

THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

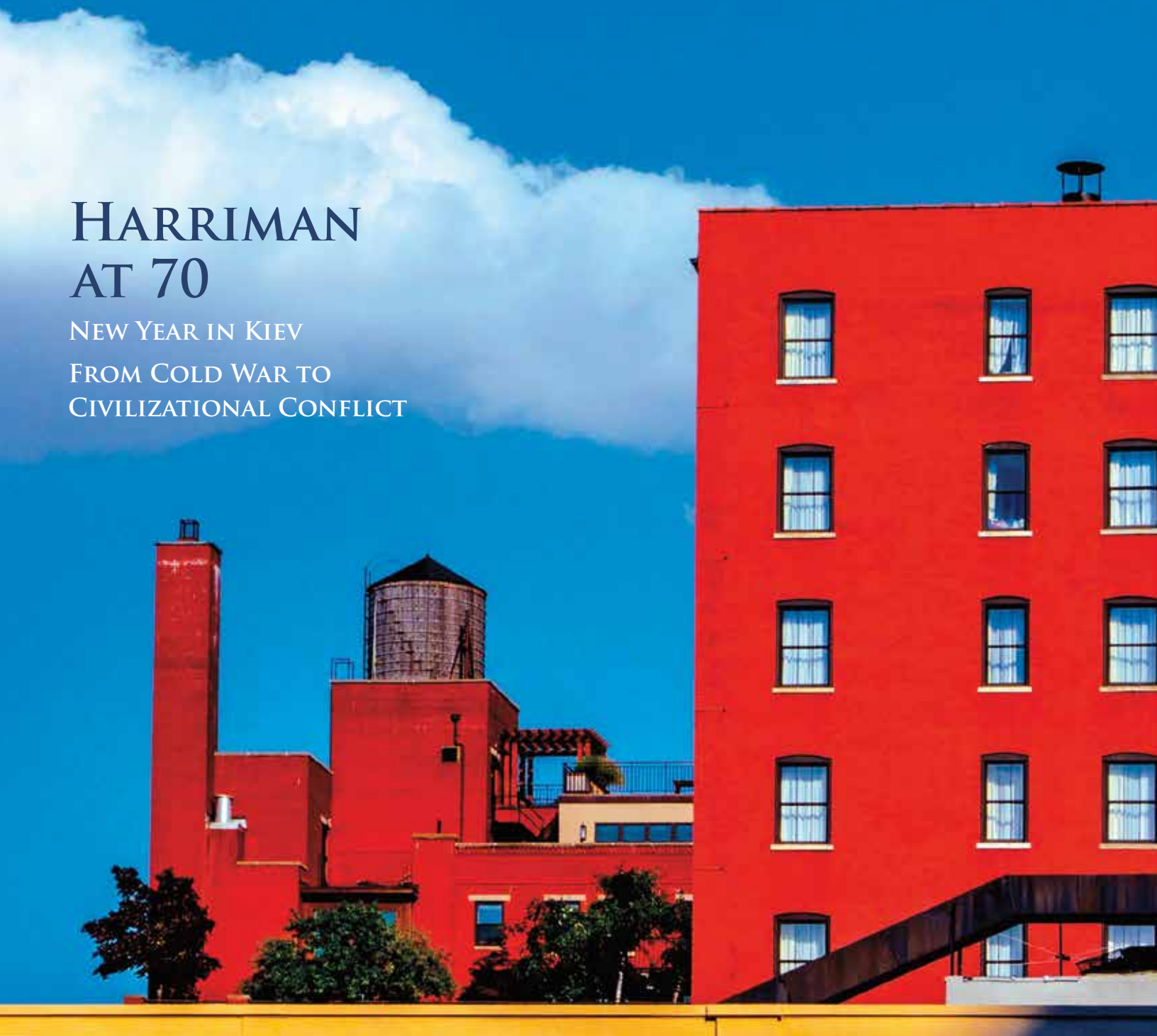
# HARRIMAN

SPRING 2017

## HARRIMAN AT 70

NEW YEAR IN KIEV

FROM COLD WAR TO  
CIVILIZATIONAL CONFLICT



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Cover photo: Mark Serman's "Urban Poetry: St. Petersburg—New York" was on exhibit at the Harriman Institute in fall 2016. We are grateful to the artist for permission to print his work on the front, back, and inside front covers, as well as pages 66–68 from his "New York" and "The Roofs of St. Petersburg." Cover photo: *Urban*; back cover photo: *Soho Motorcycle Alley*. Both from Mark Serman's "New York." This page: *Image No. 1*, from "The Roofs of St. Petersburg." All photos © Mark Serman. Printed with the artist's permission.

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This academic year is an important one at the Harriman Institute. Not only are we celebrating our seventieth anniversary, but we are also marking the twenty-fifth year since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The post-Soviet era has seen many phases and turns, from post-Cold War triumphalism and the onset of the “transition,” to the return of the post-communist states to Europe, and attempts to come to terms with post-socialism and the onset of communist-era nostalgia. The rise of a more assertive Russia, the conflict in Ukraine, and the current deepening crisis in Russian-Western relations has further added to uncertainty about the future and generated competing narratives about the meaning and stability of the so-called post-Cold War order and the challenges associated with statehood and community building.

To reflect on these developments, we have launched Harriman at 70, a lecture series that brings together a number of distinguished members of the Harriman community. The series focuses on key issues in the emerging “post-post” Cold War period, the state of the region, the growing range of experiences encapsulated in the post-communist world, and our scholarly approaches to their evolution.

This issue of *Harriman Magazine* publishes the work of two scholars who have participated in the series. Sophie Pinkham, a 2012 MARS-REERS alumna currently preparing her Ph.D. dissertation in Columbia’s Department of Slavic Languages, shares astute observations from post-Maidan Ukraine in her piece, “New Year in Kiev,” excerpted from the final section of her book, *Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2016). Sophie lived and worked in Ukraine from 2008 until 2010, researching women’s rights, AIDS activism, and harm reduction for the Open Society Institute. The piece details her return to the capital in 2014, at the height of the Ukraine crisis. We are also delighted to feature an essay by former Harriman director Mark von Hagen, who is now director of the Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies at Arizona State University. By tracing the arc of his undergraduate studies at Georgetown University, his graduate studies at Indiana and Stanford universities, and his academic careers at Columbia and ASU, Mark at the same time charts the evolution in Soviet and area studies and what it means to be an academic historian.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Cooley'.

Alexander Cooley  
Director, Harriman Institute





4



14

## SPECIAL FEATURES

Harriman at 70

4

[New Year in Kiev](#)

By Sophie Pinkham

Pinkham returns to Kiev in the aftermath of Euromaidan, as war rages to the East. Conversations with friends turn on the war, volunteer fighters, prisoners of war, weapons, and even toy rifles. Excerpted from her book *Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine*.

28

[From Cold War to Civilizational Conflict:  
On Learning, Relearning, and Unlearning](#)

By Mark von Hagen

Former Harriman Institute director Mark von Hagen reflects on his education and experience as a historian and scholar of the Soviet period and university administrator and on how the field of Soviet studies and academia have changed since the end of the Cold War.

14

[Without a Country: The Changing  
Face of Human Rights](#)

[Dmitry Dubrovsky in Profile](#)

By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

In 2015, human rights activist Dmitry Dubrovsky was dismissed from his teaching position at St. Petersburg State University's Smolny College. Unable to remain in Russia, he navigates life in exile and wonders where to go next.

20

[The Disappearance of Fear  
A Profile of Ann Cooper](#)

By Ronald Meyer

First Moscow bureau chief for National Public Radio in 1986–91, Ann Cooper is for many the “voice” of perestroika. Cooper arrived at Columbia in 2006 to head the broadcast division after eight years as executive director at the Committee to Protect Journalists. Her expertise in the refugee crisis dates back to her tour of duty as NPR correspondent in Johannesburg in the 1990s.



20

42

[Negotiating Transition](#)  
[Jenik Radon's Quest to Help](#)  
[Developing Countries](#)  
 By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

A corporate lawyer with his own international practice, Radon has traveled to 105 of the world's 195 countries and lectured and worked in about sixty of them. He cofounded the Afghanistan Relief Committee; wrote the privatization laws of Estonia, Georgia, and Poland; and wrote Nepal's interim peace constitution. He also founded Columbia's Eesti Fellowship, the first public service internship program allowing U.S. students to work in the USSR, and has won SIPA's "Top Five" teaching award twice.



28

50

[Russian Political Poetry in the](#)  
[Twenty-First Century](#)  
 By Lev Oborin

Political poetry of the final Soviet decades was largely dedicated to escaping "policy": politics was not up for discussion. Contemporary political poetry in Russia has inherited this defensive stance. Leftist activism and poetry have once again appeared on stage and sparked domestic and international interest.



50

60

[In Memoriam](#)

63

[Alumni & Postdoc Notes](#)

66

[Urban Poetry](#)  
 By Mark Serman

69

[Giving to Harriman](#)



**ВОГОНЬ НЕ ЗАПЕКЛИХ  
ПЕЧЕ**

#Sociopath

Taras Shevchenko from the series *Icons of the Revolution* by Sociopath (2014). The text is from Shevchenko's poem "Hamaliya": "Fire does not burn those tempered by flames."



# NEW YEAR IN KIEV

BY SOPHIE  
PINKHAM

**A**s the months of fighting wore on, I got used to thinking of Ukraine as a war zone, a landscape strewn with corpses, a place where people did terrible things to each other. But when I returned in December 2014, the Kiev airport's arrivals hall was the same as usual. For a moment I thought that maybe everything hadn't gone to hell after all.

Then I heard a group of men on the other side of the customs booth singing the Ukrainian national anthem.

*Souls and bodies we'll lay down for our freedom*

"Listen to how soulfully they sing!" said a middle-aged woman standing behind me in line. She'd been speaking Russian with her grown daughter, but now she started drifting into a mix of Russian and Ukrainian. "Can you imagine them singing the Russian national anthem in Sheremetyevo?" Sheremetyevo is an international airport in Moscow.

Her daughter murmured in agreement.

*Glory to Ukraine!  
Glory to heroes!*

"Ukraine has so many beautiful things, doesn't it?" the mother mused. "Like sarafans." A sarafan is a traditional dress, a bit like a jumper.

