1945, Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division (hereafter: AHP, LC), container (hereafter: c) 177, chronological file (hereafter: cf) March 7–10, 1945.

⁴ Kathleen to Pam, February 27, 1944, Pamela Harriman Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, file marked “Kathleen Harriman, Wartime Correspondence, 1943–1946” (hereafter, PHP, LC).

⁵ “Do the crows still roost in the Spasopeskovskaya trees?”

⁶ Kathleen to Pam, October 16, 1944, AHP, LC, c.174, cf. October 15–16, 1944.

⁷ Kathleen to Pam, April 12, 1945, PHP, LC. Kathy started and dated this letter the day Roosevelt died but did not finish it until several days later.

⁸ Kathleen to Mary, June 8, 1945, AHP, LC, c.179, cf. June 8–14, 1945.

⁹ See G. Roberts, “Litvinov’s Lost Peace, 1941–1946,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol.4, no.2, Spring 2002.

¹⁰ Kathleen to Mary, June 27, 1941, AHP, LC, c.159, cf. June 16–27, 1941.

¹¹ Letter to Mary, November 21, 1941, AHP, LC, c.161, cf. November 1–24, 1941. The cited paragraph was omitted from the edited version of this letter in the Library of Congress.

¹² Letter to Mary, May 30, 1941, AHP, LC, c.159, cf. May 22–31, 1941.

¹³ On Pamela, see F. Costigliola, “Pamela Churchill, Wartime London, and the Making of the Special Relationship,” *Diplomatic History*, vol.36, no.4, September 2012.

¹⁴ Kathleen to Mary, mid-June 1941, Kathleen Harriman Mortimer private papers (hereafter: KHM). The quoted sentences were omitted from the version of the letter deposited in the Library of Congress: AHP, LC, c.159, cf. June 16–27, 1941.

¹⁵ Clementine Churchill to Kathleen, April 4, 1944, AHP, LC, c.172, cf. April 1–11, 1944. Pamela also sent copies of the letters to Edward R. Stettinus, Roosevelt’s under secretary and later, secretary of state, who told Pam that he had “read the letters from Kathleen with tremendous interest.”

¹⁶ The only exception is a three- to four-page memoir cited in n.2 that she wrote for Rebecca Matlock, wife of Jack Matlock, U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, 1987–1991. To my knowledge the only other thing that Kathy wrote about her experiences in Moscow, apart from the letters and some interviews just after the war, was an article on “Opera in Russia Today,” *Opera News*, March 25, 1946.

¹⁷ Letter to author, December 10, 2001.

¹⁸ Kathleen to Pam, October 16, 1944, AHP, LC, c.174, cf. October 15–16, 1944.

¹⁹ Kathleen to Marr and Marie [Kathy’s stepmother], November 17, 1943, AHP, LC, c.170, cf. November 8–17, 1943.

²⁰ Kathleen to Mary, Thanksgiving Day, 1943, AHP, LC, c.170, cf. November 18–28, 1943. The sentences cited were omitted from this edited version of the letter in the LC.

²¹ Letter to Elsie Marshall, March 10, 1944. KHM private papers.

reported home: “The American conception of the London conservative club is without exaggeration. I walked into the library and at least 20 chairs were filled with readers of the London Times. No one looked up.... Sir Hugh is about to retire. They haven’t any place for him in even the administrative end of the RAF. They don’t either need him or want him.”²⁴

It is a pity that Kathy culled so much personal material from the copies she made for Elie Abel. In their complete versions the letters are a rich source for social and cultural historians as well as those whose interests are primarily political. Kathy’s editing of the letters made them seem more political than they actually were and had the effect—deliberate I think—of focusing the reader’s attention on their historical content. But even at their most personal, the letters are never just about Kathy herself—they are about conveying to others her experiences, the people she meets, the circles she moves in, and the events she witnesses. More than once in her letters she cautions her correspondents that when she relates who she has met and what she has done, she is being descriptive not boastful.

I met Kathy only once and had just a brief correspondence with her. I know her mainly through my encounter with her letters and, more recently, her personal papers. What strikes me most about her now was how self-effacing she was. It was, I feel,

this self-effacing quality that helped her in the circumstances of war to transcend the limitations of her background and youth and to create an enduring account of her experiences in London and Moscow.

Kathleen Harriman’s mission to Moscow ended in January 1946 when she returned home with her father—an epic three-week voyage that took in India, China, Japan, Honolulu, and, finally, San Francisco. After the war she retired from public life, married Stanley G. Mortimer, changed her name to Kathleen Harriman Mortimer, settled down, and raised a family. Except to people like me, she rarely talked about the war, or her letters, but she sure went to a lot of trouble to preserve her legacy and to shape our perceptions of it. □

Geoffrey Roberts is professor of history at University College Cork, Ireland. His publications include Stalin’s Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953 (Yale UP, 2006); Molotov: Stalin’s Cold Warrior (Potomac Books, 2012); and Stalin’s General: The Life of Georgy Zhukov (Random House, 2012).

The editors wish to thank David H. Mortimer for graciously providing the photographs that appear in “The Wartime Correspondence of Kathleen Harriman.”

²² Kathleen to Mary, March 8, 1945, AHP, LC, c.177, cf. March 7–10, 1945.

²³ Kathleen to Pam, November 1943, AHP, LC, c.170, cf. November 18–28, 1943.

²⁴ “Do the crows still roost in the Spasopeskovskaya trees?”

²⁵ Author to Kathleen Harriman, November 12, 2001. I tracked Kathy down via H-Diplo, one of whose subscribers put me in touch with her son David.

²⁶ As a journalist in London, Kathy started by writing human interest stories but then moved more toward political news and war reportage.

²⁷ Kathleen to Elsie Marshall, January 24, 1944. This letter is in Kathy’s private papers.

²⁸ PHP, LC. There is also a copy of this letter in Averell Harriman’s papers in the relevant chronological file.

²⁹ PHP, LC. Kathy’s letters to Mary and Mouche about Yalta may be found in the chronological life AHP, LC, containers 176–177.

³⁰ Kathy’s trip to Yalta and other places while she was in Moscow, including going back to Britain and the U.S. for short periods, are easy to track because Averell Harriman’s private secretary, R. P. Meiklejohn, kept detailed itineraries. These may be found in the chronological files in AHP, LC containers 170–182.

³¹ Kathleen to Mary, February 16, 1945, AHP, LC, c.177, cf. February 13–17, 1945.

³² Kathleen to Mary from Yalta, AHP, LC, c.176, cf. February 1–5, 1945.

³³ Fax to author, June 12, 2003.

³⁴ Marie Brenner has also had access to these papers and published an article in *Vanity Fair* in November 2011, “To War in Silk Stockings.” Brenner concentrates on Kathy’s London period and on the triangular relationship between Kathy, Pamela, and Averell. My reference to the *New York Herald Tribune* comes from her article.

³⁵ Mme. Maisky to Kathleen, June 22, 1944, KHM private papers.

³⁶ Kathleen to Mouche, June 26, 1945, KHM private papers.

³⁷ Kathleen to Mary, June 4, 1945, AHP, LC, c.179, cf. June 1–7, 1945.

³⁸ I am not sure that Kathy had all her letters to Mouche to hand when she provided Abel with copies of her correspondence. I have the impression that a whole bunch only came to light after Kathy died.

³⁹ Original letter, Kathleen to Mary, August 23, 1941, KHM private papers.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, September 16, 1941.

⁴¹ KHM private papers. The quoted words were omitted from the version that Kathy edited for the Library of Congress: Kathleen to Mary, June 9, 1944, AHP, LC, c.172, cf. June 1–9, 1944.

⁴² Kathleen to Mary, September 1, 1944, AHP, LC, c.174, cf. September 1–5, 1944.

⁴³ Original letter to Mary, May 30, 1941. KHM private papers. The edited LC version from which this passage is omitted may be found in AHP, c.159, cf. May 22–31, 1941.

“Incisive and provocative. . . . Sestanovich has made a masterful contribution to the history of modern American diplomacy.” —Madeleine Albright



Maximalist

AMERICA IN THE WORLD
FROM TRUMAN TO OBAMA

Stephen Sestanovich

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

HOW PAST INFORMS PRESENT

STEPHEN SESTANOVICH DISCUSSES HIS BOOK *MAXIMALIST: AMERICA IN THE WORLD FROM TRUMAN TO OBAMA*, AND HIS THOUGHTS ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

The current state of international affairs is disheartening and unpredictable. But, argues Stephen Sestanovich in his book *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama* (Knopf, 2014), no matter how rosy the history of U.S. foreign policy may seem, our past was “just as confused and chaotic as the present.” Sestanovich, who worked in U.S. diplomacy for many years, most notably as ambassador-at-large for the former Soviet Union and special adviser to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright from 1997 to 2001, describes U.S. foreign policy as a constant back-and-forth between what he calls “maximalist” presidents seeking to increase the U.S. presence on the international stage and “retrenchment” presidents seeking to scale it back. Neither approach is inherently good or bad, he argues. Each has had real successes, and yet “both are prone to error and require the correction of a new policy.” In fact, the ability to change course is precisely what has made U.S. foreign policy so successful. I met with Sestanovich in early September 2014, in his office at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs, to discuss his book and his thoughts on U.S. foreign policy.

Masha Udensiva-Brenner: Your book commences in the post–World War II period, when a weak, impoverished Europe could easily have been swallowed up by the USSR. Why did the United States step in? How did we come to see ourselves as international problem solvers?

Stephen Sestanovich: The preference of American policy makers has not always been to solve every problem. In the aftermath of World War II, Washington’s expectation was that other countries would again contribute to a successful international order. But American presidents and policy makers discovered then, as they have repeatedly discovered since, that you can’t count on others too much. Now, it’s part of our DNA to be skeptical of what others can contribute.

A second lesson American leaders have drawn is that international organizations and institutions also don’t contribute very much. At the end of World War II, it was hoped that the United Nations would be a forum for problem solving. That turned out to be a disappointment. Even some of the institutions we think of as more successful, like the IMF [International Monetary Fund] or the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade], were not central to the creation of the post–World War II order. It was created through American policy and initiative. Skepticism about what our allies and partners can do, skepticism about what international institutions can do, has been part of American foreign policy thinking for a long time. The activism that the Truman administration came to was the strategy they settled on once they saw that others weren’t going to step up.

Udensiva-Brenner: Initially, containment was a nonaggressive policy—the idea was to avoid another war by building up strength and institutions on the Western side, not to weaken the USSR’s hold on Eastern Europe. How and when did that strategy veer from



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its course? Why did some of the architects of containment, such as George Kennan, eventually turn against the idea?

Sestanovich: A fascinating story. Acheson and Kennan disagreed about some of the most fundamental aspects of American policy. Kennan thought that accepting German and Japanese neutrality would be sound moves for the United States. Acheson thought it was a terrible idea. Kennan was very unhappy with the formation of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]; he thought it overinvolved America in European affairs. The version of containment Kennan imagined was much more consistent with the traditional European balance of power; containment as Acheson imagined it was a policy very strongly led by the United States, with a rather rigid diplomatic posture toward the Soviet Union and demanding American management of the Western alliance.

A further enlargement of American aims took place in the 1970s and '80s, and both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan contributed to it. Reagan favored a full-blown challenge to the legitimacy of the Soviet regime. Carter was much more hesitant, but for all his hesitations he too enlarged American foreign policy aims. After the Vietnam War was over and the United States began to adjust to a new role, the key initiative of Nixon's policy—that is, *détente*—faced real criticism. And Carter was one of its more powerful critics. He said, in effect, this downsizes American policy too much. Although Reagan carried a new strategy forward in a more energetic and single-minded way, it was Carter, with his human rights policy, who began the revival of American ideological aims.

Udensiva-Brenner: So it was Carter who shook up *détente*?

Sestanovich: Carter is an interesting case of someone who was elected in part because of his criticism of Nixon and Kissinger's retrenchment. But he did not have a clear idea of what policy he wanted to put in its place. He struggled with that throughout his term in office. He seemed to want a new activism and energy on the part of the United States. But even late in his term—after the invasion of Afghanistan, for example—he hesitated to make a fundamental break with the core policy he had criticized, which was *détente*.

Udensiva-Brenner: You summed up Carter's biggest downfall as his ambivalence in response to foreign policy. What are some parallels you see between him and Obama?

Sestanovich: People don't always appreciate it when you compare them to Jimmy Carter, but I don't mean the comparison as a criticism of Obama, only as a way of understanding his situation a little bit better. He seems committed to the same kind of idealism in international affairs that Carter also represented. He too has hesitated to commit American power to the pursuit of that idealism. His ambivalence is like Carter's. In both of them you see a real caution, often very carefully thought out, about policies that might bog down the United States—as Obama sees it, in the futile enterprises for which he criticized President Bush. It is not easy to oversee retrenchment and to find a way to reenergize American policy at the same time. That has been hard for Obama, just as it was hard for Carter, and for most of our retrenchment presidents.