"My ears ached on the plane, the whole way," the daughter said.

"Why didn't you put drops in?"

*Glory to Ukraine!  
Glory to heroes!*

"Ukraine is a European country," the mother said happily. By the time we made it past customs, the singing patriots had dispersed.

On the way into the city, I passed the big soccer ball that had been placed there in honor of the Eurocup. It was right next to the Kiev city limits sign, which had the words HERO-CITY above it: this was the official Soviet designation for the cities that had suffered most during the Second World War. Graffiti along the highway shouted, THIS IS OUR GOD-GIVEN COUNTRY! My driver turned up the volume on the radio every time the news came on. I'd decided that my old apartment on Bohdan Khmelnytsky had become uninhabitable, so I was staying with Alik. It was already dark when I arrived at his apartment in Podil. He heated up a carrot "cutlet" for me—a vegetarian variation on the Eastern European staple, the kotlet, a meat patty made of ground meat, breadcrumbs, eggs, and onion.

"Just like Tolstoy ate," Alik told me. "He invented them."

Like Tolstoy, Alik was a pacifist: he couldn't understand why anyone was

volunteering to fight, especially people with children.

Any mention of the war made him snarl with anger and disgust. Alik was a humanitarian; he had no interest in national ideas.

Alik took me to visit his friend Jacques, a French artist who'd been living in Kiev for a year. Long-haired and skinny, in white jeans and huge plush slippers bought at a market stall, Jacques talked about every kind of event with the same sarcastic, self-deprecating humor. He told us about his love interest; the night before, he said, they'd had a whole bottle of vodka, but she still wouldn't sleep with him. In the same tone of amusement and feigned outrage, Jacques spoke about his experience of Maidan. He'd moved to Kiev just after the protests started, and he'd been living right off Khreshchatyk Street, on Ivan Franko Square. When the barricades went up, he'd been almost trapped in his apartment. Soon he didn't want to leave anyway, because of all the fires and explosions. Snipers were shooting from just above his building. "I mean, fuck, man," he kept saying, as if he were complaining about a traffic jam or being kept on hold while he called customer service.

Now Jacques was back to the expat good life, in a huge underpriced apartment with mirrored walls and ceilings and northern and southern views. The revolution had caused some stress, but the resulting collapse of the Ukrainian currency had made

Excerpted from *Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine* by Sophie Pinkham. © 2016 by Sophie Pinkham. Used with permission of the publisher, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. All rights reserved.



Director Alexander Cooley and Sophie Pinkham in the director's office before the Harriman book launch (November 14, 2016)

the expat good life even better. Jacques said that he liked Ukraine because it was a really free country, not like France or England or the United States. In Western Europe, he said, there were too many rules, and everyone was always asking questions. Here you could do as you pleased, especially if you were an expat. He said he was working on a nude portrait of Trotsky's great-granddaughter.

**THE OPERA** was decorated with a huge banner that said WE WELCOME THE HEROES OF ATO. (Everyone referred to the antiterrorist operation by its initials.) Despite this warm reception, many would-be heroes were still wearing their masks. At the Christmas fair on St. Sophia Square, Santas posed for cash while men in camouflage and balaclavas collected money for the Azov Battalion, the volunteer battalion with the strongest neo-Nazi tendencies. The previous summer Azov members had told the Guardian that once the war in the east was over, they'd "bring the fight to Kiev," and that they wanted to

install a strong military leader, perhaps a dictator. They didn't think it would be very hard. "What are the police going to do?" asked one Azov fighter. "They couldn't do anything against the peaceful protesters on Maidan; they'll hardly withstand armed fighting units." Azov used a modified version of the Nazi-era Wolf's Hook as their insignia; like the ultranationalists of the 1990s, they said it represented the words "Idea of the Nation." Azov was funded by Ukraine's most prominent Jewish oligarch, Igor Kolomoysky. Nothing was surprising in Ukraine anymore.

**MY OLD FRIEND ZAKHAR**, the proprietor of the underground art gallery-garage, invited me over to his house. I took a taxi; at the new exchange rate, I was suddenly very rich.

When I arrived, Zakhar and a friend were watching an American romantic comedy dubbed into Russian. We were soon joined by Zakhar's long-suffering girlfriend, Alla.

"What's new?" I asked, though I knew this was a fraught question.


"I have no news," Zakhar answered, in his usual bantering, slightly deranged tone. "I haven't done anything for an entire year—that's a record for me. I've just been monitoring. During Maidan I lived in the gallery so I could monitor the revolution more closely." (His gallery was a short walk from Maidan.)

"Sometimes I didn't leave the garage for three days at a time. Alla was the only one who knew I was there—she'd come and make me go outside. You could eat well on Maidan! We used to line up for borscht, didn't we, Alla?"

Alla rolled her eyes.

Zakhar and his friend, an unpleasant man with a pointed nose, beady eyes, and long, greasy hair, started talking about the war. Everything came down to money, they said. People joined the Azov Battalion for the money—and no wonder, now that there were no jobs. Zakhar and his friend discussed a rumor they'd heard about how you could make big money by buying weapons in the ATO zone and selling them for twice as much in Kiev. The problem with this





otherwise appealing plan was that it required going to the ATO zone.

Ukraine had reintroduced conscription the previous May, and a new wave of troop mobilization had just been announced for February.

“Don’t you understand that we could be drafted at any time?” Zakhar’s friend said, his voice shrill with anxiety. “I don’t want to be cannon fodder!”

“You think they want me in the army?” Zakhar said ironically.

Alla and I laughed at the idea of drafting an emotionally unstable, alcoholic bohemian with a penchant for public nudity. “They could take you,” his friend insisted. “They can take anyone, whenever they want.”

**ALTHOUGH MANY PEOPLE SPOKE** loudly about their support for the war, far fewer intended to go and fight. Friends shared strategies to avoid being drafted; to many, the draft seemed like a form of human sacrifice. An estimated fifteen hundred servicemen had been killed during nine months of fighting, but evidence suggested that the real death toll was higher, that the government was trying to conceal the scale of its losses.

Misha Friedman, a Russian-American photographer, invited me to meet Sveta, a longtime AIDS activist from Donetsk, and her husband, Aleksei, a fighter who’d just been released in a pre-New Year’s prisoner exchange. Both Sveta and Aleksei were HIV-positive former drug users. When Sveta had started her AIDS NGO, Aleksei had been on the board of directors, but he’d soon grown tired of the paperwork and become a mechanic. For him the war was personal: he’d lost his apartment in Donetsk, his work, his hometown. He volunteered early for the Donbas

Battalion, which was on the front lines from the beginning. When he joined up, it wasn’t even a proper battalion, just a band of patriots without a name.

Misha had told me we were going to a party for the released prisoners, and I’d imagined a big event, a noisy hall full of men in fatigues. But it was only a few close-mouthed couples at Il Patio, a faux-Italian chain restaurant on Bessarabska Square. Aleksei had the high, stripped cheekbones that you often see among people who take HIV medications, which change the distribution of body fat. With his glassy, beatific green eyes, he was beautiful in a way peculiar to some drug users and people with HIV or TB, people who seem to have one foot in the next world. He and Sveta were already on intimate terms with Misha; they’d even let him photograph them in bed on the first night after their reunion, as they lay in the dark, staring at their phones and frowning. I had the impression that they were relieved to have an intermediary.

In August, Aleksei had been captured in the battle of Ilovaisk, a strategically important town between Donetsk and Luhansk. Pro-Ukrainian volunteer battalions managed to raise their flag in Ilovaisk without any casualties and were said to be clearing the city of terrorists. But then the separatists appeared. There were battles in the streets, with many casualties. Ukraine promised to send reinforcements, government troops, but these never arrived: a terrible betrayal. The pro-Ukrainian fighters in the city were surrounded. After several days, the separatists agreed to allow them to retreat via a “humanitarian corridor,” but the retreating battalions were ambushed, killed, and captured. Survivors reported seeing not only

***Ukraine promised to send reinforcements, government troops, but these never arrived: a terrible betrayal. The pro-Ukrainian fighters in the city were surrounded.***

separatists but also Russian troops. Before Ilovaisk, it had seemed that Ukraine was about to win the war.

As prisoners, Aleksei and his fellow fighters had been beaten, made to confess, and paraded for Russian news cameras. Eastern Ukrainians like Aleksei usually tried to hide their origins, so that the separatists could think them natural enemies from the west rather than traitors, who might be treated even more cruelly. But the separatists weren’t always strict. People in Ilovaisk had written letters asking the Donetsk People’s Republic for POW labor, and the people’s republic had complied. Aleksei and some other POWs were assigned to do repairs in a woman’s house. The woman felt sorry for Aleksei, and let him Skype with Sveta.

The families of the exchanged prisoners hadn’t been informed in advance about where the men would arrive; President Poroshenko kept all the joy for himself, having the prisoners deposited on an airstrip at night. He was the only one photographed greeting them. The wives were furious.

Now Sveta looked anxious and happy, her eyes open as fresh wounds. Aleksei was drinking a half-liter glass of



Pinkham holding a copy of her *Black Square*

beer; he had been sober for ten years before the war, but he'd gotten smashed on his first night as a free man.

During his four months in captivity, Aleksei had shared a bed with a friend, who was also at the table with us. The friend was only twenty-four, and his fur hat with its earflaps askew made him look like a little rabbit. He and Aleksei and the other men muttered in their guttural Donetsk accents, showing each other war videos on their phones and discussing military equipment. Aleksei's eyes lit up at the talk of weapons.

"I don't think he'll be a mechanic again," Sveta said. "Look—he already misses his gun." I made some anodyne comment about the need to organize help for the fighters who returned with PTSD; Sveta snorted. No one was going to help these men.

Il Patio closed, and the party was over. I arrived at the Maidan metro station just before the train stopped running for the night. Men in camouflage and balaclavas were wrapping up a drunken fight

out front; empty beer bottles were scattered on the ground.

**NOT ALL THE VOLUNTEER FIGHTERS** were motivated by political ideals or national ideas. For a certain type of man, the war offered an opportunity to recapture a sense of potency and significance, whatever the cost. In a society in which so many men were adrift, war had appeal, especially if it paid.

Oleksandr Techinskiy, who made the Maidan documentary *All Things Ablaze* and went on to work with a number of foreign journalists covering the war in eastern Ukraine, put it more cynically, saying that many of the guys who were fighting were just "looking for an excuse to get away from their wives, stop showering or changing their underwear, and get drunk."

Once the country had taken up arms, it was hard to put them down. "People have gone over to war now," Techinskiy told me. "They've gotten used to it, they're comfortable there, and they don't want to leave."

"At one point I was in Piski, near Donetsk, with Right Sector. A Right Sector guy asked a Right Sector girl if she had ten towels. 'I do,' she said, 'but what will you give me in return?' He traded her a hand grenade—an F1, a kind of grenade that was invented in the Second World War."

Weapons became playthings, sometimes literally: two Luhansk separatists and a couple of bystanders were injured after the separatists tried to bowl with grenades. Weapons offered relief first from the boredom of everyday life, and then from the boredom of war.

"You spend hours just sitting around waiting, with nothing to do," Techinskiy told me. "Fighters are

fun people—they know how to keep themselves occupied. One fighter once said to me, 'Oh! You're a journalist! Want to throw a fly?'" *Mukha*, or "fly," is the nickname for a Russian rocket launcher developed in the early 1970s. When Techinskiy declined, the fighter shot the rocket launcher himself, just to keep busy.

**OLENA**, an acquaintance from my public health days, told me straight off that the last year had almost killed her. During Maidan she had coordinated medical aid to the wounded, sending people to clinics and buying medicine, equipment, and prosthetic limbs. In August her husband, father of her nine-year-old daughter, had been drafted. Olena hadn't wanted him to join up. She knew that there were plenty of ways to get out of the draft; after all, this was Ukraine, still one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Even military personnel, she'd heard, were managing to escape mobilization. But Olena's husband said he wanted to defend his country. He had no real military training, only some theoretical knowledge of artillery.

The impoverished Ukrainian army provided almost no equipment to its conscripts, so Olena and her husband scrambled to purchase several thousand dollars' worth of gear and medical supplies with assistance from friends and colleagues. Through personal connections, Olena was able to obtain prescription painkillers, another thing the government didn't provide. (The government was shocked to discover that because of its own labyrinthine requirements for opioid prescription, it was unable to procure painkillers for its own soldiers.) After just three weeks of training, Olena's husband was sent to

Donbas. When Olena and I met, he had been on duty for three months without any break or hope of rotation. He was already used to killing people, and to people trying to kill him.

Olena said that Maidan had “crystallized” civil society, proving that self-organization was far more efficient than anything orchestrated by the corrupt, useless, badly managed state. But the story was no longer an inspiring one. Olena and her husband had been lucky to have the money and connections to get the necessary equipment and supplies, but they couldn’t do anything about the broader problems: lack of equipment, training, and experience, and incompetent officers who exposed soldiers to unnecessary risks.

“Many people are killed because of pure stupidity,” Olena told me. “My husband and many others are hostages of this situation—they cannot escape. Or if they do, they’ll be criminals.” Her husband was one of the many people who predicted that the soldiers would come back very angry at the government, with their own military equipment and fighting experience, and that Ukraine would become even more dangerous than it had been in the 1990s.

#### ALIK’S FRIEND SPINNER

(pronounced “Spee-nehr”) came over to visit. Spinner was an extremely good-looking raver.

He was thirty but seemed younger, with a boyish face, yellow-tinted glasses, baggy camouflage pants, and brightly colored high tops. His outfit was perfectly normal for a raver, and I wouldn’t have looked at it twice in New York in the 1990s. But in Kiev in 2014, when every underpass held a cluster of shady, unshaven men in fatigues,

Spinner’s outfit seemed more than outdated.

Spinner stood in Alik’s living room, looking in the mirror, admiring himself, practicing his dance moves. “I’d like a car and an apartment on Bessarabska Square and a pistol,” he said dreamily.

“Why do you want a pistol?” I asked.

“I like pistols,” he said. “There are weapons everywhere now.” “The nineties are coming back,” Alik said.

“We have to be ready!” Spinner laughed.

#### AT A TRENDY NEW CAFÉ off

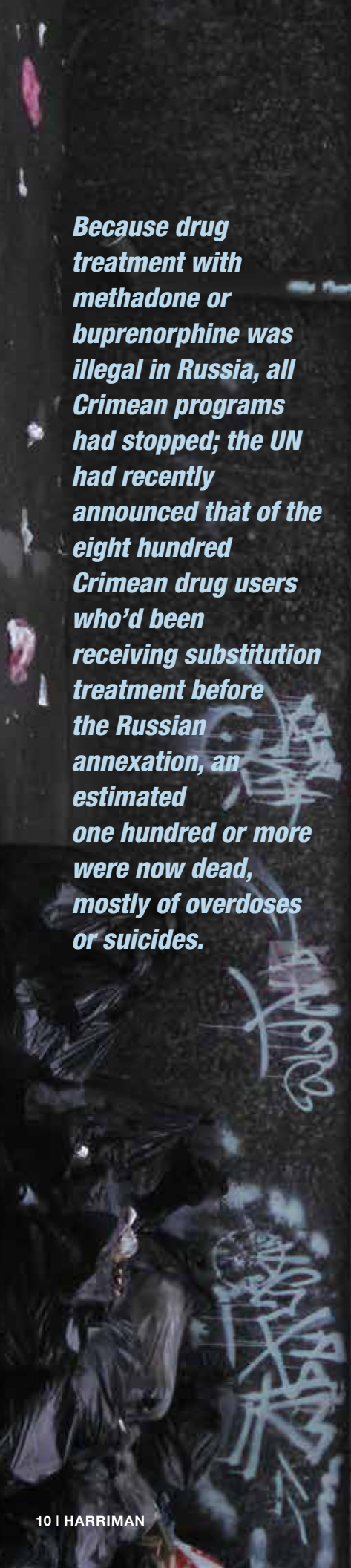
Khreshchatyk Street, I interviewed Nikita, the eccentric harm reductionist I’d first encountered several years earlier. Huge, broad-shouldered, and bald, in a red-and-white-checked cowboy shirt, Nikita was out of place, out of proportion, out of time. American Christmas music was playing in the background: Bing Crosby’s “Jingle Bells,” “Last Christmas” by Wham!, and “All I Want for Christmas Is You.” Nikita looked around with impatience, declined a coffee, and told me about the Soviet Union.

“We had a very tough country. You had to wait online for two hours to buy underwear. There was food to eat in the capitals—in Kiev, Moscow, Tallinn. But not in other places. Every Saturday and Sunday people rode on the train to buy sausage. On Sundays in Kiev, you’d have to wait in line for four hours. People stood and read, wrote whole dissertations, while they waited to buy sausage.” He laughed. “So anyone who robbed the government was a saint. Now it’s the same way.”

He told me about working as a black marketeer in the 1980s. “I’d go up to a foreigner who’s visiting. ‘How’s life, kid? Give me a T-shirt or some

***“Many people are killed because of pure stupidity,” Olena told me. “My husband and many others are hostages of this situation—they cannot escape.”***





***Because drug treatment with methadone or buprenorphine was illegal in Russia, all Crimean programs had stopped; the UN had recently announced that of the eight hundred Crimean drug users who'd been receiving substitution treatment before the Russian annexation, an estimated one hundred or more were now dead, mostly of overdoses or suicides.***

underwear. Or dollars.' For dollars you got eight years.

"Russia wants to bring us back to Soviet times. But Putin has given us a nation. I used to be closer to Donetsk in spirit. But now I'm not close to Donetsk at all. I would never invite Putin to come to Ukraine. I'd get a gun and shoot him instead." He said this in a very casual way.

I asked him about anti-Semitism in Right Sector and Svoboda. (Nikita was half Jewish, which was part of the reason I'd wanted to interview him.)

"Svoboda works for the KGB," he said. "What makes you *think* so?" I asked. "I don't *think* so. I *know*."

"You *know*?"

"I'm an old Jew, what do you want? I know everything," he said, and laughed.

Because drug treatment with methadone or buprenorphine was illegal in Russia, all Crimean programs had stopped; the UN had recently announced that of the eight hundred Crimean drug users who'd been receiving substitution treatment before the Russian annexation, an estimated one hundred or more were now dead, mostly of overdoses or suicides. Others had moved to parts of Ukraine where treatment was still available. There were drug users and HIV-positive people among the refugees from the east as well. Nikita had new harm reduction clients, but he didn't like them much.

"The good ones from the east or Crimea are somewhere else, doing something else," he said. "They're not the ones who came here. The ones I see want to take with both hands—they have Russia in their heads." In his opinion, although all drug users were tricky, the HIV patients and drug users who had moved to Kiev from

Crimea or the east were more cunning, more dishonest than Kiev natives.

"People from Donetsk come and think we owe them something. So you're a drug addict, so you're HIV positive—go ask Russia for help. Why are you coming here? Maybe you shouldn't have been waving those flags and begging Putin to come."

**ON NEW YEAR'S EVE**, Alina and I went to visit Alina's colleague, Yury, and his wife, Yulia. (Alik had disappeared.) Yury and Yulia were good-looking, charming, successful people in their thirties, with a beautiful blond son about five years old. They lived just off St. Sophia Square, in a high-ceilinged, Euro-renovated apartment furnished with white IKEA furniture.

We drank champagne and ate ham that Yury's mother had baked.

"Why don't you show us your present?" Yury asked his shy son, who was playing quietly in the corner. The boy's eyes widened, and he ran into his bedroom. When he came back, he was holding a huge black air rifle, as big as his body.

"He was begging for it for six months!" Yury said, laughing. "It's real—it works. But there are no bullets in it, of course."

Kiev residents traditionally celebrated New Year's Eve on Maidan, but now there were too many painful memories; the festivities had been moved to St. Sophia Square. When it was almost midnight, we went downstairs. Bundled in our parkas, scarves, hoods, hats, and gloves, watching our breath in the night air, several hundred of us greeted a new year. Everyone was eager to chase away the old one.



Street graffiti in Kiev. Photo by Sophie Pinkham

In the morning, Kiev's snowdrifts were strewn with empty bottles of cheap champagne. ("Soviet Champagne" was one of the most popular brands.) While nursing my hangover, I saw on Twitter that Evgeny Feldman, a Russian photographer, was at the annual torch march in honor of the nationalist hero Stepan Bandera's birthday, January 1. Feldman's pictures were ominous; a mass of torches burning in the night, the marchers almost invisible. I headed to Maidan.