Retrenchment presidents try to find a way to blunt the downward impact of what they're doing. To keep from going down the drain, as president Nixon often put it. But I'm struck by how you're usually one thing or the other. You can be a maximalist president with large aims and keep reminding yourself to avoid over-commitment. But you are still prone to the same mistakes.

One of the things I learned from studying Reagan is how he did manage to avoid overcommitment. Remember, he was the maximalist who avoided losing public support

by getting bogged down in a stalemated war. He was able to do so in part because he had Gorbachev always ready to make concessions. If Gorbachev or some other Soviet leader had instead tried to defy U.S. policy, to ride out the Reagan challenge, you would have begun to hear Americans say, “You know, this Reagan maximalism has not brought us any benefits. It’s bogged us down in an ideological and geopolitical confrontation where we have to spend too much on defense, where we are constantly trying to check the Soviets at this or that spot in the third world. And with what payoff?” So, Reagan’s ability to avoid an unsuccessful war was part of the explanation of how he managed to avoid the usual fate of maximalism. But there’s more. He could easily have faced the same kind of backlash against his policies except for the fact that Gorbachev kept showing that maximalism worked.

Udensiva-Brenner: Then Bush Sr. came in and said that Reagan had been too gentle, and he decided to put Moscow on the defensive. Can you talk a bit about that, particularly the process of German reunification?

Sestanovich: We tend to forget that in 1989 Bush and his advisers thought Reagan was a softie and a dupe. That he’d been taken in by Gorbachev’s good guy rhetoric. That the Western alliance needed a little spine stiffening. That’s what they thought. It prepared them for a very aggressive approach to German reunification when it happened. At the time there was confusion throughout Europe about how to deal with the collapse of East Germany and the other Soviet satellite regimes. France, England, Poland, the Soviet Union were all terrified by the prospect of German reunification. I think it might not have happened, and certainly not in the way it did, but that the United States felt confident it could manage the process, that it was powerful enough to deal with a reunited Germany, and considered other countries’ fears to be the result of their own weakness. Another example of how American presidents tend to disregard the outlook of other countries.

Udensiva-Brenner: And they created the Two Plus Four Agreement as a façade for cooperation . . .

Sestanovich: George Bush had the good manners and the ingratiating personal style that made it possible for him to suggest to other leaders that he was taking their views into account. But he often did the exact opposite. He ignored their views and usually didn’t tell them he was doing so. Many of the successful moves of American policy in the period of German reunification involved deception—not leveling with our close allies—not to mention our new friend Gorbachev.

Udensiva-Brenner: Is this something our allies hold against us?

Sestanovich: The many decades since World War II have taught West European governments that you cannot always count on the United States to consult fully and take your views into account. What softens that resentment is respect for what American policies have in fact done for Europe. But there is a just-below-the-surface frustration that is the product of being ignored and marginalized again and again.

Udensiva-Brenner: And Obama came into office with the intent to change all that, to consider our allies, to build bridges. But even if you look at the way the Iran negotiations went down, you will see that it was only the U.S. and Iran that mattered.



President and Mrs. Truman with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran.



2013 Geneva negotiations with P5+1 and Iranian foreign ministers.

Sestanovich: When it comes to a diplomatic crunch, American leaders tend to think they have to make their own decisions. The instance you're referring to, the parallel secret talks between the United States and Iran, is a perfect example. The United States liked the legitimacy—the PR value—that came from participating in a multilateral forum, the P5+1. But it didn't have confidence that the forum would produce good results. To get a good deal—to get any deal—you have to go into the back room with the Iranian negotiators themselves.

Udensiva-Brenner: As a former diplomat, what do you think of this?

Sestanovich: It would be great if we could make multilateralism work better and get other countries to make more enduring and constructive contributions to good causes. But it's awfully hard to do, so the choice that American leaders make to go their own way and follow their own calculus has for decades been nearly unavoidable. The question for the future is, will we still be able to produce, on our own, the kinds of good results that we have been able to achieve over the years? I think there is a compelling argument to be made that it will be harder for the United States to do that. But that doesn't give me a lot of confidence that others are going to step up. It may be that we end up with more regular under-performance, with more problems that don't get solved.

Udensiva-Brenner: The rise of China is a big factor in this. And one of the things Obama did very successfully in the beginning of his presidency was to increase our presence in East Asia and check China's rise a little bit. Is that going to fall to the wayside now that we're involved in so many other foreign policy issues?

Sestanovich: China's rise still looms very large in the thinking of American policy makers. What's a little less clear is whether there are the resources to back up that policy, the commitment of time and attention and even sometimes risk taking that will be necessary to make it work. Obama was not wrong that America's focus on the Middle East had taken a toll on its ability to balance China in East Asia. But that element of his policy is still a work in progress.

Udensiva-Brenner: You've pointed out that retrenchment presidents, like Obama, tend to devise strategies they hope can sustain us for the long haul. Can you elaborate?

Sestanovich: Retrenchment presidents are sometimes our more strategic leaders. They face a situation where in straitened circumstances the United States has to solve a problem that can't be fixed simply by doing more. They need to be subtle, they need to maneuver; they need to figure out how to get other powers to help with the solution. They need to calm the American public. And you're right: they tend not to think of this adjustment as a short-term fix. They think they can offer an alternative to oscillation, to the dramatic swings of American policy between over-commitment and under-commitment. They think they can find that steady level of American involvement in the world that will protect our interests and advance essential goals, without making a mess. Retrenchment presidents tend to be confident that they can do all that, but they too get bogged down. Just like maximalist presidents, they overdo it. They become overconfident in their ability to fine-tune policy.


They also become rather irritable in response to criticism. We think of Dwight Eisenhower as a genial, grandfatherly figure. But he was deeply annoyed by the challenges to his decision making. He thought he had established his credentials in a lifetime of successful involvement in foreign policy. So when people said to him, "You are ignoring



President Harry S. Truman, Winston Churchill, and Josef Stalin seated prior to a Potsdam Conference meeting in Germany in July 1945.



President Barack Obama holds a cabinet meeting in July 2012.



the challenges that we face in Berlin, in the strategic arms competition, in East Asia, in Cuba, in the Middle East,” he was pissed off. You see something of the same irritation on Obama’s part. He thinks a lot of the criticism against him is just poorly thought through and doesn’t reflect a serious weighing of costs and benefits. Both Eisenhower and Obama are impressively thoughtful leaders, but you don’t win people over by being irritated as president. They both lost ground because they were unwilling to listen to what their critics said.

Udensiva-Brenner: You call Eisenhower a “prisoner of his own super secrecy.”

Sestanovich: This was a surprise for me in writing the book. Retrenchment presidents are unusually strong and secretive managers of policy. They distrust the bureaucracy. They think disasters occur when the foreign policy establishment isn’t disciplined by the president, so they want to make all the big decisions. Eisenhower felt he alone should decide when the United States would threaten nuclear weapons and mean it, and when it would bluff. This tended to confuse people. If you’re too secretive about your reasons and unwilling to explain why one crisis requires a response and others do not, your supporters lose confidence in you. In your “red lines,” you might say. Eisenhower, Nixon, Obama have experienced this problem in quite similar ways.

Udensiva-Brenner: Our post–World War II involvement in the Middle East started with Eisenhower. What lessons can we draw from that period?

Sestanovich: Eisenhower’s 1958 intervention in Lebanon is an interesting case study for thinking about what Obama faces in the Middle East today. After the Suez Crisis, in which he had undercut U.S. allies, Eisenhower wanted to send a rather simple message to Arab leaders, and to the Soviet Union, that America was not disengaging from the region. He thought a lightning intervention—America’s first in the Middle East—would serve his purposes. He would show U.S. power but withdraw quickly so as not to get bogged down. We could compare this story to the way in which Obama intervened in Libya in 2011. A quick in and out. No enduring effort. Unfortunately Obama doesn’t have the luxury of just sending messages like that. He can’t signal commitment through a lightning intervention the way Eisenhower did. Today the U.S. policy predicament is much harder to manage. Obama’s got both allies and adversaries in the region that are not sure of the extent of American commitment and want to see it demonstrated before they change their policies. It’s in part that kind of questioning of American staying power that has pushed Obama to greater involvement in Syria and Iraq.

Udensiva-Brenner: Obama’s former senior advisers, Clinton and Panetta, for instance, were advocating long ago that he should arm Syrian rebels, and he didn’t decide to do so until now. He says it’s not because of the beheadings. Why do you think he switched course and do you think it’s the right course?

Sestanovich: During his first term Obama became more confident that he could fashion a strategy different from what I call “Clintonism.” By that I mean the set of assumptions followed by Bill Clinton and his advisers in making the United States an indispensable nation—the international problem solver of first resort. “Indispensable nationalism” was not Obama’s outlook, and he sought to develop something a little more stripped down and austere but still effective. His light footprint strategy was okay on the way out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and okay, too, in reducing American involvement in Yemen and Pakistan. But it has been a much less successful answer to the region-wide upheaval of



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in Kyiv, Ukraine, on March 4, 2014. The photos are of those killed at Maidan.

the “Arab Spring.” Bit by bit Obama has found himself pushed toward policies that look more like Clintonism—that is, toward deeper involvement. He is not yet abandoning his light footprint approach for good. He obviously still hopes he can make that work in some way. That’s why he keeps saying, “This isn’t the war in Iraq; this isn’t the war in Iraq.” But I think he’s found it somewhat difficult to persuade people that he’s got a strategy for limiting American involvement while still achieving American aims.

In all this, Obama faces the classic problems of a retrencher who has cleaned up the mess, more or less, that he inherited and now faces new challenges that he isn’t quite ready for and weren’t a part of the case that he presented to the American people in getting elected. All retrenchment presidents have to make this pivot. They tend to be weaker in dealing with what comes next. It’s hard to remember that just two years ago when he got reelected people thought Obama’s foreign policy was a fabulous success.

Udensiva-Brenner: What are your thoughts on how Obama is handling the crisis in Ukraine?

Sestanovich: As different as the crisis in Ukraine is from what we face with ISIS, it’s had the same impact on Obama’s foreign policy. They remind everyone of the adverse consequences of American disengagement and call for a reassertion of leadership. Still, Obama’s response in Ukraine has also had its innovative side. He has insisted that this kind of problem requires a collective solution. He has put the emphasis on coalition building, on getting others to pull their weight. He has challenged Europeans to do more, to push back against Putin.

Against ISIS, his answer has been the same: he says others have to forge a coalition. It’s still hard to tell whether this is a fig leaf for what will turn out to be essentially an American response. For now, however, you see Obama’s own strategic instincts at work. He is wary of over-commitment by the United States; he doesn’t want to pay the whole bill himself. Other governments are supposed to show that they are prepared to carry a larger part of the burden. The president is thoughtful about this: he knows our friends have been free riders of American security policy for decades. Analytically, he’s right, of course. But there is a difference between being a thoughtful analyst and being an effective leader. We don’t yet know whether his policy toward Ukraine or his policy in the Middle East is going to look successful in six months or a couple of years out.

Udensiva-Brenner: And do you think this is the right course of action in Ukraine?

Sestanovich: For my money, it will be important to show Putin that what he’s done in Ukraine is a costly mistake. That means, at a minimum, sustaining sanctions that have been put in place, keeping Russia on the defensive, and possibly even increasing the costs. It is going to mean more support for Ukraine itself, both economic and military.

Udensiva-Brenner: Do you advocate direct military involvement?

Sestanovich: Right now Ukraine does need help in upgrading its defense capabilities. That doesn’t require American troops, and it doesn’t require a whole lot of American equipment, but it does require some. If the Ukrainians don’t build up the capacity to hold off the Russians in Eastern Ukraine, the Russians will continue to make trouble there.

Udensiva-Brenner: What do you think of the argument that the reason we are in this mess to begin with is because the U.S. mishandled its foreign policy toward Russia by ignoring it as a great power, expanding NATO and placing missiles in Eastern Europe?



President Obama discusses the situation in Ukraine with Russian President Vladimir Putin, March 2014.



Sestanovich: I don't agree with that. Sure, some aspects of American policy have been intensely irritating to Russian leaders. But I also feel that, on balance, the United States has gained more than it has lost by enlarging its alliance into Eastern Europe. The issue of Ukraine's membership in NATO has not been well handled. But the person who has inflamed the situation more than anyone is Putin himself. Ukraine's membership in NATO basically ceased to be a live issue years ago. It had very little support in the alliance and some implacable opponents. Ukraine's own leaders had more or less dropped it too. They saw that it was too divisive for the country to handle. Putin has revived it as an issue for cynical domestic political motives. People who say Putin feels angry about enlargement have a small bit of truth to work with. But did he really feel threatened? That's much harder to believe. We've learned over time that taking Putin at his word is not always wise.

Udensiva-Brenner: What are Putin's motives? Is he trying to rally domestic support? Is he reacting to the threat of Ukraine's Westernization?

Sestanovich: Putin clearly has great ambitions for Russia. He would like it to be a larger power, more influential and respected in the world scene. The question is how much he's prepared to do to achieve that, and will his goals come at the expense of other countries' independence and interests. Does Russian greatness in his mind depend on regaining control over some of its neighbors?

Putin has the familiar goals of any politician: to stay in power, to counter challenges to his rule, to build up the economy, to expand influence internationally. All of that had a relatively pragmatic feel in his earlier years. What's been disturbing more recently is the belligerent nationalism that has become an integral part of Putinism. For many people in Europe who thought of Putin as a politician not so different from themselves—maybe a creepy little guy, but still someone you could work with—the past few months have been a shock. He has undermined confidence in himself among people who felt he was a difficult, but not reckless, leader. This has been very damaging for him, and I don't see how he's going to undo it.

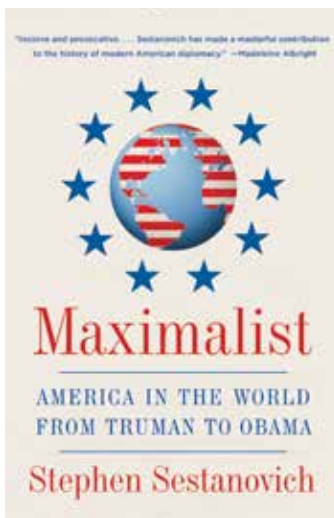
Udensiva-Brenner: And what can we learn from containment?

Sestanovich: Containment teaches that, most importantly, you have to have stable societies on your side of the line. Applied to Ukraine, that would mean making sure that outside of the small swath of territory claimed by Russian commandos, the country is a going concern: that the economy revives, that the political leadership is supported by a national consensus, and that the country restores some of the underlying unity it enjoyed for twenty years. Long before the U.S. challenged Soviet control of Eastern Europe, it fortified friendly, democratic societies in Western Europe. There is a clear lesson for us here. If Ukraine succumbs to economic crisis, to political disunity, and outside meddling, we will have a much more turbulent region in which it's much harder to sustain effective American policy.

Udensiva-Brenner: After the Cold War ended, Clinton was looking for some way to define American policy, and he said: Give me something you can put on a bumper sticker. If you had to define the ideal American foreign policy and were tasked with putting it on a bumper sticker, what would that bumper sticker say?

Sestanovich: This is a very important question. I don't expect to write the bumper sticker myself, but for the next two years our political debate is going to be about what

that bumper sticker says. Anybody who has half an idea of running for president has to come up with a foreign policy that will be attractive to the American people. In her interview with Jeff Goldberg in *The Atlantic*, Hilary Clinton suggested that she will present a program to the American people that has both a domestic and a foreign policy component. She had some bumper sticker phrases. Prosperity and security are obviously going to be the key elements of what she offers the American people. The other presidential candidates, both Republican and Democrat, have to do the same thing. Typically American presidents have prosperity and security on their bumper sticker. The question is whether they propose to achieve them by doing more or doing less. My sense is that the 2016 candidates are going to lean slightly in favor of doing more, but the debate is only starting. The American people may turn out to be in favor of doing less, of continued retrenchment. That's what's going to make this story interesting. □



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ON THE GROUND

BY
CASEY
MICHEL

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

A CONVERSATION WITH STEVE SWERDLOW ('03) AND NATE SCHENKKAN ('11)

Civil rights have never been a strong suit in Central Asia, but over the past few years, with new legislation further curtailing independent media, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and political opposition, the situation has become even worse. Kyrgyzstan, the only multiparty democracy among its neighbors, has been an exception to the rule—but that may soon change. Two potential laws, currently under debate in Bishkek, threaten to move the country toward an authoritarian model. Both pieces of

legislation are modeled on laws already enacted in Russia. The first would label NGOs that receive funding from abroad as “foreign agents,” while the second would outlaw “gay propaganda” to minors, prohibiting the promotion of “nontraditional sexual relations” with a fine, and possibly prison time (a penalty harsher than the one imposed in Russia). The backslide is concurrent with Moscow’s push to enact its concept of *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World), an attempt at gathering many of the former Soviet colonies under Russian cultural, political, and economic hegemony. Much of Moscow’s focus has

been on constructing the Eurasian Economic Union—nominally modeled on the European Union but largely seen as a neo-imperial project aimed at increasing Russia’s regional sway.

I sat down with Nate Schenkkann ('11), a program officer for Freedom House’s Eurasia Programs, and Steve Swerdlow ('03), a Central Asia researcher with Human Rights Watch, to discuss the current state of working in the field of human rights, new patterns emerging throughout Central Asia, and the potential fallout of Kyrgyzstan’s slide toward the Russian model.



Bishkek’s Osh Bazaar, one of the largest bazaars in Central Asia. Photo by Casey Michel.

Casey Michel: What’s it like working in the field of human rights in 2014?

Steve Swerdlow: Documenting human rights abuses at its core is about listening to people’s stories and honoring victims. Whether with the elders of a community or the youth, your modus operandi is the interview, and you are interacting with and seeking to understand a society. Asking what it’s like to do human rights work in 2014 is a difficult question. But, if I start to compare, when I was in Russia from 2000 to 2001, there was a dramatic rise in anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism connected to the [U.S.-led] Kosovo bombing campaign.

Back then, I was working in Krasnodar, in southern Russia, for an organization monitoring ethnic discrimination and anti-Semitism, as well as the disenfranchisement of ethnic minorities in the North and South Caucasus. It was the first time I had witnessed firsthand such deep-seated skepticism about Western motives and saw antiliberal values mobilized in such a powerful way. I also saw how much the local population was

feeding off of xenophobia and narratives of ethnic conflict. I thought then that these sentiments would be confined to Russia’s border regions with proximity to the conflicts to the south, such as the war in Abkhazia. I witnessed that xenophobia, anti-Western sentiments, and nationalism were being deployed locally in Krasnodar but hoped they wouldn’t necessarily be found in other parts of Russia and the former Soviet Union.

This has made it all the more disheartening to turn on Russian TV in Bishkek in 2014 and speak with your ordinary man on the street who, in discussing Crimea, will say in all seriousness that there were fair elections held, that there were international observers present, that what is happening there is the moral equivalent to Western humanitarian interventions and cases of self-determination in other contexts. That’s what’s been most remarkable to me: how widespread this cynicism toward the West has become and how it has taken root, and come to encompass the entire post-Soviet space, even Kyrgyzstan in recent years.

The nationalists are very visible [in Kyrgyzstan], and they seem to have more support than some other movements. But how strong are they? We don't know because they don't have elections, and we don't have poll data ...

Michel: And how about this idea of a “clash of civilizations” being pushed by Russia. Is it taking hold in Central Asia?

Nate Schenkkan: I would separate the Russkiy Mir nationalist view from the anti-human rights and anti-civil society movement. Obviously Russkiy Mir isn't going to play very far in Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Kazakhs might want to be a part of something where they have closer economic relations with Russia, better visa access so they can travel freely and have educational opportunities there, but they don't really want to be a part of a Russian-dominated world, and they have very strong reactions against it—not just liberals or democrats but everyone. At the same time, there are a lot of historical memories and traditions of paranoia, a fear of outsiders, and reactions against perceived interference in internal affairs. That's a very strong Soviet sentiment that carried over. But it doesn't necessarily mean everyone embraces the idea of joining some great Russian challenge against the West. It's just that they don't want the West interfering in their internal affairs.

Swerdlow: In a way it's more about nihilism than it is about nostalgia for imperialism or for a cultural front.

Schenkkan: There is nostalgia for the Soviet Union, but it's nostalgia for the basics. It's nostalgia for having international status as a world power, for having decent universal education, for having some level of health care, infrastructure that works, universal employment literacy, some mobility for women, ease of travel,

and less uncertainty. But if you've got Kyrgyz nationalists, Kazakh nationalists, Tajik nationalists, Uzbek nationalists, all of whom are relatively strong forces in their respective countries, these forces just aren't compatible with Russian-led Eurasianism.

The level of support for these nationalist forces, however, is very difficult to gauge anywhere except in Kyrgyzstan, where you have some semblance of a political system that, to some extent, takes in social input and produces a result. Elsewhere it's very hard to tell. As in Kazakhstan, the nationalists are very visible, and they seem to have more support than some other movements. But how strong are they? We don't know because they don't have elections, and we don't have poll data ...

Michel: How is the lack of certainty in the region reflected in your work and in the human rights sphere?

Swerdlow: Operationally there is a lack of certainty for human rights activists but exponentially more so for the local movements than for international human rights groups. There is a sense that human rights groups are under attack. With the proposed Foreign Agents and LGBT laws

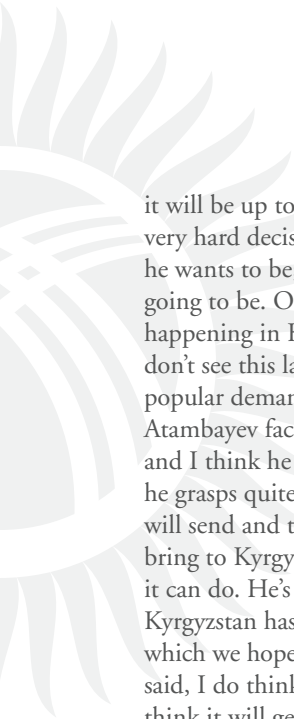
in Kyrgyzstan, the threats to civil society in Russia, and deteriorating situations in Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, there is a deep lack of certainty in the NGO community as to how you run a program without running afoul of legislation. For international groups the questions include: how you base your staff in these countries securely or even travel to places such as Uzbekistan to conduct research. For local groups, can you get the funding you need to survive? And if so, what bank is it safe to keep it in? In this environment the possibility of strategically planning ahead, which has never been easy in the human rights field, has become even more difficult in this period of seemingly perpetual emergency and crisis.

Schenkkan: What is the likelihood of passage of the foreign agents law and the LGBT propaganda law in Kyrgyzstan, and what is the potential impact?

Swerdlow: One only has to look at what happened in Russia to see what happens when these laws are passed. It's a very scary moment when the Ministry of Justice in Russia is talking about liquidating Memorial, the oldest and leading human rights organization across the former Soviet space. That is a shot across the bow. It's an extremely major threat to free expression.

Schenkkan: And to memory. A lot of Memorial's work is about the memory of past repressions and connecting them to current human rights abuses. In Kyrgyzstan, from what I can tell, the gay propaganda law is likely to pass. Then

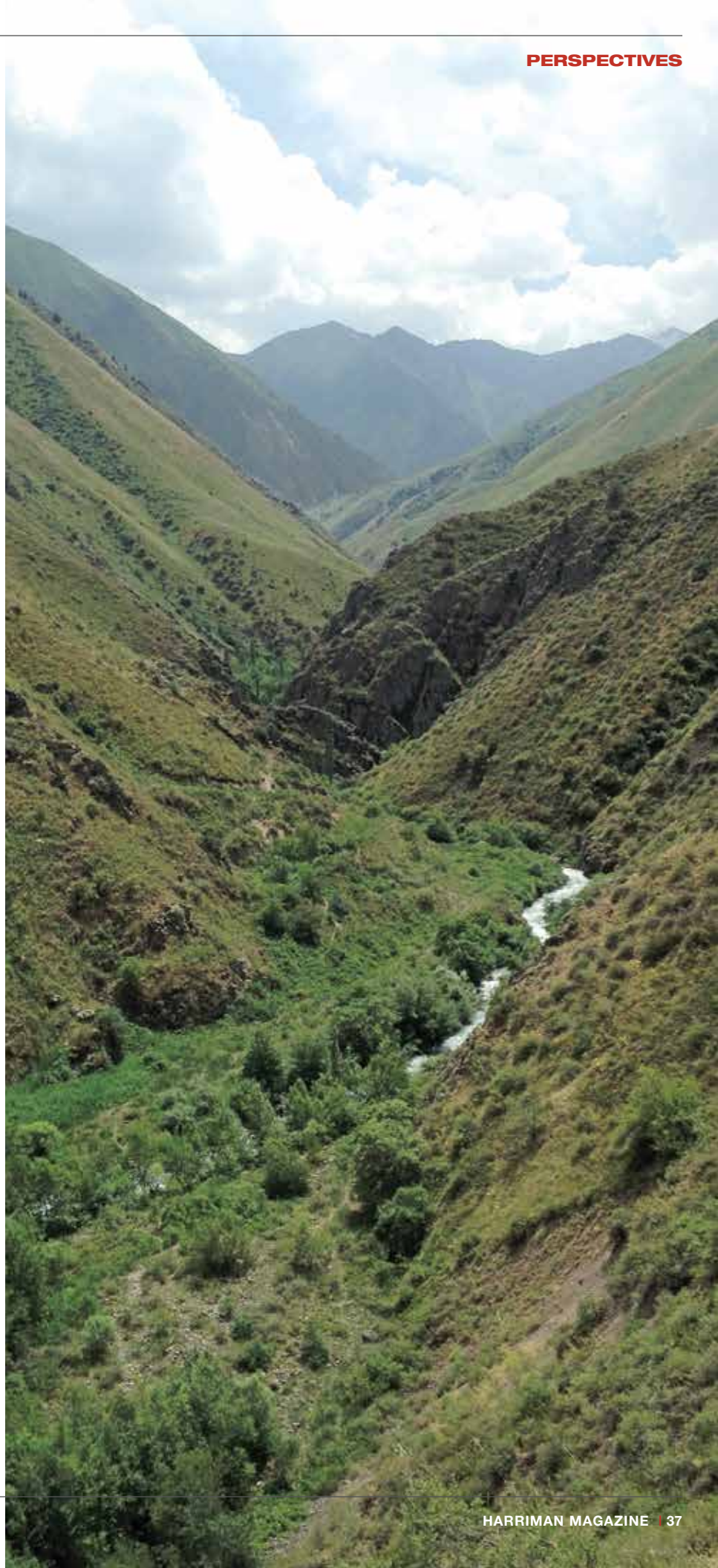
Operationally there is a lack of certainty for human rights activists but exponentially more so for the local movements than for international human rights groups.