A man was leading a pony through the Maidan underpass, and drunk men in Winnie-the-Pooh costumes were propositioning laughing women who shoved them away. The menacing, torch-wielding hordes of Feldman's photos, which had already been retweeted again and again by those who were concerned, or who wished to seem concerned, about Ukraine's far right, had dispersed. All that remained was a small group of flag wavers. About half the flags

were blue and gold Sloboda flags; the others were red and black, for Right Sector and other nationalist groups. Passing clusters of men in fatigues, some of them in balaclavas, I stopped behind a family.

"It's not too scary for you?" the father asked his children, laughing. The children seemed unconcerned. Their father was showing them a historical curiosity, a zoo exhibit.


A group of pensioners were wearing traditional Ukrainian clothing; one babushka wore a woven headband covered in pompoms and little pins with portraits of Bandera. Small children slid across the icy cobblestones. An attractive blond woman had Right Sector's black and red flag painted on her cheek.

"Glory to Ukraine!" the group shouted. Only a couple of people yelled "Death to enemies," and they didn't sound convinced.

On a small stage, a pretty woman stood and smiled radiantly, holding a portrait of Bandera. An old man

held a Ukrainian flag and a portrait of Taras Shevchenko. An Orthodox priest made a speech, and then everyone sang a song. As the rally's speakers stepped down from their little stage, they clustered around Oleh Tyahnybok, the leader of Sloboda, asking him to pose for photos with them. Robust and photogenic, he towered over the crowd. He looked like a real politician, but if this was his constituency, he was in trouble. The crowd was full of people who were one-eyed, disabled, elderly, visibly marginal. It was hard to take them seriously as a neofascist menace. Feldman, the journalist, said the march was smaller than it had been in previous years; maybe this was because the young and able-bodied had gone to fight in the east.

On the steps leading up to the square, some young men in camouflage were clowning around, waving flags and singing some kind of nationalist limerick. Suddenly a few of them began to shout "Glory



***“All this will pass.  
Suffering, sorrow,  
blood, hunger, and  
mass death. The sword  
will vanish and the  
stars will remain . . .”***

**— Mikhail Bulgakov, *White Guard***

to Ukraine! Glory to heroes! Death to enemies!” the guttural chant tearing out of their throats. This time it sounded genuinely frightening.

**AT THE BULGAKOV MUSEUM,** housed in the novelist’s childhood home, a sign on the door announced, “The entrance into our museum of individuals who support the military occupation of Ukraine is not desired.” Inside, one of my fellow tourists was wearing a Right Sector scarf.

I could tell that the tour guide, a well-kept woman in her fifties or sixties, was the kind of person for whom literature is a religion and a favorite writer is a messiah. Though she spoke quickly, her voice had the modulation of a professional actress’s, and she looked very dignified in her black cardigan sweater with its grid of thin white lines. It was clear that current events had inspired her with new fervor, new grief.

Speaking Russian, she told us grimly that by 1918 this house had become a communal apartment; Bulgakov couldn’t go home again. The world of his childhood had vanished. He lived in Moscow for a while but soon returned to Kiev, because it was freer there.

“That was a hundred years ago,” she said meaningfully.

She led us through the living room, where there were two pianos and a Christmas tree—which would not, she pointed out, have been allowed during Soviet times—and then into a painstaking reconstruction of Bulgakov’s sisters’ bedroom. With great ceremony, she opened the wardrobe to reveal an apartment door with a tablet that read “50.” This was apartment 50 on

302-bis Bolshaya Sadovaya Street, the Moscow communal apartment where Bulgakov lived with his first wife. He hated the apartment and made it the site of the dance of the unclean spirits in *The Master and Margarita*.

We walked through the wardrobe into Bulgakov’s room in Moscow, then into a final sitting room, back in Kiev. The guide lined us up in two rows, shortest to tallest, in front of a mirror.

“This room can never be peaceful,” she said, “because it is full of doors. There is another room where peace can be attained, but we cannot reach it; I can only show it to you.”

She turned off the lights and pressed a switch. The mirror became a window, and instead of our own reflection, we saw a ghostly white bed, a bookshelf, and a cluttered writing desk that seemed to be suspended in the air, trembling. We gasped. Then she flipped another switch, and we saw nothing but stars.

“Why do we look at the night sky so seldom?” she asked. She was referring to the famous last lines of *White Guard*:

All this will pass. Suffering, sorrow, blood, hunger, and mass death. The sword will vanish and the stars will remain, long after the shadows of our bodies and our affairs are gone from the earth. There isn’t any man who doesn’t know this. So why are we so reluctant to turn our gaze to the stars?

“Thank you for coming to our beautiful city,” our guide concluded, “where, as you can see, there are no fascists or Banderites.” ■





Graffiti at the Bulgakov Museum (Tothkaroj / CC-BY-SA-2.0)



**IN HER BOOK**, *Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, Sophie Pinkham uses the lens of public health, specifically HIV prevention and advocacy, to organize the story of her decade in Siberia and Ukraine. After graduating from Yale in 2004, Pinkham traveled to Siberia as a Red Cross volunteer to work in HIV/AIDS education and prevention. She continued her work in the HIV field in Russia as a representative of George Soros's Open Society Institute, moving to Ukraine in 2008 to study Russian and collect oral histories about women's rights and AIDS activism in Ukraine. In her work with activists, many of whom are former injection drug users, Pinkham comes into contact with young men and women only slightly older than herself, members of the first generation to come of age in post-Soviet society. And not only activists and doctors, but also musicians, artists, and teachers, thus bringing into focus a youth culture flourishing amidst collapse, ruin, and war. The tension between keen observation of post-Soviet life and culture and the practicalities

of working for a nongovernmental agency, including facing the negative attitude toward international donors and their prescriptive policies, propels Pinkham's narrative and keeps it from being mere travelogue or memoir. Instead, *Black Square* perfectly captures the decade in all its manifest absurdity, poignancy, and tragedy.

"New Year in Kiev," from the book's final section entitled "War and Peace," recounts Pinkham's return to the capital city, but now conversations with friends frequently touch on war, volunteer fighters, prisoners of war, weapons, and even toy rifles. The chapter ends appropriately enough with an eerie visit to the Mikhail Bulgakov Museum in Kiev, during which the guide quotes lines from the civil war-era novel, *White Guard*. Bulgakov's words, written in the 1920s at the beginning of the writer's career, remain as effective and moving almost a century later.

One final note: The transliteration of proper names in "New Year in Kiev" follows that of the book publication; for example, *Kiev* and not *Kyiv*.

Sophie Pinkham, a Ph.D. candidate in Columbia's Department of Slavic Languages, is writing her dissertation, tentatively titled, "Sanctuaries, Strolls, and Slander: The Pushkin Myth after the Thaw." She is a 2012 graduate of the Harriman Institute's MARS-REERS program, for which she wrote the thesis "Blatnaia pesnia, the Odessa Myth, and Alternatives to Utopia in Soviet Song." Pinkham's writing has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, *n+1*, the *London Review of Books*, and *Foreign Affairs*.

The Harriman Institute hosted a book launch for *Black Square* on November 14, 2016, as part of the Harriman at 70 lecture series.



*Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine*  
Sophie Pinkham  
W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. (2016)  
ISBN 978-0-393-24797-8

Dubrovsky (*right*) with Vladimir Kostushev, professor, Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, serving as expert witnesses at the criminal trial against the street art group Voina, known for its provocative and politically charged performance art. All photographs in this article by Vladimir Telegin





BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

# ***WITHOUT A COUNTRY: THE CHANGING FACE OF HUMAN RIGHTS***

DMITRY DUBROVSKY IN PROFILE

It's an unseasonably warm day in mid-November, one week after the United States elected Donald Trump to the presidency, and I'm with Dmitry Dubrovsky, associate research scholar at the Harriman Institute and an Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund fellow, on a small playground near Columbia University. Dubrovsky, dressed in a light-blue seersucker jacket and dark blue jeans, is trying to stop his





Dubrovsky pondering the case, with Voina's founding member Oleg Vorotnikov behind bars in the background



three-year-old from injuring himself with a giant stick, and telling me, in rapid-fire Russian, about the implications of the recent election for the international human rights landscape. Dubrovsky, a historian by training, taught human rights at St. Petersburg State University's Smolny College for ten years until, in March 2015, he was dismissed and his position permanently eliminated. He believes his dismissal was related to his criticism of the university and the Russian government. (The university's official stance was that Dubrovsky failed to sign a contract in a timely manner. University officials later decided to eliminate his old position altogether.)

Dubrovsky, who came to the Harriman Institute in the fall of 2015, has been teaching and researching the trajectory of change in the rhetoric and practice of human rights from the USSR to the Russian Federation. Human rights discourse in academia, he says, has become much more isolated, xenophobic, and conservative since the later years of the USSR, and the Russian government has coopted and appropriated human rights rhetoric in order to promote its own geopolitical interests. The most prominent example of this, he says, is the 2014 annexation of Crimea, which the Kremlin justified as retaliation against purported fascist tendencies of the new leadership in Kyiv.

As recently as three years ago, Russia seemed alone in its quest for national isolationism and a return to traditional values. But since Dubrovsky's arrival in the United States, the geopolitical landscape has changed tremendously—the United Kingdom has voted to leave the European Union, right-wing governments have come to power in both Poland and Hungary, and nationalist movements are gaining prominence in France, Germany, and Austria (where a right-wing leader was defeated by a narrow margin in December 2016). After the election of Donald Trump, who has embraced international despots throughout his campaign and has been nominating controversial right-leaning candidates to his cabinet, tides in the U.S. have shifted, too.

With his term at the Harriman Institute ending in June, Dubrovsky wonders where he'll go next. "After this election," he says, looking into the distance, "it feels like there is no place left."

Born in Leningrad in 1970, Dubrovsky came of age in the final years of the Soviet Union. Aside from a few isolated experiences he had no involvement in the human rights sphere until his early thirties. As a teenager he was an avid guitar player, an archeology enthusiast, and a leader of the Komsomol (the Communist Party's youth organization).

*Dubrovsky lost consciousness and later awoke inside, on the floor, his eyes level with rows of police boots.*

When he was sixteen, he traveled to Tajikistan to work on an archeological dig. There he watched as the archeologists—“refined members of the intelligentsia,” he says—demeaned the Tajik workers. Having grown up in ethnically homogeneous Leningrad, Dubrovsky had no understanding of the concept of racism—he did not even know the word—but was struck by the vast injustices that befell the workers. “Watching these quiet, diffident men, I could not for the life of me understand how anyone could tolerate this disgrace.”

The following year, while working on another dig in central Siberia’s Tuva Republic, Dubrovsky noticed a local ethnic Russian police officer grab a ram from an ethnic Tuvan shepherd and drive away—blatant robbery. Dubrovsky asked the shepherd why he didn’t do something, and the man simply shrugged. “What can I do? Go complain to the police about the policeman?”

Having observed these wrongs, Dubrovsky began to develop a sense of rebellion toward the Soviet order. One warm spring Saturday in 1988, he sat in Leningrad’s Kazan Square playing guitar with a friend, in hopes of earning extra cash, when a group of police officers warned pedestrians to disperse. “This is an unsanctioned rally,” an officer announced. The Democratic Soyuz, an opposition group Dubrovsky knew nothing about, was scheduled to demonstrate. But the demonstrators did not have any posters or signs, so they blended into the crowd. Not knowing their targets, the police began detaining everyone. Dubrovsky could not believe the unfairness. He shouted, “Hello, Soviet democracy!” and was about to run, when an officer grabbed him (his friend escaped with the guitars) and dragged him to an old white police bus. Dubrovsky squirmed, and an officer whacked his head against the bus; he lost consciousness and later awoke inside, on the floor, his eyes level with rows of police boots. (Soon the bus filled with other detainees, including an old woman with her groceries who had been curious about the commotion.) Because he had shouted an “anti-Soviet” slogan, the police deemed him part of the demonstration

and sent in a KGB officer to question him. Somehow the officer knew a lot about his background. “You come from a good family,” the officer said. “Why are you destroying your life?” A few hours later the officers realized Dubrovsky had no connection to the movement and released him.

These incidents alerted the teenage Dubrovsky to the failings of the Soviet system, but they did not propel him to pursue a career in human rights. After serving in Karelia as a radio operator for the Soviet army, he studied central Asian archeology, a “bohemian” profession far removed from the political sphere. By then, the Soviet Union had collapsed, and he was married with a daughter and interested in establishing a peaceful life for his family.

But soon funding for archeological projects, which had been plentiful during Soviet times, diminished, eventually forcing him to leave the field. Dubrovsky enrolled in the European University at St. Petersburg (EUSP), where he completed a master’s degree in 1996 and fulfilled his course requirements for a Ph.D. in ethnography in 1999. He was planning to finish and defend his dissertation, when EUSP unexpectedly invited him to direct a new program on ethnic studies and tolerance. The program attempted to popularize tolerance in the Russian mass media by gaining a comprehensive understanding of propaganda, particularly on the Russian-language Internet, then using the information to create “hate filters” that would make it possible for users to avoid Internet pages with this content. It also administered professional training about ethnic tolerance to state employees and law enforcement officers working with multiethnic societies. It was the first effort of its kind in Russia, and Dubrovsky drafted the mission statement.

For years Dubrovsky and his colleagues had trouble getting professionals to take their tolerance training seriously. The police force declined to participate altogether, and the city government, which had initially approved of the program’s goals, was beginning to adopt the opinion that ethnic minorities themselves were to blame for the negative attitudes toward them—if only they would integrate into Russian culture, they would not evoke so much hatred. In 2004, funding for the project ran out. But soon came another career opportunity: the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Smolny College) of St. Petersburg State University (SPbU) invited Dubrovsky to establish a new program on human rights. The invitation surprised him. Not only had he never taught the subject, but also he had never studied it; at the time, human rights courses were rarely offered outside of law school. “And



From top to bottom: Dubrovsky with supporters of the street art group Voina; Dubrovsky during Voina's trial

*Suddenly he was entrenched in the political sphere he had always wanted to avoid.*

here I was," says Dubrovsky, "being asked to teach it to nonlawyers in a liberal arts setting."

Two months before he started, Dubrovsky heard the news about Nikolai Girenko, a prominent ethnologist and human rights activist who had pioneered the ethnic tolerance and antiracism movement in the Soviet Union. Frequently called as an expert witness, Girenko had testified against many ultranationalists, including three skinheads prosecuted for the murder of an Azerbaijani

street vendor; an ultranationalist newspaper accused of anti-Semitism; and Schultz-88, a radical nationalist-socialist group implicated in a series of hate crimes against non-Slavic-looking pedestrians in St. Petersburg. Then, an ultranationalist group called Russian Republic designated him an "enemy of the Russian People" and posted a death threat on its website. Three days later, on June 19, 2004, Girenko was shot dead through the wooden front door of his St. Petersburg apartment. Subsequently, several neo-Nazi youths, who had been convicted of other hate crimes, were sentenced for his murder.

"It was a very scary moment for our nation," says Dubrovsky. In hopes of continuing Girenko's efforts, Dubrovsky started appearing as an expert witness in various trials and commenting in the media about hate crimes and racism in Russia. Suddenly he was entrenched in the political sphere he had always wanted to avoid.

Smolny College was founded in 1994 by a group of liberal SPbU scholars in collaboration with Bard College (graduates of Smolny's bachelor's program also receive a bachelor's degree from Bard); Smolny was the first liberal arts department in Russia. It operated as an independent platform within the philological institute at SPbU, and, thanks to Bard, which sought grants on its behalf, was well funded by organizations like the Open Society Institute and the MacArthur Foundation. It attracted young, successful, liberal-minded faculty, who initiated programs that would have been unpopular with both Russian society and the Russian government. "When I started there, it was very independent," recalls Dubrovsky.

At the time, Smolny's dean was Nikolay Koposov, a historian who, as one of the college's original founders, encouraged his faculty to participate in public intellectual debate. Dubrovsky embraced this attitude, but his public comments espousing tolerance provoked criticism from some conservative and nationalist groups. Once after condemning a racist incident in the St. Petersburg metro—a metro worker, spotting pickpockets, made an announcement asking passengers to "beware of gypsies"—Dubrovsky was harangued by fascist organizations on social media. They published his photograph, his passport information, and his address, and urged vengeance for the metro worker, who had been docked a month's salary. But, Dubrovsky was not physically harmed. On another occasion, he was assaulted in front of the entrance to his apartment building.





Dubrovsky responding to questions from the media

In 2008, the atmosphere at Smolny started to change. The university appointed a new rector, and, according to Dubrovsky, all its departments faced intensified scrutiny from the administration. The following year SPbU enacted a new regulation that required faculty to show their work to university administrators before submitting it for publication or conference presentations abroad. Dubrovsky criticized the new rule in a comment to the reporter Ellen Barry, who quoted him in the *New York Times*; he says that he was quickly warned by the administration that, due to a new clause in his contract, he could not criticize the university in the press as a university employee (the matter was reported by Al Jazeera in May 2015). Five years later his contract was up for renewal. Dubrovsky had an uneasy feeling.

In March 2015, after a long bureaucratic process, he found himself without a job. St. Petersburg's Human Rights Council, to which Dubrovsky belonged, quickly wrote a letter on his behalf. And more than 15,000 students signed a petition to reinstate him and two other faculty members who had also been let go under controversial circumstances. But Dubrovsky was not reinstated. Instead, the university eliminated his position altogether.

Seeing no professional future in Russian academia, Dubrovsky pursued opportunities abroad. When he first moved to the United States nearly two years ago, Dubrovsky felt that, despite all its problems, he was living in a country that respected human dignity and the rights of its citizens. Since the Cold War, he had always perceived the U.S. as a stabilizing influence in international politics and a counterbalance to Russia and other autocratic regimes that disregard international human rights norms. With President-elect Trump at the helm, he fears for the fate of international institutions and foresees a new world order that will drastically alter the human rights climate. "The danger is that human rights will stop being a part of the global order," he says. "The U.S. is a key player, and if it starts promoting the same rhetoric that Trump and his consultants have used, they will speak the same language as the Russians."

Since the election, Dubrovsky has decided to reshape his research. He is now studying global academia in the face of the changing human rights landscape. "The post-Nuremberg world is facing a crisis," he says. "And it will be a crash test for Western democracy and institutions." ■



# THE DISAPPEARANCE OF FEAR

## A PROFILE OF ANN COOPER

BY RONALD MEYER

**A**nn Cooper (CBS Professor of Professional Practice in International Journalism) joined fellow former Moscow correspondents for the roundtable discussion “Russia Hands,” sponsored by the Overseas Press Club of America and the Harriman Institute, on February 24, 2016. (Video is available on the Harriman website.) Cooper, who referred to her posting in Moscow in 1986–91 as “the good years,” arrived in the capital city as NPR’s first Moscow correspondent. The move to Moscow in late 1986 entailed not only nine months of intensive language lessons and moving halfway across the world, but also learning a new platform—radio. She had received three offers for Moscow postings, but chose NPR because of its national audience. NPR assured Cooper that she would be trained, but she admits, “There wasn’t much training.” She did, however, possess a clear and distinctive voice that was perfect for radio—and fifteen years’ experience as a working journalist in newspapers and magazines. For many of us she remains the “voice” of perestroika.

Neither Cooper nor NPR, however, had foreseen the months the Foreign Ministry would take to process her press credentials, and during this time she worked for The Associated Press. Alone in the AP office one weekend in early 1987, she starts reading reports coming through on the telex that political prisoners were being released from the camps in Perm. Cooper decides to telephone Andrei Sakharov’s apartment to get confirmation of the story, and, as always, Elena Bonner, his wife and protector, answers. Cooper summons all her Russian—and most people will recognize how much more difficult it is to speak in a foreign language over the phone (particularly a bad Soviet phone line) than it is with

your interlocutor in the same room—to tell Bonner that she is receiving reports of political prisoners being released from the camps. Bonner replies that they are hearing the same thing and is about to hang up, saying she needs to keep the line open. Cooper pushes the point and asks whether Bonner can confirm the names that she has collated from the telex, which gets Bonner interested and the conversation continues as Bonner confirms most of the names from reports by the prisoners’ families. Cooper receives confirmation for her story, which goes out on AP—but without a byline because she lacks credentials. Months pass without any word from the Foreign Ministry on her NPR credentials, and, finally, AP applies to have Cooper credentialed with them, believing that NPR’s case will never be resolved. In its infinite wisdom, however, the Foreign Ministry instead approves her NPR application. This little story illustrates quite plainly the importance of personal connections in Gorbachev’s Russia and the illogicality of the omnipresent Soviet bureaucracy.