it will be up to the president to make a very hard decision on what kind of leader he wants to be; how independent he is going to be. Of all the things that are happening in Kyrgyzstan right now, I don't see this law as emerging from some popular demand to stop gay propaganda. Atambayev faces a pretty stern choice, and I think he understands that. I suspect he grasps quite well the signal this law will send and the kind of attention it will bring to Kyrgyzstan, the kind of damage it can do. He's previously said that Kyrgyzstan has no need for the law, which we hope he will stick to. With that said, I do think it will get to him; I do think it will get through the parliament because I doubt anyone in parliament will be brave enough to stop it. Whereas with the foreign agents law, there is a chance it won't pass in parliament because the NGO community is very large in Kyrgyzstan. There are even people in parliament who have civil society backgrounds. The civil society world and the money it receives from international donors is a big economic factor there.

Swerdlow: There are so many potentially pernicious effects from the proposed LGBT law, from the increased attacks on people in the LGBT community or those perceived to be LGBT, that won't be evident immediately. Xenophobia will surge following the legal sanctioning of homophobia. Also, the vague language in the bill could result in censorship and the inability to publish or distribute any information on this topic—all this would increasingly call Kyrgyzstan's democratic credentials into question, when freedom

Right: Ala-Archa, Kyrgyzstan's premier national park. Photo by Casey Michel.





A statue of Vladimir Lenin still standing behind Kyrgyzstan's state museum in Bishkek. Photo by Casey Michel.

Take HIV/AIDS, which is a big problem in Kyrgyzstan. There is a lot of work on prevention. What do you focus on in that line of work? Intravenous drug users, sex work, and male-to-male transmission. If you're running a campaign that focuses on sex work or on male-to-male transmission, the LGBT law will cause huge problems.

of speech, expression, association, and assembly are all targeted in this way.

Schenkkan: What we have to remember with the gay propaganda and the foreign agents laws is that more than anything they are themselves acts of propaganda. It's not that someone in the Russian government or in the Russian parliament decided, "Wow there's so much gay propaganda out there we really need to get a hold of this." These are very effective tactics for stigmatizing the human rights community and the democratic community in all of these countries, and also for dividing them. Older human rights groups, what we would call mainstream human rights groups, for instance, will be afraid to take on these issues.

Michel: So even if the NGO legislation doesn't pass, the LGBT legislation will still have an impact on NGOs within the country, and not just specifically LGBT NGOs, but the wider NGO world in and of itself?

Schenkkan: Yes. Take HIV/AIDS, which is a big problem in Kyrgyzstan. There is a lot of work on prevention. What do you focus on in that line of work in order to be effective? You focus on intravenous drug users, on sex work, and on male-to-male transmission. These are some of the main vectors. If you're running a campaign that focuses on sex work or on male-to-male transmission, the LGBT law will cause huge problems.

Swerdlow: Which I think further raises the issue that it's not only the U.S. and the EU and governments that should be pressing Central Asian and other post-Soviet states on their human rights obligations but also the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank—the donors that conduct many of these programs in areas of economic development and public health. They can send the message that their investments

will be halted if authorities are making it impossible for the project outputs to actually reach their beneficiaries. That's a lot of money and resources for these governments.

But in general, I want to stress that international pressure works. The Cotton Campaign that has had some successes in Uzbekistan is a good example of this. Even though Uzbekistan is mobilizing millions of its own citizens to pick cotton, they were pressured to reduce the numbers of the youngest kids in the field, and I think that was thanks to a strong international campaign and some very unique partnerships between the apparel industry, Uzbek civil society, and the trade groups. If we are going back to basics, we have to remember that pressure still works, and it will continue to work even as things get really gray.

But when the West conducts human rights negotiations after already telling a government that it intends to sell them military equipment, this undermines the discussion over human rights. So linkages always need to be present. Conditionality is at the very heart of making improvements.

Schenkkan: The reset with Russia was very much a de-linkage idea. The whole concept of the reset was, "Oh, yeah, we are going to talk about human rights—we already set up the U.S.-Russia civil society working group," which was a big part of the reset. And really it was just a little box that you put human rights issues into, and Russia supported it from the beginning, and they appointed Surkov to head their side.

Swerdlow: And in many ways that "reset" was not just put into effect in Russia, but it was very much operating and guiding policy on the human rights situation in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Schenkkan: We have to get human rights dialogues into security dialogues. If you have a security dialogue and an economic dialogue and a human rights dialogue,

guess which one is the one in the crappy room with the lowest level diplomats in it?

Literally, it will be as bad as a meeting happening on the security side in a really nice room with nice chairs and good lighting, and then the human rights side of the meeting happens in a tiny little room in a back alley with not enough chairs and a poorly constructed agenda. You can tell which meetings are the important ones. And the other side too, they can see it.

Swerdlow: The fact that it's a controversial suggestion that there should be public statements that follow from a human rights dialogue between the European Union and Uzbekistan is astounding. There have to be public commitments made at the end of a negotiation; otherwise, if you don't have measurable benchmarks a government has to meet, then it all just melts into thin air.

And it's also the symbolism during visits. One of the recommendations we make to the diplomats visiting Tashkent is that before they go see Karimov, they should do what Reagan did before he saw Gorbachev, which was to go see Sakharov first. Go see a political prisoner's family. Go see a dissident's family before you visit Oksaroy [*Editor's Note: the official resi-*

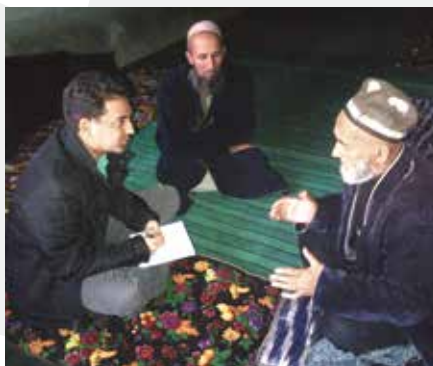
dence of Uzbek President Islam Karimov] and have your sit-down with the president. Show them through symbolic actions, real actions, who you're prioritizing, how important human rights are. And make sure that even though it's going to irritate the Uzbek government, you make a comment to a reporter, and you mention political prisoners by name.

Michel: What will happen to the human rights work in Uzbekistan and Central Asia if the Russian government succeeds in eliminating Memorial, and how will that affect your work moving forward?

Swerdlow: Memorial provides important technical support but also inspiration and expertise to many of the groups on the ground. They've been at the business longer than anyone. As Nate said, so much human rights work is about memory. Records and historical work can produce results later. For example, a public defender I know in Florida was defending an Uzbek man charged criminally with refusing to aid in his own deportation back to Uzbekistan. He had come to the United States ten years earlier and sought political asylum. He claimed he was a victim of religious persecution, and he told the story of how, like many

other thousands of young men, he was accused of being a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a religious organization banned by the Uzbek government, rounded up, interrogated, and tortured. The man had escaped to the United States. Like many other people in similar situations, he unfortunately found himself a bad lawyer, lost his political asylum case, appealed, the case went all the way up the court system, and he was finally issued a deportation order. When it came time to leave the country, he was so afraid to go back—he knew he would be tortured—that he physically resisted getting on the plane on four separate occasions, which constituted a criminal offense.

After the public defender told me about his case, the first place I turned was Memorial's compilation of religious and political prisoners in Uzbekistan to see if his last name was in that book as someone who had been arrested. I didn't find his name, but I found his brother on a list of arrested persons. And that was key evidence used in the court; his criminal charges were dropped. He's now back in immigration court trying to win his asylum case. This just shows you that work done ten years earlier can literally save someone from torture a decade later. That expertise, that detailed approach to cases



Left to right: A mural inside Kyrgyzstan's state museum representing Ronald Reagan riding a nuclear missile into a crowd of antinuclear protesters (2014), photo by Casey Michel; Steve Swerdlow interviewing members of an unregistered mosque in Rudaki district, outside of Dushanbe, about authorities' restrictions on religious practice (November 2013), photo by Steve Swerdlow; a yurt camp in Karakol, Kyrgyzstan (July 2002).

used by Memorial, is something on which I try to model my own work. And some of this work is not sexy or glamorous. It's collecting court judgments, photocopying, scanning documents. But without that careful accounting of individual cases we would have no idea how many people are political prisoners in Uzbekistan.

Michel: So the threat currently hanging over Memorial impacts your work significantly.

Swerdlow: Both for its symbolic effect, the strong message it sends to all NGOs, and the actual loss of knowledge.

Schenkkan: That's what we face not just with Memorial but with any other organizations under threat, the loss of knowledge, and the loss of capacity. We all build on the work of others. There's some idea of the sole researcher out there in the field magically finding all these people and collecting all these documents. It doesn't happen. There are local organizations, or even in some cases, a couple of people in a city or some town who are doing this. And the fact that they continue to do it is . . .

Swerdlow: A quiet dignity. I remember the exact moment I knew I wanted to do this kind of work. I was volunteering in Russia with this human rights group, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. We were monitoring, in 2000–2001, the ethnic discrimination of the Meskhetian Turks, a group that was deported en masse from Georgia to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and later suffered in the Fergana violence of 1989, moved to Krasnodar, and were treated as second-class citizens, attacked by Cossacks, denied citizenship.

In order to interview some of them, we had to evade Cossack militia groups, who did not want foreign researchers or journalists documenting this situation. I remember traveling in several taxis and hiding in the back seat on one occasion,

and we came to meet this Meskhetian Turk leader who turned out to be a local mullah. We were talking with him about the treatment of the Meskhetian Turks, the lack of citizenship, beatings, and just the humiliation of being called *chernyi* [black] everywhere they go. And the leader pulls a copy of the Russian constitution from his back pocket, and he says, "I have these rights. I have the right to citizenship, I have the right to move freely, I have the right to choose residency, and I have the right to receive the pension that I earned all those years in the Soviet Union. My children have the right to serve in the army." It was so dignified, and he was in this little house literally hiding from Cossacks, but he was so principled and so confident that he was on the right side, and that eventually these rights were going to be afforded to him. The faith he placed in this piece of paper, in the constitution, and the idea that there was a framework for the betterment of his life, was remarkable. And I thought, *Wow, these are the kind of folks I'd like to get to know, and I'd like to help, and I'd like to learn about.* That's when I decided I wanted to do this.

Michel: Nate, did you have a comparable moment?

Schenkkan: No, I didn't. I had worked for a while as an assistant to Andrew Blane, who was the first American member of the international executive board of Amnesty International. I wouldn't say he belongs to the founding generation of Amnesty, but to the second generation, so the 1964–65 Amnesty Movement, and he was also very involved in the Soviet dissident movement because he was a professor of Russian religious history at CUNY.

My interest in human rights arose from the perspectives of the people in the States who were supporting dissidents and supporting human rights not just in the Soviet Union but all over the world. The field has changed a lot since then.

But the same kind of persistence and commitment to values and commitment to pursuing and doing the work endures.

It's like in that Albert Camus novel *The Plague*, a parable about a tiny town in French Algeria where a plague hits and the whole town starts dying. It's about what the individuals do in that situation. The heroes of the book are the people doing the work, who keep cleaning up bodies and moving bodies and just doing the things you have to do, and there is this kind of relentlessness to it; you keep doing it because this is what you have to do. You don't need something bigger than that.

Swerdlow: That's so true. There have been so many human rights activists who have inspired me, and some have been professors—for instance, my professor here at Harriman, Peter Juviler, supported human rights studies for so long and went back and forth between here and Russia looking at these issues in a creative way—and others are women like Mutabar Tadjibaeva from Margilan, a provincial Uzbek village, who now finds herself in France. I'm inspired by Emil Adelkhanov, an old Soviet dissident in Tbilisi, who lived through Georgia's civil war in the early '90s and continues to monitor the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. Like Nate says, it's always been this principled commitment to the values and doing the work, no matter what historical period you're in, no matter what the funding stream is for your NGO, no matter how unsexy your area of focus, or chosen topic, becomes. □

Photo by Bartek Bobkowski.