Cooper refers to the “accident of timing” in regard to her Moscow years—that when she arrived in December 1986 it was still the gray Soviet Union, but that this changed almost immediately with the release of Sakharov and political prisoners such as Lev Timofeyev and Sergei Grigoryants in 1987, among many earth-shattering events. She also credits the year 1987 with two “defining moments” that influenced how she would report the story from Moscow. The first is a series of phone calls made to her home by Russian sources informing her that Fyodor Finkel, a Jewish refusenik who had been on a hunger strike, had received permission to emigrate. Not just one call, but three or four. And it finally dawns on her what has changed:





From top to bottom: In front of Yeltsin's White House a few days after the August 1991 coup attempt failed—remnants of the barricades built by Yeltsin supporters remain on the site; Cooper's press credentials in the Soviet Union as NPR correspondent

“They’re calling me at home.” Russian citizens simply did not call foreign journalists at their home as everyone assumed that the phones would be bugged, just as foreigners never called Russians from their hotel or apartment, but always from a pay phone on the street. (Foreigners instantly became hoarders of two-kopeck pieces for the street pay phones.) When Cooper asks the Russian callers what has changed, has the KGB stopped bugging the phones, the reply is revelatory: “No, but it doesn’t matter anymore.”

The second defining moment is the August 1987 anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the nonaggression treaty between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and the public demonstrations and rally held at the Adam Mickiewicz Monument in Vilnius, Lithuania, despite the Soviet ban on such protests. Cooper attended the demonstration and interviewed participants, whose numbers grew as the day wore on. Cooper was struck by a number of things, including the fact that the public protest was not shut down—as virtually any such attempts at protest had been for decades; people were willing to be interviewed, despite the obvious presence of KGB personnel; there were no arrests; and, finally, the protest was written about in advance in the Soviet press—albeit in a negative light.

These two moments early on in her tenure as Moscow bureau chief led Cooper to the conclusion that the story she most wanted to cover, the story that would define the era, was the “disappearance of fear.” “People were losing their fear and speaking out as never before. It was both exhausting and exhilarating,” she observed. The story could be broken down into many constituent components (economic and political reforms, religious freedom, environmentalism, reclaiming Soviet history)—foreign correspondents and Soviet journalists could barely keep up with breaking events—but on some very basic level it all came down to the disappearance of fear, a theme in many of her stories, and the focus of a long analysis she did for NPR in 1990.

Cooper ends the narrative of her Moscow years with two events from 1991: the Soviet invasion of Lithuania in January that did not succeed in bringing the country back into the Soviet fold, and the failed coup in August. Cooper writes about how the foreign press reported the latter in the volume she coedited, *Russia at the Barricades: Eyewitness Accounts of the August 1991 Coup* (with Victoria Bonnell and Gregory Freidin). From the time

that she received news of the coup, while in Lithuania researching a story on Lithuania's independence campaign, through the uncertain but exciting days of navigating the barricades at the Moscow White House and the return of Mikhail Gorbachev, Cooper chronicles those three days in August that come to an end with an emergency session of the Russian parliament called by Boris Yeltsin. At that session she meets a smiling Lev Timofeyev, the same Timofeyev from that early AP story, who greets her with the words, "We've won." She wants to check the rumors that the tanks are leaving Red Square, but needs to rush home to file her report for NPR's *Morning Edition*. While preparing her report, she receives confirmation from her chauffeur, Volodya, that the tanks are leaving the Kremlin.

In answer to the question, "Were we too romantic in our expectations and reporting in Moscow?" Cooper replies that perhaps the West and Western correspondents covering the final stages of the Soviet Union were too enamored of free speech and the sight of large, peaceful demonstrations. Those were real, dramatic, and important—but so was the economic collapse that was taking place at the same time. And it turned out that for some people, the prospect of hunger, job loss, or devalued rubles was so frightening that those fears began to outweigh the exhilaration over the growing political freedoms people enjoyed.

"I tell my students, learn from me, learn from the Arab Spring and what came after, and what happened after the color revolutions. Now the landscape is littered with examples like these," where euphoric political change is followed by political disappointment, or chaos.

Both the unsuccessful Soviet invasion of Lithuania and the aborted coup seemed to ring the death knell for the Soviet Union, which indeed did dissolve at the end of the year. Today with the hindsight of a quarter century we can see that another narrative was taking shape. Cooper now invites Harriman Director Alex Cooley, author of the essay "Authoritarianism Goes Global: Countering Democratic Norms" (*Journal of Democracy*, 2015), to speak to her classes about this other story, which was completely overshadowed by the hopeful picture of a democratizing Russia, but which has taken center stage today.

Moscow, however, represents only some five years from an extraordinary career as journalist and educator, so I would like to step back and see how Cooper came to be in Moscow at this crucial historical juncture.

When I sat down with Cooper in her office on the sixth floor of Pulitzer Hall, she recounted how her interest in journalism all began with a high school English teacher, who complimented Cooper on her writing and suggested that she enroll in her journalism class. By senior year Cooper was editor of the high school newspaper, and that set her on her career. She majored in journalism as an undergraduate at Iowa State University, which later honored her with its James W. Schwartz Award (1997) for service to journalism, as well as its Alumni Merit Award (2006), in recognition of her "outstanding contributions to human welfare that transcend purely professional accomplishments and bring honor to the university." As Cooper wryly put it when describing her undergraduate days, she "majored in something that doesn't exist anymore: home economics journalism." Journalism, like so many of the professions in the early 1970s, was essentially a man's world.

She landed her first professional job as assistant to the food editor in the summer of 1971 at the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, one of the great regional papers. The rise of the consumer movement, personified by political activist Ralph Nader, highlighted national issues concerning food, including things like fat content, bacterial contamination, and food labeling. Cooper seized the opportunity and was soon doing stories for

***"I tell my students, learn from me, learn from the Arab Spring and what came after, and what happened after the color revolutions."***

the newsroom on food issues and eventually moved to the newsroom full time to devote her energies to consumer reporting in general.

During her tenure at the *Courier-Journal* Cooper attended a weeklong educational seminar organized by the Washington Journalism Center and devoted to consumer reporting. That week in the nation's capital,



Cooper in Perm, interviewing Soviet men who had served in Afghanistan, for a story on how the public was finally beginning to learn about the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. This was in the winter of 1989. She was the first American allowed into Perm since Stalin closed the city. Gorbachev opened the city the following year.

during which she met with a number of prominent figures in the consumer movement, whetted her appetite, and in 1974 she returned for the Center's four-month fellowship, again meeting a number of up-and-coming politicians and newsmakers, including Joe Biden, and falling in love with D.C.

Back in Louisville and looking for a job in D.C., she landed a position with the Capitol Hill News Service, popularly known as the Nader News Service in recognition of the support it received from Nader's Public Citizen, Inc. Capitol Hill News was founded by Peter Gruenstein, a D.C. attorney who had authored a study for Nader on how the press covers Congress, finding that only 27 percent of U.S. dailies had their own correspondents; the majority relied on press releases sent out by the offices of congressional representatives, which hardly presented an unbiased picture. All the Capitol Hill News staff were paid the un princely sum of \$8,000 a year, which, as Cooper noted, "even then was not much money. But we all so believed in what we were doing. And it was a lot of fun."

From the mid-seventies Cooper stayed in D.C., working at Capitol Hill News, *Congressional Quarterly*,

the *Baltimore Sun*, and *National Journal* magazine—all print platforms, which reflected her journalism training. And then she made the move from print to broadcast journalism and traded D.C. for five years in Moscow. In addition to covering events in the Soviet Union, during her Moscow tenure NPR sent Cooper to Beijing to cover Gorbachev's historic rapprochement with China. Shortly before the Gorbachev summit, the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests (1989) began, and when Gorbachev made a hasty departure from Beijing, Cooper stayed on to cover the growing protest movement.

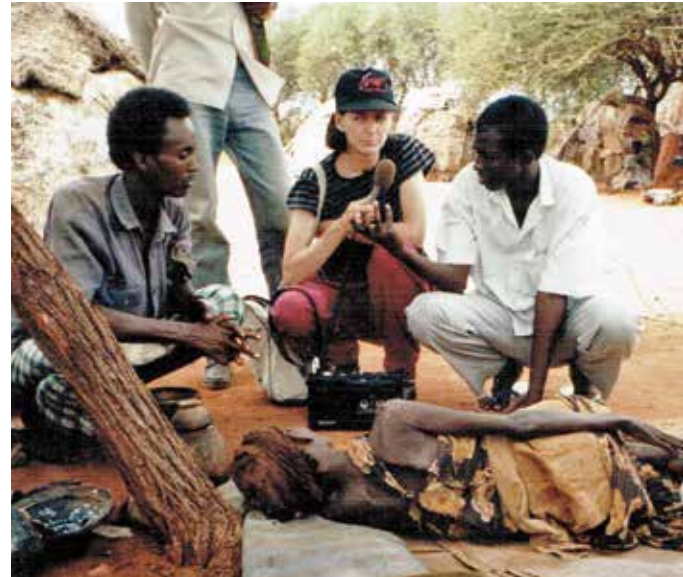
Cooper followed up her Moscow assignment with a tour of duty in Johannesburg. The years 1992 to 1995 saw her traveling throughout Africa writing stories and analysis on the famine and international intervention in Somalia; the first multiparty elections in Mozambique and Malawi; and the crisis and cholera epidemic in Zaire, when hundreds of thousands of Rwandans fled there in 1994. Cooper's coverage of South Africa's first all-race elections in 1994 garnered NPR a duPont-Columbia silver baton for excellence in broadcast journalism.



After almost a decade abroad Cooper moved back to the United States, this time New York City, to take up the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Press Fellowship at the Council on Foreign Relations (1995–96). Cooper studied refugee issues at the Council, a subject of which she had firsthand knowledge from her reporting in Zaire and elsewhere in Africa. During the term of her fellowship she traveled to Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Haiti, Kenya, Rwanda, and Zaire to produce a series of four reports on refugee policy for NPR's *All Things Considered*.

While many expected the refugee crisis to abate after the end of the Cold War, in fact it had grown more acute as the world became ever more unstable, and few could have predicted the vast global refugee crisis of the present day. In many respects, as Cooper has noted, the refugee problem has taken center stage now, and it's a subject that she continues to follow and for which she shares her expertise; see, for example, the interview with Joseph Erbentraut "How the Media Are Reporting on Europe's Refugee Crisis" (*Huffington Post*, October 9, 2015). As she says in that interview: "There's a lot of good coverage being done . . . , but it's not a brand-new crisis. I think one thing that's overlooked somewhat in the coverage of recent weeks is the degree to which some other countries—namely, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey—have been dealing with this massive flow of Syrian refugees for a few years already. . . . Sometimes it feels like the human beings at the center of it become sort of anonymous numbers." While recognizing that fatigue can set in with a story like this and that sometimes it is hard to get people's attention, Cooper concludes her interview by saying, "I think good news organizations don't abandon these stories."

In 1998, after a year of reporting on the United Nations for NPR, Cooper was appointed executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a post she held until coming to Columbia eight years later. She had seen the "tremendous courage of journalists [in the Soviet Union]," as she stated when taking up the position. "It made me want to do what I could to defend journalists in other countries, who work without the press freedom protections that are a hallmark of our American democracy." CPJ brings attention to abuses against the press worldwide and also publishes articles, special reports, and news releases, as well as its annual report, "Attacks on the Press." Cooper has continued to write occasionally for CPJ, most recently a July 2016



*Top:* Cooper in Somalia with two international aid workers at a camp to which people from the countryside came during the famine; the woman on the ground is one of those who came looking for food. *Bottom:* In Spitak, Armenia, a few days after the December 1988 earthquake



essay about Belarusian journalist Pavel Sheremet, who was awarded in absentia the 1998 CPJ International Press Freedom Award at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York (Belarus officials would not allow Sheremet to travel to the U.S.); later that year Cooper presented the award to Sheremet in Minsk. Sheremet, still a CPJ case, was killed by a car bomb in Kyiv this past July. Another CPJ report from 2015, “The Death of Glasnost: How Russia’s Attempt at Openness Failed,” continues the story she began in *Russia at the Barricades*, but now the Russian government rules the air waves, and journalists are ever more at risk.

During her tenure at CPJ, Harvard University’s Nieman Fellows awarded the organization the 2002 Louis Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism: “As increasing numbers of journalists face censure and physical intimidation, the CPJ is a loud and aggressive voice against regimes, governments, and terrorists that seek to threaten human rights and pervert the truth.” CPJ chairman Paul Steiger had this to say on Cooper’s leaving: “Ann has built the programmatic and financial strength of the organization, even as she has become an important public face and voice for the global effort to protect journalists from incarceration and physical violence.”

In 2006 Cooper came to the Columbia School of Journalism to head the school’s broadcast division. At the time journalism students picked a platform (newspaper, magazine, broadcast, digital), whereas now students explore multiple platforms as the profession has changed so much and expectations are that job candidates will have more than one field of expertise. Cooper has been a valued member of the Harriman Institute right from the start. She was tapped early on by Cathy Nepomnyashchy to speak at the institute’s “Legacies” seminar on the press in Russia and share her Moscow experiences, a role that she continues today with director Alex Cooley.

Cooper generously shares her expertise and contacts with the Paul Klebnikov Russian Civil Society Fellowship, which annually brings a working journalist to be in residence at the Harriman Institute. On April 14, 2015, Cooper chaired the panel “Ethics and Approaches to Covering Violent Conflicts,” which featured Klebnikov Fellow Maria Turchenkova, a photojournalist who had been covering the Crimean conflict, and two colleagues from the School of Journalism. (Video is available on the Harriman website.) In her opening remarks Cooper raised some of the problems journalists face in conflict



situations, not the least among them the difficulties for a journalist to cover both sides of the conflict and how you resist being coopted if you choose “to embed” with one party. Cooper takes the story back to the Crimean War in the 1850s—the same war in which Leo Tolstoy served—and William Howard Russell, commonly credited as the first modern war correspondent. Russell’s reports as a civilian journalist to *The Times* of London differed from the usual reports from the field sent by military personnel, who would be unlikely to speak to the unpreparedness of the troops and the poor medical treatment. In fact, Russell’s stories about inadequate medical care prompted a flood of donations and are credited with leading Florence Nightingale to revolutionize battlefield medical procedures, and with ultimately turning the English population against the war. What is the most surprising, perhaps, in this story is how journalists are still finding ways to cope with the issues that Russell singles out in his account of the “first” Crimean war.

Now director of the International Division at the School of Journalism, Cooper remains as much in demand as ever. In 2012 she contributed an article to the *Columbia Journalism Review* on the Putin television organ Russia Today, which had become a favorite platform for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Students in her 2011 “International Newsroom” class had studied RT and other English-language government-sponsored broadcasters. In their findings they quoted Hillary Clinton’s testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States is “engaged in an information war. . . . We are losing that war.” Words that have even more resonance today.

In 2013 Cooper interviewed Richard Engel, NBC chief foreign correspondent and the recipient of that year’s John Chancellor Award for Excellence in Journalism, which recognized his “courage under fire and reporting throughout his career that reflects a deep understanding of the Arab world.” (Video of the interview, “Covering Violence,” is posted to Cooper’s website at the School of Journalism.) It’s a great interview by a seasoned journalist, and not a bad starting point to gain an appreciation of Cooper’s broadcasting chops. Among the many questions: What is a journalist? What differentiates a journalist from an activist? How does one distinguish between what a colleague has termed “random acts of journalism”—for example, a bystander’s iPhone video of some incident that is sold to a broadcast

outlet—and that same material used “journalistically,” that is, to tell the story, to *report* on that same incident, making use of the same video? These are questions that Cooper has been tackling at least since her days at the Committee to Protect Journalists. But once you have come to terms with the abstract initial questions, you need to answer much more practical concerns, from the

***“Ann has built the programmatic and financial strength of CPJ, even as she has become an important public face and voice for the global effort to protect journalists from incarceration and physical violence.”***

***—Paul Steiger***

basic importance of knowing the language and culture when setting off abroad as a journalist, to the more complex issues of journalists’ safety in a world where they can be targeted and murdered for their reporting, kidnapped as hostages, or detained for seemingly no reason. What certainly has changed since William Howard Russell’s day is that war has become even more deadly, and foreign correspondents are now more vulnerable than ever before. ■

*Facing page, from top to bottom: After an interview with Nelson Mandela in 1994, in the first weeks following his election as president of South Africa; in Mogadishu to report (early 1990s)*





Director Mark von Hagen at the exhibit held in Low Library to celebrate the Harriman Institute's fiftieth anniversary

# AREA STUDIES FROM COLD WAR TO CIVILIZATIONAL CONFLICT

## ON LEARNING, RELEARNING, AND UNLEARNING

BY MARK VON HAGEN

**A**lex Cooley's invitation to reflect on the state of our field came at a most opportune time for me to engage in some preliminary comparisons of my experience at the Harriman and, since July 1, 2016, at Arizona State University's Melikian Center, where I stepped "back" into the role of interim director in a field that I thought would be very familiar.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, I quickly learned that this kind of sudden reimmersion in the role of director of an area studies center in a major public research university nearly a decade and a half later requires a lot of learning, relearning, and even some unlearning. We find ourselves in new contexts and often rediscovering scholars, books, and other knowledge that for various reasons we had overlooked in the past. Learning is, after all, what universities and other institutions of higher



*From left to right: Harriman director Robert Legvold, associate director Mark von Hagen, and Russian president Boris Yeltsin on Low Library Plaza (September 11, 1989)*

education are supposed to be about, and it is academic and university-based area studies that I know best and what will be the focus of my remarks. In very important ways, the purpose and mission of those centers remain what they have long been—namely, helping prepare students for global citizenship and introducing them to the best research and teaching about regions of the world through language training and familiarization with the cultures, societies, economics, and politics of the countries constituting the region defined today as Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia.<sup>2</sup>

Arizona State University (ASU), as a large public university, aspires to be the New American University and prides itself on its innovation, entrepreneurial culture, applied research and teaching, and community impact. (Columbia, by comparison, seems a place where pure research and disciplinary tradition is—at least relatively—more esteemed and even institutionalized, for example, in the Core Curriculum

that I taught for nearly all my twenty-four years.) The ASU focus on innovation and entrepreneurship is, in part, a reflection of the political economy of higher education where “state” is less and less appropriate for our universities’ names; instead, “public” better reflects the reliance on student tuition and the decline of state budget transfers. It has also meant the aggressive pursuit of private-public sector partnerships and more vigorous competition for still-substantial U.S. government funding across “critical” or “strategic” areas and issues.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the Harriman Institute and the Melikian Center is its funding sources. The Harriman’s large endowment, built up over seventy years, does not rule out fundraising from outside sources, but does not make it an existential urgency. The Melikian, by contrast, has a small endowment—\$2 million—and depends almost entirely for its operations on grants from the U.S. government:

Department of Defense, State Department, Education, more recently the National Security Agency, and other federal agencies. And that “entangles” ASU’s area studies much more tightly with the national security worlds than is the case for Columbia and other private top-tier universities that support area studies programs.

### **What I Learned at Columbia: From Red Army and Militarized Socialism to Russia as Empire**

Already as a student in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University—majoring in international relations and still considering a career in diplomacy—I made my first trip to the USSR on a summer language program in 1975, under the auspices of the Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE), and four months later won a berth among the thirty Americans studying in Leningrad for the winter semester of 1976. In between Georgetown and Stanford,



I earned an M.A. in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Indiana University, where I taught an intensive first-year Russian class and later led the Georgetown group for CIEE's summer language program in 1980. I wrote my doctoral dissertation, in history and humanities at Stanford University, about the Red Army during the 1920s as a laboratory for what I called "militarized socialism." I witnessed (via television and local Leningrad reactions) another beginning of the end when Leonid Brezhnev died, while I spent the year 1982–83 in Moscow and Leningrad on a fellowship from Fulbright and in the leading scholarly research program, the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX). The exchanges, and opportunities for study abroad and language study, were key to my career and to area studies more broadly.