FROM WARSAW TO NEW YORK IN SEARCH OF THE BIGGER PICTURE

One sunny autumn morning, in a small, wood-paneled classroom in Hamilton Hall, a group of Columbia College sophomores sat in a circle and debated the texts of Martin Luther and the tenets of the Protestant Reformation in their Contemporary Civilization course. “How can you tell whether or not you are a good person?” “Does Luther ultimately believe that there *are* no good people?” “Is the logic in Luther’s argument flawed?” The class is part of the College’s Core Curriculum—a set of courses required for all undergraduates regardless of their major—and the texts in question belong to a standardized syllabus assigned across sections regardless of the professor.

In this case, the professor is Małgorzata Mazurek, a petite, youthful woman with bright, bespectacled, green eyes who won the international competition for the Polish Studies Chair in Columbia University’s History Department last spring. She is teaching the course for the first time and confesses that the experience, which goes beyond her realm of expertise as a sociologist and scholar of contemporary Polish history, is challenging. “I’m learning everything right along with the students and it’s like I’m feeling around in the dark,” she says. Still, Mazurek leads the discussion gracefully, with the confidence of someone who has been teaching the subject for years.

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

MAŁGORZATA MAZUREK

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLISH STUDIES, IN PROFILE

“I think there is a more universal story linked to Luther and the broader questions of salvation and predestination,” she tells the class in her lilting Polish accent. To prove her point, she ends the session with a text outside the official curriculum. “On War against the Turk,” written by Luther in an attempt to explain the ideological shift in his views on war against the Ottoman Empire (he swung from opposition to support), is a demonstration of “doctrine as living text shaped by events,” says Mazurek. It also “shows how political Luther was,” she adds, a fact not illuminated through the required readings.

After class, during a brisk walk across campus, Mazurek, wrapped in a large gray and purple coat, her suede heels clacking on the cobblestones, explains that the texts assigned in Contemporary Civilization confine history to a Eurocentric narrative that fails to explore how events in the West fit into the global context. So, in addition to the already demanding weekly preparations she makes for her course, she tries to read as much as possible beyond the syllabus, often turning to colleagues in the History Department for recommendations. “In the entire reading list there are only two pieces of writing by a woman and just a few by those outside the European cannon,” she says. “But how can you understand these events without seeing the bigger picture?”

Mazurek’s interest in history dates back to the collapse of Communism in Poland. Growing up in Warsaw, she was struck by the changes. “Everything that was colorful was Western,” she recalls. “And the colors were tantalizing.” They material-

ized through TV advertisements, through Toblerone bars and M&Ms, new shops and bright clothes. “The transformation was happening every day,” she says, “and I didn’t view it through the lens of the political calendar.” This early experience—she was ten when the Iron Curtain fell—paired with her natural curiosity, inspired a perpetual yearning to discover how the past interacts with the present. It also moved her to study ordinary people and their lives during a period when most scholars were focusing on Poland’s political history.

As early as high school, Mazurek conducted a series of interviews about cultural and daily life under Stalinism. At the time she was attending the first non-state school, established in 1989, where she was an outlier among the children of liberal, anti-Communists. This was new and strange; Mazurek’s parents never discussed history or politics at home, and her father had belonged to the Communist Party until the collapse of the regime. The people she interviewed, members of the Warsaw intelligentsia who had been part of the political opposition, fascinated her, as Mazurek was previously unaware of Poland’s Solidarity movement and the “bourgeois” lifestyle that had continued to exist even after the Communist takeover.

After that experience, Mazurek began to approach her research with particular attention to how social behavior and attitudes survived (or didn’t survive) political transition. She noticed, for instance, that laborers were idolized in Communist times, yet were almost entirely forgotten during the 1990s. As the government liquidated factories one after the other, Mazurek



wondered what had happened to the workers. While enrolled in M.A. programs for sociology and history at the University of Warsaw in 2001, she traveled to former East Berlin and interviewed the former employees of an electric appliances factory, most of whom were retired or working for other factories. “I was surprised to discover that twelve years after the factory closed the workers hadn’t ceased contacting each other,” she says, describing a state-sponsored clubhouse where they met every week. “They had even organized the interior of the club to resemble the layout of their factory cafeteria.” She explains that the nostalgia went even further—after a colleague passed away, his friends left his seat empty in his memory.

Mazurek was intrigued and turned to Warsaw’s working class for comparison. Polish workers, it turned out, had not maintained their factory ties—there was no club to hold workers together after their factories ceased to exist. The German state had created much stronger civil institutions. The comparison between everyday factory life in Poland and the GDR not only fueled her master’s thesis (awarded two M.A. dissertation prizes

in 2004: the Witold Kula First Prize in Social Sciences and the Józef Lipski Award of the “Open Republic Association against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia” in History), but also laid the groundwork for her first book, *Socialist Factory: Workers in People’s Poland and in the GDR on the Eve of the Sixties* (Wydawnictwo Trio, 2005). Her next book, *Waiting in Lines: On Experiences of Scarcity in Postwar Poland* (Warsaw Trio, 2010), an exploration of how the experience of scarcity affected social ties, was shortlisted among the ten best books in contemporary Polish history in a 2011 nationwide contest and quickly sold out.

When *Waiting in Lines* came out, Mazurek was working at Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam, Germany,

Facing page: Małgorzata Mazurek introducing President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski at the World Leaders Forum (September 2014); photo courtesy of Columbia University. Below, left to right: Portrait of Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1528); photo of Warsaw from the International Space Station (2013).

Mazurek’s interest in history dates back to the collapse of Communism in Poland. Growing up in Warsaw, she was struck by the changes. “Everything that was colorful was Western,” she recalls. “And the colors were tantalizing.”



Mazurek arrived at Columbia in the fall of 2012. She got a bicycle and toured the city, immersed herself in the culture of her surroundings, tried new cuisine—barbeque, soul food, ramen—and read books on U.S. history. She was especially interested in the history of slavery, which inspired her to develop a course.

Right: Małgorzata Mazurek. Photo by Bartek Bobkowski.



as a research scholar. Two years prior, during her first semester in Potsdam, she'd visited the United States for the first time for the annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) in Philadelphia. "I was surprised that there were very few scholars present who were actually from East-Central Europe," she says. "I kept looking for another Polish historian, but everyone was American."

Torn about whether to continue her academic career in Germany or Poland, Mazurek decided to try a third option. "We have this Polish saying that you get three chances," she says. "I decided that my third chance would be in the United States." She applied for the Marie Curie Fellowship of the Gerda Henkel Foundation, a program financed by the European Commission that promotes transnational academic exchange, and won. But she needed to find an institution to take her in. It is common knowledge in the United States that the academic job market can be brutal, but Mazurek knew little about the U.S. system. She e-mailed the prominent historian Mark Mazower, Ira D. Wallach Professor of World Order Studies, whom she had long admired, and told him she wanted to come to Columbia. "I said I would come under the condition that I could have my own office and teach my own class," she laughs. "Clearly, I understood nothing."

Mazower, who directs the Heyman Center for the Humanities, received her e-mail at a fortuitous time. The Center was in the midst of staging a series of workshops and conferences on the history of development thought, and Mazurek happened to be working on a project about the intellectual history of Eastern Europe (her book in progress), which traces the lives of a group of Warsaw-based social scientists and how they shaped the economic development of the postcolonial world. The series organizers were particularly interested in the participation of a historian from Eastern Europe. "What we'd been saying is that it was all very much focused on the U.S. side of the Cold War and that people must be doing very interesting work about development on the other side of the Iron Curtain," says Mazower, who encouraged Mazurek to come.

Mazurek arrived at Columbia in the fall of 2012. She got a bicycle and toured the city, immersed herself in the culture of her surroundings, tried new cuisine—barbeque, soul food, ramen—and read books on U.S. history. She was especially interested in the history of slavery, which inspired her to develop a course, "The History of Modern Eastern and Central Europe," from the perspective of the abolition of serfdom. "Teaching is all about questioning standard narratives, and it has a tremendous impact on my research," she says.

As she enjoyed her time in New York, she was also trying to figure out what to do once her fellowship money ran out in 2014. That's when she applied for the Polish Studies Chair, a position in Columbia's History Department. The chair was created after an extended fundraising effort by the Harriman

"Teaching is all about questioning standard narratives, and it has a tremendous impact on my research."

Institute's East Central European Center produced donations from both Polish and Polish diaspora companies, institutions, organizations, and individual donors, establishing a \$3 million endowment. The History Department wanted someone who was not only an accomplished Polish studies expert but also "a fine historian, period," Mazower explains. "The strategy was to think who was going to put this subject, this position, this chair on the map over a ten- or twenty-year period, as opposed to whose name happens to be in the newspapers today," Mazower explains.

"Most American historians of Poland were still playing goodies and baddies. Was it a conquest of power? Was there some popular support for Communism? They're still trapped in these questions," Mazower says. Mazurek had moved beyond that, portraying the communist period itself as history. She also has the benefit of being trained as a sociologist. "Training in history and sociology together is something that would be hard to replicate here," Mazower says. "It's much more natural in the Polish context. Intellectually, that's something new and fresh." The department invited her for a job talk, which, according to Harriman Director Timothy Frye, who was on the search committee, was "fresh" and "engaging." Frye was particularly impressed during the question and answer session. "You could tell she had already given these questions a lot of thought," he says.

To her great surprise, Mazurek was offered the position. "Smaller universities would have to fight for prestige and would never take a chance on an unknown, foreign scholar like me," she says, looking at the roofs over Amsterdam Avenue through the large window in her office. She describes her task of developing Polish studies at Columbia as a "one-woman intellectual show." She is working on building partnerships with members of the Harriman community and Columbia at large. "The program will emerge through these conversations," she says.

Starting next year, she will lead seminars related to Poland and East Central Europe in addition to teaching the Core Curriculum. "Becoming the Polish Chair means to rediscover Poland in a new context," says Mazurek, who wants to teach a class through the prism of Polish memoirs and personal stories—the diaries of peasants in interwar Poland and Holocaust literature, for instance. "I want to go back to thinking about Poland as a historical-geographical space with people of different origins, various cultures," she says, "to reach beyond the figures closely related to the national canon that shaped the history of Polish lands since the nineteenth century." □



Robert L. Belknap. Photo courtesy of
Columbia University Archives.

TEACHING CONTEXTS

ROBERT L. BELKNAP

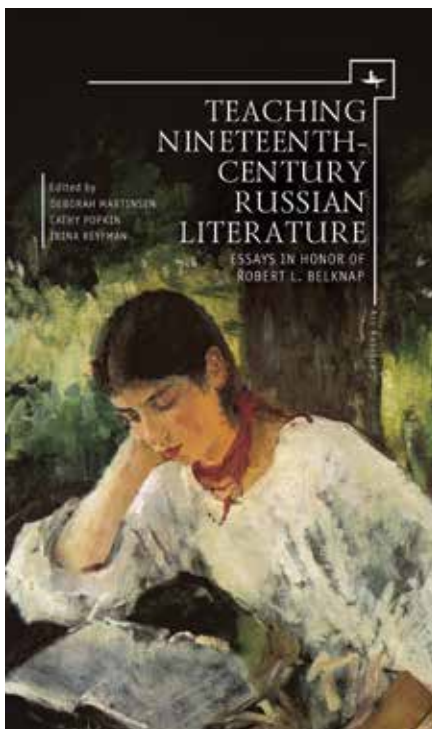
INTRODUCTION

BY DEBORAH A. MARTINSEN

Bob Belknap was a great scholar who asked questions about narrative, structure, plot, and memory that anticipated entire contemporary disciplines; an internationally renowned and beloved Dostoevsky scholar, whose two books on *The Brothers Karamazov* are universally cited classics of Dostoevsky scholarship; a true University man, who crossed boundaries and brought people together; a wonderful person, who radiated intelligence, generosity, and kindness; and a legendary teacher. It is for his teaching that the Slavic Department honored him in 2010 with a conference on teaching nineteenth-century Russian literature, and it is for the conference volume that Bob wrote the piece published here. Whereas the other essays in the volume—*Teaching Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Belknap*—pay tribute to Bob by outlining strategies for teaching, Bob's essay pays tribute to his education as an educator and to the most memorable course he ever taught.

Robert Lamont Belknap came to Columbia in 1952, after a year studying Russian at the University of Paris. The prior four years he had spent at Princeton University, majoring in English and Latin in the Special Program in the Humanities, and writing a senior thesis under the supervision of New Critic R. P. Blackmur on "The Noble Lie in Plato, Shakespeare, and Dostoevsky." At Columbia, he fulfilled most of the requirements for his M.A. before spending a few years in the Army. At Bob Belknap's retirement dinner, Bob Maguire said that when he himself arrived at Columbia as an entering graduate student, he was awed by Bob Belknap. Both Bobs left Columbia for the Army at the same time. Maguire finished

his master's essay before leaving. Belknap didn't. Maguire noted that while he and his group concentrated their full energies on surviving boot camp, rumor had it that Belknap had completed his master's essay there. Bob Belknap blushed and admitted it was true.



Bob Belknap returned to Columbia in 1956 as an instructor, teaching Literature Humanities and two other courses each semester and finishing his dissertation on *The Structure of "The Brothers Karamazov"* in 1960. During the next fifty-four years, Bob served as acting dean of Columbia College, as associate dean of students, and thrice as chair of Literature Humanities (1963, 1967–70 with one-year break, and 1988–90). He chaired the Columbia Slavic Department in the 1970s and again in the 1990s; he also served as director of the Russian (now Harriman) Institute from 1977 to 1981. After retiring from the Slavic Department in 2000, Bob spent another decade directing the University Seminars, the home of eighty-five interdisciplinary and interinstitutional seminars that gather scholars and practitioners dedicated to a particular line of investigation into a forum that encourages what Bob called "good talk." During his decade at the University Seminars, Bob was also a moving force in

EPIC—Emeritus Professors in Columbia—where he continued the good talk until his death.

From 1956 to 2010, Bob taught Literature Humanities or, twice, the colloquium of which he writes in the article published here, almost every non-sabbatical year, even after retiring from the Slavic Department. In fall 1988, as he returned to chair Lit Hum for the third time, Bob wrote to the incoming teaching

staff, “For a member of our small department, the course, like St. Petersburg, is a window on Europe.” Next Bob outlined his teaching philosophy: “In preparing for the course, bear in mind that students rarely remember anything we tell them, but often remember what they say themselves.” He asked us to “coax intelligent formulations” from our students, reminding us that “astonishingly often the facts about a Greek or Roman or Biblical text come from that text itself. When they do, your students can discover them if you direct attention to the appropriate passage.” And he urged us to consider staff meetings as a “sacred” hour in our schedules, by observing that “within our course we all are working at the edges of our central expertise, using our wits and one another in an enterprise as exciting and as valuable as the education of our students: the education of the faculty at a great university.”

In the classroom, Bob asked probing questions, guiding and inspiring students to make discoveries for themselves. Under his guidance, class went further, wider, and deeper than students expected. Columbia College undergraduates recognized his extraordinary teaching in 1980 by awarding him the Mark Van Doren Prize. Three decades later, the Society of Columbia Graduates chose him as the recipient of their Great Teacher Award. Students in his last group of lucky Lit Hum students believed that Professor Belknap “seems to have read every book ever written, ... knows the *Aeneid* almost by heart in Latin, ... and ... can act Shakespeare better than any actor.” In the fall of 2013, four months before he died, the family of Julia and Jay Lindsey (CC ’75) established the Robert L. Belknap Core Faculty Fellowship, a fitting gift for a great educator.

In accepting the Society of Graduates Great Teacher Award in 2010, Bob said: “Columbia is great in many ways, but it exceeds all other universities in the way it goes on educating its own professors. Most universities leave that job to the departments, which do it pretty well. But Columbia has the Core Curriculum, and the Regional Studies Institutes, both invented here, and uses them to educate us all in areas between our specialties, where many times the real excitement lies.” Although Bob did most of his teaching in the Slavic Department and the Core Curriculum, in the essay that follows he describes a course he team taught in the early eighties. Reflecting on that course almost forty years later, Bob observed: “My test of any course I teach is what I learn from it. That spring I learned a lot.”

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Robert L. Belknap’s essay “Teaching Contexts” is reprinted from *Teaching Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Belknap*, edited by Deborah Martinsen, Cathy Popkin, and Irina Reyfman, with the kind permission of the publisher, Academic Studies Press.

TEACHING CONTEXTS

BY ROBERT L. BELKNAP

Let me begin with the warmest thanks for this volume, and for the conference that generated it, one of the high points of my life. I loved it not only because so many students, friends, and colleagues came together, with me and with one another, but also because it was a concentrated moment of something I have rejoiced in all my life: learning from my students and my interlocutors. My six decades of studying and teaching nineteenth-century Russian literature and other matters at Columbia have shown me a variety of structures for this kind of learning that deserve discussion.

In American academia, teaching competes with scholarship for our time. European systems sometimes place their good scholars at the universities, and their great scholars in the Academy of Science for pure research. But even the Academy sometimes insists on teaching students too, just as the Rockefeller Institute felt it had to turn into Rockefeller University. The students were cheap labor, of course, but these most rarified scholars also recognized them as a pretext for encounters beyond one’s specialty. Rigor demands specialization, but students demand context, and even the purest virologist, econometrician, or Slavist cannot stand alone, apart from intersecting fields.

We should always investigate and always teach everything in its context, biographical, psychological, historical, political, economic, literary, linguistic, religious, etc., in our Russian literature, and, equally, in other subjects. And yet life is too short for any of us to know most of these contexts with scholarly expertise. Marc Raeff used to say that we could have a monographic control of one or maybe two fields, and only a textbook knowledge of anything else. Our scholarly

or pedagogical use of context is therefore either amateurish or dependent on the expertise of others. Universities exist to enable scholars to use each other's brains, but often they do not make it easy.

In the field of literature, context threatens rigor in a special way. A text is a fearsome thing, emotionally and intellectually. Like the most benighted savages in some colonial accounts, when shot at it shoots back, and any serious literary scholar has had formulations pierced by literary fact. In self-defense we may therefore prefer to discuss more obedient matters, like the Marxism we absorbed as freshmen, or the Freudian doctrine we picked up from our shrinks, or other fields made simple by our lack of mature study. Context can shield us from the text.

The New Critics responded to this risk in times when literary criticism often took the form of "The Life and Works of ..." or "... in My Life." They wrote manifestos demanding concentration on

a text and ignoring the author's biography, the reader's reaction, the background, and such, but when they wrote practical criticism, as opposed to *Practical Criticism*, they often divulged the breadth of their curiosity and waded into deep waters from the safe ground of their technical task. In the same way, the Russian Formalists had positivistic dreams of studying not literature but *literaturnost'*, in all its purity, but their later careers displayed them as broadly learned philologists.

In my own Proseminar for beginning Columbia graduate students, I usually stole a pedagogical trick from I. A. Richards to minimize context at the start. I picked a fairly obscure short story and asked the students to write a Freudian or Marxian or Feminist or Semiotic or other kind of paper on it, without knowing the author or even the title of the story. One author blew his cover when a careful student found that the story's title was cited as the dictionary's example of a rare

word. Nowadays computer searches make anonymity harder. One time an angry Soviet émigré refused to write the first paper without knowing the author's name. I didn't know her yet and secretly suspected that I was making plagiarism too difficult, or terrifying someone who had never expressed an opinion not ratified by an encyclopedia, but I had to admit that she was right to be angry. Even an American could understand that books are social, economic, and political products. But this course was not real life. It was like training a boxer with one hand tied behind his back. She had to learn tough ways to bob and weave and prepare for an uppercut, but half-way through the course would be allowed to meet the onslaught of a text with a fuller sense of its context.

The amateurishness inherent in context and the narrowness that rigor demands of finite humans temper each other in three great academic inventions made at Columbia in the first half of the nine-

“Professor Belknap ‘seems to have read every book ever written, ... knows the Aeneid by heart in Latin, ... and ... can act Shakespeare better than any actor.’”



From left to right: Robert Belknap was known for the expressive use of his hands when making a point, as the first two photographs capture some decades apart. The color photos were taken at the conference in Belknap's honor held at Columbia University in 2010. Middle photo courtesy of Hilde Hoogenboom.

teenth century: the Core Curriculum, the Regional Studies Institute, and the University Seminars. The first two serve the students directly, but all three serve them indirectly, by educating their professors. I learned a great deal in college and graduate school, but far more through my teaching at Columbia. Dostoevsky lives in many contexts, but for most Columbia undergraduates, *Crime and Punishment* exists not in the company of Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Chekhov, but in that of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Virgil, Genesis, Matthew, St. Augustine, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Cervantes, Goethe, Austen, Woolf, and the other figures all Columbia College students read and discuss in the required Humanities course. A thousand students read each one of these books the same week every year in the residence halls. As their fifty teachers moved through this same list of readings, some of us treated it as a course in Plato and his footnoters, others as Homer and his imitators, others as Goethe and his sources. For Slavists it can become a course on the two thousand years' work it took to produce Dostoevsky.

But first-year college students rarely care about *quellenforschung*. More tellingly, the family structures in the *Oresteia*, *Oedipus*, *The Bacchae*, or *Don Quixote* gave them fresh ways to see the presence and the absence of families in *Crime and Punishment*, the step-by-step

The Russian Institute was the first of its kind, and still very young when I became a graduate student in 1952. For a certificate, I had to get an M.A. in Slavic for rigor, but also take courses in politics, international affairs, economics, and history, for context.

extermination of the married couples, the Svidrigailovs, the Marmeladovs, and the Raskolnikov parents, leaving only the explosive lieutenant whom Raskolnikov inexplicably selects for his final, proper confession, after rehearsals with the single people, Zametov, Porfiry, Razumikhin, and Sonia. The readings in Plato, Augustine, Dante, and the Bible enable the Humanities staff to show how that confession was the means to, not the result of, Raskolnikov's repentance, and how his secular pilgrimage moves in steps, like the mystical experiences encountered in the course. I know most of the people who have taught this course since 1956, but even if I did not, it is easy to recognize the scholarship of anyone who has had to discuss this list of books for several hours each with a roomful of disrespectful Columbia students. The intimacy and unforeseeability of reference is different, and *Crime and Punishment* is different for them.

Columbia invented this kind of course for social studies almost a century ago, and expanded it to include the humanities in the thirties, the arts in the fifties, and the natural sciences very recently.

St. John's College expanded the model to include most of its curriculum, and Chicago, Harvard, and many other universities tried out versions of it, though most made students select among a variety of more specialized courses, sacrificing the dormitory discussions to faculty fears of overwork or lack of rigor. For students, such programs can be valuable, but they let professors wall themselves inside their specialties in ways that may advance careers while delaying the advancement of knowledge that often occurs in the fields between established specialties.

The Russian Institute was the first of its kind, and still very young when I became a graduate student in 1952. For a certificate, I had to get an M.A. in Slavic for rigor, but also take courses in politics, international affairs, economics, and history, for context. The courses were not amateurish. John Hazard taught Soviet law and politics with the practicality of an American lawyer who had graduated from a Soviet law school in the 1930s. Abe Bergson was one of the inventors of matrix economics. He used the fact that each car required a knowable amount of steel, and that this amount of steel, in turn, required a knowable amount of coal, and so on, to figure out from incomplete, inaccurate, and sometimes falsified data what was actually going on in the Soviet economy. I had never taken an economics course before; it is weird and wonderful to jump into a field at the graduate level. My basic ignorance was spectacular and my learning curve high; the experience prepared me to teach an economist or a law school student in the Russian Institute that a Soviet farce about having to share a room with one's ex-

I had never taken an economics course before; it is weird and wonderful to jump into a field at the graduate level. My basic ignorance was spectacular and my learning curve high; the experience prepared me to teach an economist or a law school student that a Soviet farce about having to share a room with one's ex-spouse was part of a tradition going back beyond Menander ...

spouse was part of a tradition going back beyond Menander, as well as a reflection on Soviet property rights and on the political allocation of economic resources. The Institute kept me doing that all my life. I ran it while Marshall Shulman was serving in Washington, and still profit from my encounters with colleagues and visitors doing all sorts of things involving Russia and its empire.

Columbia's third great contextualizing invention is the University Seminars, for professors and other experts from Columbia or elsewhere. The eighty groups meet every month either to solve some problem that falls outside any one department or to listen politely to a speaker who claims to have solved it, but may or may not be able to answer the Seminar's questioning. Academic departments should try to hire masters of the latest intellectual approaches and subjects. Ideally, departments should also be thinking of the next way of thinking, but

that is unknowable, and hiring a brilliant young scholar exploring a dead end may cost a department millions of dollars over a lifetime. University Seminars pay no salaries and can take intellectual risks that departments should avoid.

I first learned about the Seminars at a weekly luncheon of the Humanities staff at which Susan Sontag and Walter Sokel happened to discuss an argument at the Hermeneutics Seminar the night before between Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas, a wonderful philosopher at the New School, who earlier had been a lieutenant general in the Israeli army. They invited me to attend, and I continued to educate myself there until the Seminar split in two: one on religion and one on literary theory. Both interested me, but I spent more time in the latter, and also in the Seminar on Slavic History and Culture. These Seminars changed with the times, but they offered the chance to interact with experts of all sorts who wanted to

exploit the intellectual riches of New York. The Russian Formalists had ideas that could only be systematized by the French Structuralists, and the Seminar on Literary Theory brought us together. When Edward Said chaired it, I began to see the Soviet handling of Ukrainian language and literature, or translations of central Asian literatures, in the light of imperialism and orientalism, though some members of the Seminar rejected those terms when applied to the Great Socialist Experiment.

The first two of these Columbia inventions have spread around the country, modified to match the needs, resources, and cultures of many universities, for in the academic world, at least, practices thrive only if they are invented or reinvented by the faculty that will use them. The University Seminars remain unique, partly because Frank Tannenbaum endowed them, and no one has made similar endowments elsewhere,

Portrait of Fyodor Dostoevsky
by Vasily Perov (1872).





and partly because New York is probably the only area in which there are three thousand people who want that kind of interdepartmental excitement.

But I want to talk about a fourth academic adventure at Columbia, one that never spread or even continued, but was the finest teaching experience I ever had, the most contextual and among the most rigorous. I sat down with Michael Rengstorf, a semiotician in the French Department, and David Robertson, a major expert on Victorian literature and art, to invent a course that would use the often wasted final college semester to continue the general education most Columbia students interrupt to concentrate on their major. By the end of senior year, they relax; they feel informed about their field, and at the time this experiment was performed they were usually already placed in a graduate school or a job. We conceived a twelve-point course on European prose of the 1860s. This would be considered a full program for a Columbia senior, though one more course might be allowed.

We decided to spend all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays with the students. One of us would lecture from 9:00 to 11:00 on that week's book, with the other two attending and learning. Then we would split the students into three groups of ten to discuss it. Around 1:00, we would move to a different room for lunch, and ask a colleague to give a lecture on a topic beyond our expertise (none

refused, unless they were absent from the city), and in the afternoon, we would break up again into groups of ten, but this time according to our specialty: the French-speakers with Rengstorf, the English majors with Robertson, and the couple of Russian majors, together with the historians, mathematicians, and the others, with me. Each afternoon session had its own additional assignments and oral reports from the students, culminating in a week with no lectures during which each student wrote a thirty-page paper emerging from the reports. The English, French, Russian, and History Departments accepted the course as satisfying their major requirements for a seminar and one additional course. We put together a fat book with a chronology, a list identifying political, religious, scholarly, and literary figures in our three countries who would appear in our texts, a table of currency values, a bibliography, and the texts of assignments that were out of print.

Our reading list scared even us. We admitted students after vetting their records and interviewing them, so that we could warn them to read *War and Peace* over Christmas vacation, since they would

Left: Portrait of Leo Tolstoy by Ilya Repin (1901).

Our reading list scared even us. We admitted students after vetting their records and interviewing them, so that we could warn them to read War and Peace over Christmas vacation, since they would have to discuss it in a group of ten for four hours in the first week of the course.

Those students are scattered now, doctors, lawyers, merchants—maybe a thief or two!—and when they stop me on the street or in a theatre (as still happens), they have forgotten most of our lectures and much of their readings but clearly remember what they said in their papers.

have to discuss it in a group of ten for four hours in the first week of the course. That week, Istvan Deak lectured at lunch on the Crimean War, and Elizabeth Valkenier on the collision between the *Peredvizhniki* and the more academic Russian art establishment. The English group concentrated on the historical background, and the French group on the doctrines of realism, while the Russian group had an additional assignment, Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Stories* (for us, the 1860s actually began in the 1850s). For me, these texts offered a sense of the continuities and the evolution in Tolstoy's attitude toward war, and his capacity to see the slogging soldier in his international context. I have taught *Anna Karenina* and many other Tolstoy works quite often, but this was my only chance to teach *War and Peace*. My teaching of Borodino had to prepare the students for Victor Hugo's "Waterloo," which they would read about during their next vacation. Most of us have done comparisons of battle scenes in class, but this time I had to do half of a comparison, and it was an entrancing exercise. With this first reading, I also had to mark the picture of political life for comparison with that of Trollope, whom Tolstoy admired so highly, and map the seductions to prepare the students for Flaubert. For the students, Tolstoy also offered a historical context for the rest of the course, in the Napoleonic period and the Crimean War.

The next week, we jumped to England and read *Our Mutual Friend*, with a separate assignment for the Russian group, Aksakov's *Family Chronicle*. The Russian authors had adored Dickens, but in this course the undergraduates were more

interested in comparing the plotting of family structures and relationships, or the handling of suspense, than in the actual literary influences. That week at lunch, Karl-Ludwig Selig, a German expert on the Spanish Renaissance, talked about the novella as it was developed all over Europe, in a tradition going back to his beloved Boccaccio. Robert Paxton, whose specialty is twentieth-century French history, discussed the 1860s in France.

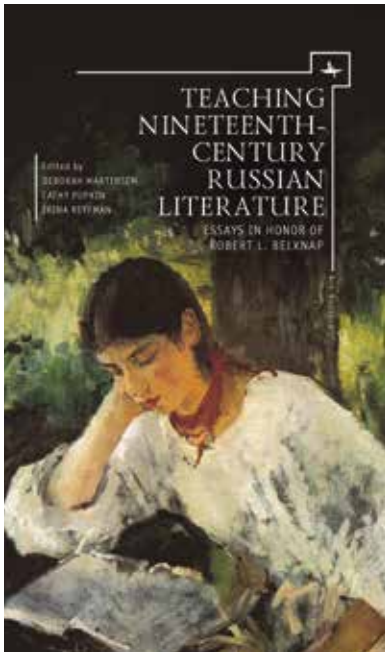
We pressed on into France with *Madame Bovary*, and back to Russia the next week with Goncharov's *Oblomov*. The Russian afternoon group read Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*, a novel with a very different take on marriage and society than Flaubert's, and the critique of *Oblomov* by Dobrolyubov, another radical. The juxtaposition was wild, and the Russian adultery novel came to life far better than it ever had for me when I had taught it in the immediate glare of Dostoevsky's attack in the *Notes from Underground*. A lunchtime lecture on opera by Hubert Doris gave us a context for both novels, as did one by Leopold Haimson on the emergence of a Russian working class among the peasants laboring winters in the Petersburg textile mills. Both lectures were brilliant set pieces from which the three professors learned as much as the students did. Haimson's talk was bracketed intellectually by that of Edward Malefakis, a colleague of his in the History Department, on the European peasantry, and that of the sociologist, Allan Silver, on social classes.

For the next two weeks, we read intellectual history for our morning sessions—John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and some Huxley essays on Darwin the first week,

and religious writers the second week: George Eliot's translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (for one afternoon group in the original), a Jowett essay, and Cardinal Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Our lunchtime lecturers included Samuel Devons discussing physics in the 1860s and Maxwell's achievements, and Donald Ritchie discussing Darwin. For a lunch considering the closely-related religious controversies and anxieties of the period, Canon Edward West invited us to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and explained how unthreatening some of Darwin teachings were to a congregation that loved to sing "A thousand ages in Thy sight are like an evening gone," while others seemed to threaten their faith. Allan Silver used his background as a sociologist for a lecture on the European social classes, and David Robertson, whose expertise included alpinism and who had climbed and trekked a good deal in the Himalayas, spoke on the Great Game, discussing Britain and Russia in Central Asia.

The last week before spring vacation, we all read Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and the section of Herzen's *Past and Thoughts* dealing with his life in Europe in the 1850s and 1860s. We had neither the expertise nor the time to deal with many literatures, but that week Gertrud Sakrawa outlined the chief events in the German literatures of the period, and Olga Ragusa did the same for the Italian. The Russian section in these weeks concentrated on the literature reflecting this period, which produced institutional changes that may have been greater and more rapid than those of any others from Peter the Great to Gorbachev: Pisarev's "Destruction of Aesthetics" and short stories by Sleptsov, Levitov, Naumov, Uspensky, and Reshetnikov.

The next week, most students left Columbia, but not those taking this course. They all read *Les Misérables*, partly in French, for one group, and the Russian group read Pisemsky's *A Thousand Souls*, too. That week, our lunchtime



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lectures dealt with French too: Michael Riffaterre discussed Lautréamont, and LeRoy Breunig Baudelaire. We followed this huge immersion with a week on each of our central literatures, Trollope's *Phineas Finn*, Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. The Russian group read Pavlova's *A Double Life*, a selection from Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Fables*, and Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. In those weeks, Anne Prescott spoke on Lewis Carroll, Allen Staley on English painting, Joan Rosasco on French painting, and Richard Kuhns on the aesthetic doctrines of the time.

In our final three weeks, our lunchtime talks continued to consider the arts, with Mary McLeod treating Haussmann's architectural activities in Paris, Richard Taruskin Russian music, and Theodore Reff French painting. In addition, Paula Hyman discussed the Jews in Europe, and Fritz Stern the subject of his major study, Bismarck. In two of those weeks, our readings returned to intellectual history and literary criticism, considering Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, Mill, Sainte-Beuve, the Goncourts, Baudelaire, Taine, Dmitry Pisarev, and Apollon Grigoriev. Few scholars had ever encountered the Russians in this company, who seemed as intelligent as the European masters, but far less universal in their concerns. Our Russian group read Leskov's *Enigmatic Man*, which, like the Dostoevsky readings in this course, attacked and ridiculed the social upheaval that inspired Pisarev and the "Men of the Sixties." These deliberations over what we had been surveying throughout much of Europe helped to organize the wild array of half-processed experiences we were still reeling from.

The penultimate week of the course did this job better than any reading could. We had no lectures or class meetings, though we stayed available in our offices while the students worked day and night on the thirty-page papers that grew out of the reports they had given in their afternoon sessions. These were undergraduate papers, not research scholarship

but thirty serious tunnelings into one or another corner of the texts we had read, illuminated by the intense experience of all the other texts and the way they reached out to one another and beyond.

Those students are scattered now, doctors, lawyers, merchants—maybe a thief or two!—and when they stop me on the street or in a theatre (as still happens), they have forgotten most of our lectures and much of their readings but clearly remember what they said in their papers. More important, we all go on exploring things that seized our minds in those three months during which the thirty-three of us drenched ourselves in one embayment of a mighty ocean.

We only taught this course twice. It needed imitators to attract enough students from other courses that could then be closed, and thus liberate their professors for such an adventure. Some universities concentrate their energies on a single topic every term, but for Columbia the last semester seemed best. It may never happen here again. The pressure for stellar careers has led the Columbia faculty to yield the governance of the university to administrators with other priorities. However, maybe this account will provoke other teaching experiments that also teach professors to maintain their rigor in the huge complexity of the world. □

Lysycha, Ukraine (2013).
All photos by Christopher Herwig.

BY MASHA
UDENSIVA-BRENNER

FORGOTTEN ART

**CHRISTOPHER HERWIG AND THE WORLD'S LARGEST
COLLECTION OF SOVIET BUS STOP PHOTOGRAPHS**

The former Soviet Union is remembered as a bastion of uniformity—drab, awkward clothing, monotonous concrete buildings, pyramids of condensed milk cans on empty shelves. David Remnick, in his book *Lenin's Tomb*, describes the “classic Soviet city” as “an urban mass indistinguishable from

hundreds of others, with a Lenin Avenue and broad and pitted streets and apartment blocks so ugly and uniform that you could weep looking at them.” But there are exceptions to the rule. During the Brezhnev era, a period notorious for its repression of creativity, architects and artists evaded the watchful state by designing what were considered “minor architectural forms”—



Pitsunda, Abkhazia (2013).



playgrounds, pavilions, bus stops—in remote areas of the Soviet Union. These relics of artistic expression (some belonging to artists as famous as Georgia’s Zurab Tsereteli, who designed bus stops all over Abkhazia) had been largely neglected and forgotten. Then, last summer, the Canadian photographer Christopher Herwig published *Soviet Bus Stops*, the biggest and most diverse collection of bus stop photographs from the region. Twenty-two of these were on exhibit at the Harriman Institute from October 20 to December 20, 2014, and, next fall, a new edition of the book will be released by Fuel Publishing.

Herwig, who has no background in the region, first noticed the bus stops in 2002, while riding his bicycle from London to St. Petersburg. The trip took two months, and he spent much of it cycling through flat, barren territory. To pass the time, and to push the limits of his creativity, he tasked himself with producing one photo per hour. “I would not normally go out of my way to take a picture of a power line,” he says, “but when you only have five minutes left in the hour, that’s what you do.”

The bus stops appeared when he got to the Baltics. They are laid out sporadically, and at first he didn’t pay much attention—they can seem dismal in the context of weeds, tires, broken beer bottles, and gray skies. But since they were often the only structures he encountered, he ended up photographing many.

The first bus stop photo Herwig ever took depicts a rectangular brown and white construction in Marijampolė, Lithuania, with peeling paint, a solitary bench, and a set of small, brown steps leading to a flat brown column of the same width. As he biked, he noticed that the Lithuanian designs were cold, Spartan, and somewhat futuristic, with sloping lines and sharp angles of painted concrete, whereas once he got to Estonia, the bus stops were usually made of wood—a three-dimensional hexagon with two open sides for an entrance; a glass decagon with wood panels and six wooden spider legs emerging from the top; a triangular hut with an entrance in the shape of a pine tree. In Ukraine, he encountered yet another aesthetic—brightly painted bus stops adorned with mosaic representations of flowers and shining suns. Herwig perceived the strangeness and variety, but it was not until he developed the photographs and saw just how many bus stops

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Buses are actually the most inconvenient way to hunt bus stops—they either fly by or stop so quickly that there is no time for a photo; and, if you hop off, you might end up stranded in the middle of nowhere, waiting hours for another bus.

he had captured, and what they looked like in the context of a collection, that the trend struck him. “They clearly went beyond pure functionality and into the realm of artistic expression,” he says. “These were not created by a big Soviet machine.”

After his bicycle trip ended, Herwig moved to Sweden to live with his girlfriend (now wife) and exhibited his photos in a Stockholm gallery. Along with twenty-five bus stops, he included shots of power lines, clotheslines, graffiti, and apartment blocks. The bus stops were the most popular, he recalls. But, when the exhibition ended, he moved on to other projects. Then, in 2003, Herwig’s wife, who works for the United Nations, was transferred to Almaty, Kazakhstan. He joined her and started working on a photo project about Central Asia and the Silk Road. Since he spent much of his time driving around the “five ’Stans,” he kept running into (and photographing) more bus stops. A lot of them were heavily influenced by Islamic and agrarian traditions, incorporating mosque-like shapes and sculptures of peasants and animals.

As Herwig accumulated more photos, he posted them online, where they quickly garnered traffic and reposts from other blogs. At first he was upset that his work was being reposted for free, but the buzz attracted magazine editors. Over the years, Herwig’s bus stops have appeared in magazines about fashion, German architecture, and Chinese history. “If people hadn’t stolen my photos, I doubt I would have ever continued with the project,” he says.

And continue he did. Suddenly, Herwig was seeking out new bus stops whenever he got the chance. No database existed, so he went online, Googling his search parameters in various languages. “It was like a scavenger hunt,” he says, “and it became my reason to travel.” To get around, Herwig hired taxis. (Buses are actually the most inconvenient way to hunt bus stops—they either fly by or stop so quickly that there is no time for a photo; and, if you hop off, you might end up stranded in the middle of nowhere, waiting hours for another bus.) The taxi drivers were always puzzled that he would want to photograph something so ugly and dirty. But sometimes, the act of the hunt would change their perspective.

Pitsunda, Abkhazia (2013).









Once, after hours of driving fruitlessly around the peripheries of Kazakhstan, Herwig finally found a stop. It was freshly painted and, he recalls, the most beautiful thing he'd seen that day. When he got out his camera, a local woman yelled, "You're going to take these back to your country and show everyone how dirty and backward we are." He tried to explain his project, but she wouldn't listen. For her, he realized, the stop blended seamlessly into the landscape. "They forget it's there," he says, "or they find it offensive, because of the smell." The stops, often on dirt roads and in places without towns or people, make good shelters for drivers who need to relieve themselves.

Over the years, Herwig photographed bus stops in thirteen countries. At one point, he even encountered competition: while scouring blogs and websites, he discovered a German journalist (also named Christopher) who had photographed stops in Ukraine. He emailed him for tips. "I know who you are," the journalist replied. "I've been hunting these for years, and I'm not giving away any locations."

In July 2014, Herwig released his book, self-published with funds from the crowd sourcing site Kickstarter.com (he managed to raise nearly \$52,000). The 1,500 copies of the edition sold out quickly and received press from *The Guardian*, BBC, and *Vice* among others. Though the project is finished for the time being, Herwig hasn't ruled out the possibility of a return. "There are many more bus stops out there," he says, wistfully, to a crowd at his Harriman exhibit opening. The guests nod their heads, ask questions. Nicholas Hutchings, a medical student who spent two years in Armenia with the Peace Corps, always noticed the bus stops and is surprised to discover that they exist in different forms all over the region. Another guest, Al Rivera, a friend of Herwig's, is reminded of the bus stops in his hometown, Aibonito, Puerto Rico. "They've been around for as long as I can remember and we would use them to graffiti and smoke pot as teenagers," he recalls, explaining that he always took them for granted. "This exhibit makes me want to go home and shoot a picture." □

From left to right, top to bottom:
 Nova Dykanka, Ukraine; Kootsi, Estonia; Kablakula, Estonia; Poltava, Ukraine; Gudauta, Abkhazia (2013); Shymkent, Kazakhstan (2005); Parnu, Estonia; Garga, Abkhazia; Skverbai, Ukraine; Leliunai, Lithuania (2013); Taraz, Kazakhstan (2005); Pitsunda, Abkhazia (2013).



Maurice Friedberg
(1929–2014)

In Memoriam

Maurice Friedberg, an alumnus of the Russian Institute Class of 1953, who went on to become a distinguished scholar in the field of Russian and Soviet literature, died on August 15, 2014, in Washington, D.C., at the age of 84. Maurice was born in Poland ten years before the Nazi invasion. He escaped with his family, making their way to America. He graduated from Brooklyn College and at Columbia received the Certificate of the Russian Institute along with his M.A. in Slavic languages and Ph.D. in 1958.

During his academic career he taught at Brooklyn College, Hunter College, Columbia, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Indiana University, where he was director of the Russian and East European Institute (1966–75), and the University of Illinois, where he chaired the Department of Slavic Languages from 1975 until his retirement in 2000. Maurice was an active member of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) and a frequent chair, panelist, and discussant at its regional and national conferences. His honors include Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships.

He was the author of several books, including *Russian Classics in Soviet Jackets*, *A Decade of Euphoria*, *Russian Culture in the 1980s*, *How Things Were Done in Odessa*, and *Literary Translation in Russia: A Cultural History*.

Maurice and I were not only colleagues in the field of Soviet studies but also close personal friends. Together with my wife Gloria, also an M.A. in Russian from Columbia, we celebrated his wedding to Barbara Bisguier in the mid-1950s and kept in touch over the years, enjoying the growth of their lovely daughters Rachel and Edna, who have succeeded in their careers: Rachel, as a professor at Brown University, and Edna, as a staff member of the Holocaust Museum in

Washington. They delighted their parents with five grandchildren.

Maurice's energies were not limited to his professional responsibilities. He played a significant part during the Cold War, with frequent broadcasts in Russian to the Soviet Union over Voice of America and Radio Liberty. As a director of programming at Radio Liberty, I called on him for help in planning a special series aimed at Soviet Jewish listeners about their religion and culture, which the hostile regime opposed and repressed. We learned later from émigrés in the West that they appreciated this lifeline to their heritage of Judaism.

He was a person of great warmth and compassion and possessed a wonderful sense of humor. A skillful raconteur, he would regale his audiences with a seemingly inexhaustible flow of Soviet *anekdoty*, that is, uncensored jokes with barbed political meaning that Russians told each other, risking arrest by the secret police for spreading anti-Soviet propaganda. For example: "A fellow gets up one morning in his dingy room in Moscow and discovers that his beautiful pet parrot is missing. In a panic, he grabs the phone and calls KGB headquarters to assure them that 'I do NOT share his opinions!'"

In Maurice's years of retirement he contributed a detailed video interview describing his life story to the oral history archive of the Holocaust Museum. (The video and transcript can be accessed on the museum's website: collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn38082.) It is the thoughtful and moving memoir of a unique and beloved *chelovek*.

—Gene Sosin, B.A. '41, M.A. '49,
Certificate of Russian Institute '49, Ph.D. '58



George Louis Kline
(1921–2014)

George Louis Kline, Milton C. Nahm Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Bryn Mawr College, died at the age of 93 in Anderson, South Carolina, on October 21, 2014, six months after the death of his beloved wife Virginia (“Ginny”).

After military service as a navigator/bombardier during World War II, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Kline matriculated at Columbia University and went on to earn three degrees there—B.A. 1947, M.A. 1948, and Ph.D. 1950—all with a concentration in philosophy. His early teaching was also primarily at Columbia, where he taught from 1950 to 1959 (with the exception of one year as visiting professor at the University of Chicago), before accepting his position at Bryn Mawr.

Although Kline published widely on major figures in world philosophy, such as Spinoza, Hegel, and Whitehead, and served terms as president of both the Hegel Society of America and the Metaphysical Society of America, he is best known to Slavists not only as the American scholar who smuggled verses by his Russian friend, the future Nobel Prize-winning poet Joseph Brodsky, out of the Soviet Union and translated them into English, but above all as the founder and acknowledged dean of the scholarly specialty of Russian philosophy in the United States.

Beginning with his doctoral dissertation, published as *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy* in 1952, followed by his English translation in 1953 of the authoritative two-volume *History of Russian Philosophy* by V. V. Zenkovsky, and continuing with his influential study *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia* (1968) and a wealth of other books and articles (more than 300 in all), Kline alerted generations of students and general readers of English to the availability and merits of a body

of philosophical reflection that few had known existed.

Ironically, Kline’s single most influential publication is one for which he never received full recognition. He was the de facto but unidentified editor in chief of the three-volume anthology *Russian Philosophy* (1965), which has now been continuously in print and used in university courses for fifty years. He recommended the volume’s structure and the readings to be included, translated some of them himself, and guided the preparation of the introductions and commentaries at every stage. But he refused to be listed even as a coeditor, accepting mention only as “collaborator,” because he wanted the three younger scholars involved (who included the undersigned) to have the credit of editorship—a gesture emblematic of the remarkable lifelong generosity Kline displayed toward his students and younger colleagues. He is sorely missed.

—James P. Scanlan, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, The Ohio State University



Alumni & Postdoc Notes

Marian Leighton (Harriman Certificate, 1966; Ph.D., Political Science, 1979)

has had a long career in intelligence, with a focus on the Cold War and, since 9/11, on counterterrorism. She worked as a Soviet analyst at the CIA during the first half of the 1980s and then as a counterterrorist specialist at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). During the 1990s she worked in the private sector, including a job as director of Soviet Studies at National Defense Research Inc. and vice president for intelligence at Strategic Planning International. She was most recently employed by the CIA Declassification Center. Leighton has written three books on the Soviet Union, as well as many articles for scholarly journals. Her most recent article, “Strange Bedfellows: The Stasi and the Terrorists,” appeared in the December 2014 issue of the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*.



Marian Leighton



Sarah Paine



Esmira Jafarova

Kirsten Lodge's (Postdoc 2006–07)

new translation of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* was published by Broadview Press in September 2014. In addition to the text itself and an informative introduction, this new edition includes a selection of background documents (also newly translated) that help set the work in the cultural and intellectual context out of which it emerged. As Ilya Vinitzky (University of Pennsylvania) writes: “Kirsten Lodge offers a marvelous translation of one of Dostoevsky's most famous and most difficult works.... [T]he translator manages to convey the very pulsation of the paradoxical and painful thoughts of the narrator.... You can feel the changes in his mood, immerse yourself into the depth of his suffering, and instantly grasp those tiny little details which characterize his tragically shrewd style.” Lodge is assistant professor

of comparative and world literature and humanities at Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Sarah Paine has spent more than eight years living abroad, with multiple yearlong stints in Taiwan and Japan, and a year each in China, Russia, and Australia. Her publications are based on archival research in these countries. They include: *The Wars for Asia, 1911–1949* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), winner of the Richard W. Leopold Prize and the PROSE Award for European & World History, and longlisted for the Lionel Gelber prize; *Nation Building, State Building, and Economic Development: Case Studies and Comparisons* (edited) (M.E. Sharpe, 2010); *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); and *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier, 1858–1924* (M.E. Sharpe, 1996), winner of the Barbara Jelavich Prize.

She has also co-written or co-edited with Bruce A. Elleman: *Commerce Raiding: Historical Case Studies, 1755–2009* (edited) (Naval War College Press, 2013); *Naval Power and Expeditionary Warfare: Peripheral Campaigns and New Theatres of Naval Warfare* (edited) (Routledge, 2011); *Modern China: Continuity and Change, 1644 to the Present* (Prentice Hall, 2010); *Naval Coalition Warfare: From the Napoleonic War to Operation Iraqi Freedom* (edited) (Routledge, 2008); and *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-Strategies, 1805–2005* (edited) (Routledge, 2005).

She holds the following degrees: Ph.D., Russian and Chinese history, Columbia University; M.I.A., Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, with certificates from both the

Russian and East Asian Institutes; and M.A., Russian language, Middlebury College Russian School.

We also want to congratulate **Esmira Jafarova (Harriman Institute Visiting Scholar, 2014)**, on the publication of her book *Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus: Challenges to International Efforts* (Lexington Books, 2014), which

she completed during her time at the Harriman Institute. Jafarova holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Vienna and an M.A. from the Central European University (Budapest). She has held diplomatic positions at the Permanent Missions of Azerbaijan to the OSCE (Vienna) and to the United Nations (New York).



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Saratak, Armenia (2013).
Photo by Christopher Herwig.