I started teaching Soviet history at Columbia in January 1985. Two months later, Mikhail Gorbachev became

general secretary and the period of accelerating reforms that led to the breakup of the Soviet empire and the Soviet Union began. After the openings of 1989–91, Columbia was at the center of another arena of area studies that became possible like never before—namely, international conferences and collaborative research projects across former Cold War borders.

The end of the Soviet Union opened an era of new and exciting fields of cooperation, mutual learning, and relearning across the former empire, including a vast expansion in student and faculty exchange programs. Those new opportunities often took us to newly independent countries and to cities beyond the capitals, including many where foreign travelers had been banned from entry during the long Cold War decades. One of my early experiences of those new opportunities came in 1988 when Dorothy Atkinson, then executive secretary of the American Association

*The end of the Soviet Union opened an era of new and exciting fields of cooperation, mutual learning, and relearning across the former empire.*

for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (as it was known back then) and one of my advisers at Stanford, asked me to "receive" our first delegation of Soviet academicians to attend an annual convention of the AAASS (today known as the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies) in Hawaii, for an eighteen-hour layover they had in New York City. Our Soviet guests, most all of them historians, arrived in mid-November wrapped in thick coats and fur hats. I organized a bus tour of downtown New York City,

*Left:* With IU Bloomington fellow grad student Carol Sorrenti, recently retired from a long career at IREX-Moscow; *right:* With David Remnick at the Harriman Institute Alumni Conference (April 1997)





Von Hagen teaching the Harriman Institute's "Legacies" seminar

including a dinner at Times Square, and tried to introduce them to what they knew from Soviet propaganda as “the city of contrasts” (*gorod kontrastov*). It was an early lesson in how important our area studies centers were in providing spaces where we could help our Soviet and East European colleagues “translate” America and Americans.

Even though my appointment at Columbia was in history, where I was tenured and eventually promoted to full professor, my office, until my very last year, was not in Fayerweather with most of my colleagues, but at the Harriman Institute in the School of International and Public Affairs with most of my Russian and East European history and political science colleagues.

The Harriman stood for area studies—one of, if not, the earliest versions of what we once called interdisciplinarity, and more recently transdisciplinarity, and usually mean by that something more than old-fashioned comparative studies. We taught together in the conviction that practitioners of different disciplines ought to be able to learn from one another—each discipline brings its own strengths and blind spots to important processes occurring in the world—and also that we can understand something better when we understand similar things in other places and other times.

I began my “imperial turn” under the influence of Michael Stanislawski and his students in Russian and East European Jewish history, such that it is hard for me to imagine Russian history anymore without Jewish history, which, among other features, is the paradigmatic diaspora history. It is also hard to imagine it without Ukraine after my tutoring at the hands of Alex Motyl and Frank Sysyn (with whom I also cotaught a seminar),

or Turks and Islam after I studied modern Turkish for a couple of years and cotaught a seminar with my Ottomanist colleague, the historian-sociologist Karen Barkey. Another sign of the new possibilities for empire and nation studies was marked when the Harriman Institute began hosting the annual convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, which has become the premier international, intergenerational, interdisciplinary group of scholars devoted to problems of empire and nationality and itself grew out of Columbia's long-functioning Cold War-era seminar on Soviet nationality problems.

Philanthropic foundations in the United States, Canada, and Europe also supported collaborative research in the region across all social science and humanities disciplines. Just before the end of the Soviet Union, the Ford Foundation funded a multiyear project with Moscow Memorial for which I served as the PI in the U.S.; with the help of human rights activist Ed Kline and the Chekhov Publishing House, we brought to the U.S. and Europe researchers, including former dissidents, to bring back émigré dissidents' archives and other samizdat and tamizdat collections to Moscow. Also during the first half of the 1990s, the then Estonian foreign minister, Toomas Ilves, a Columbia alumnus, invited a team of Columbia Contemporary Civilization teachers to bring our model of liberal education formed around the classics of Western political and moral thought to Tartu University. I was part of a team of social scientists led by the British sociologist Teo Shanin that helped set up a textbook competition under the auspices of George Soros's Transformation of the Social Sciences



Von Hagen, George Rupp (president of Columbia University), and Ukrainian Ambassador to the United Nations Anatoly Zlenko at the conference “Chornobyl: Ten Years After” (April 1996)

project in Russia. And I worked as a consultant for Primary Source Microfilms (later the Gale Group and still later part of the Thomson publishing empire) for their Russian Archive series, thanks to which I got to know the directors and highlights and histories of major archives in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, and even Warsaw. And all this after I had been denied any archival access for my own work on the Red Army just ten years earlier!

I spent most of 1991 in Berlin as a Humboldt Fellow at the Free University of Berlin's Osteuropa Institut, from where I witnessed the transfer of Germany's capital from Bonn to Berlin and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Potsdam and East Berlin. During that summer I was part of one of the first meetings of still-Soviet, German, American, and British historians of World War II at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio conference site. In Berlin I cotaught a research seminar with my colleague

Rosalinde Sartorti on Soviet culture and politics in the 1920s.

The new possibilities included teaching together with Russian, Ukrainian, and other colleagues. Some of the most positive memories of my entire career came in the summer workshops, starting with two social science workshops of the Moscow Public Science Foundation, where I taught together with Russian historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists in Yaroslavl and Tarusa; and for several years that now are almost unimaginable I served on the selection committee for the Moscow Public Science Foundation together with Russian scholars.<sup>3</sup>

Another set of international collaborations on the historical encounters of Ukraine and Russia raised hopes for dialogue between historians of a newly independent Ukraine and Russia with their counterparts in Europe and North

America.<sup>4</sup> Not only did scholars attempt to overcome age-old national stereotypes, but also to reimagine both histories in the comparative frameworks of empires and nations. There was even hope of writing a collective history of Ukraine and Russia along the lines of what the French and Germans have done.

Perhaps for me the highlight of these new international relationships and collaborations and the mutual learning that was their outcome was a second Ford Foundation grant (1997–2002) that funded the Russian empire project with Jane Burbank (who was first at Michigan, then NYU); the late Anatolii Remnev, dean of Siberian historians at Omsk State University; and Petr Savel'ev (at Samara). It was during those years and my frequent trips to Russia for conferences and for consulting on archival projects that I realized how much energy we had spent during the Cold War decades in keeping





With President Mikhail Gorbachev, Low Library, Columbia University (March 11, 2002)

our vigilance in contacts with Soviet colleagues, worried that we might get them in trouble in the first place, but also worried about possible repercussions even for us. In Omsk, Samara, and New York, Russians, including several scholars from national republics, and Americans were able to talk freely; we read the same books together and shared drafts of our essays.

During most of the 1990s there were some initial troubling signs of the changes, especially in the economic contraction of the post-Soviet economies and the brutal turn to market economies, that hit academic institutes and universities (not to mention all educational and cultural institutions and much of the working population as well) very hard. The resistance to the brutal reforms grew, as did the increasingly blatant corruption. A particularly stark reminder for me of the incomplete—and, in some cases, failed—reforms

and the initial hopes came from a teaching experience in Minsk, Belarus, in summer 2001. Very much in the spirit of the summer workshops of the 1990s, I cotaught a workshop on postcoloniality in Minsk at the European University, a European- and U.S.-supported liberal arts university that was already under siege from Lukashenka's dictatorial regime. A year later the European University was forced to seek refuge in Vilnius.

But Belarus in 2001 was already an indicator that democratization was not irreversible and that transition was not going to be as smooth or as positive a story as many of us had hoped just ten years earlier. What once was an anomaly has become the norm, and different trends were already evident in most of the Central Asian states, the Caucasian ones as well, but with qualified exceptions at times, such as Mongolia until recently, Georgia at moments, the Baltic states more

generally. One lesson we learned was that we should generalize less about the Soviet legacy while not ignoring or forgetting it entirely.

During my presidency of the International Association of Ukrainianists (MAU)—I was elected at the congress in Chernivtsy and presided over the congress in a still quite peaceful Donetsk—the three years of congress preparations involved me in extensive and sometimes intensive interactions with the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Culture and Sport, and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Kyiv, as well as with the rector (and his staff) at Donetsk National University. The Association's board led an effort for three years to “internationalize” the association, but we eventually learned the power of old bureaucratic inertia and survival techniques when the Academy of Sciences seized back control of the association with the



With Secretary Cyrus Vance (1998)

next presidential election and wound down our reforms.

### **What I Have Been Learning at ASU: From Empire and Colonialism to Civilizational Conflict**

I tried to summarize much of what I had learned from the “imperial turn” in an essay in the *American Historical Review* (AHR), “Empire, Borderlands, and Diasporas: Eurasia as Anti-Paradigm for the Post-Soviet Era” (2004). I would submit that those themes remain and perhaps have become more important frameworks for the study of “our” region today.

I left Columbia in 2007 as the history department chair and faculty member of the Harriman Institute for a job as the history department chair at ASU; in other words, I moved away from area studies (temporarily) to a history department, where I had a lot of relearning to do in my

disciplinary home, the historical field, but beyond Russia and Eurasia, in a new institutional setting and in a new part of the country. Chairing two departments forced the kind of up close and intensive immersive learning that comes with preparing tenure and promotion cases above all, i.e., learning the field from your colleagues’ work. Before too long my relearning had to take another rapid step forward when my mission transformed from reengaging with history to engaging history with philosophy and religious studies in the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies.<sup>5</sup> So again I was relearning the fields of philosophy and religious studies from my undergraduate and graduate introductions and my long teaching at Columbia of Contemporary Civilization in the Modern West. My own life and career paralleled and intersected with the transitions of the countries I studied and with

the careers of so many scholars who now hold positions in American and Canadian universities who have made their own, often difficult, transitions from late Soviet East European academic cultures to new languages, cultures, and academic cultures.

Another theme I proposed in my AHR “manifesto” was diasporas, which included the émigré scholars who shaped the fields of Russian and East European history, politics, and literature for many generations, who again after 1991 brought new possibilities of transborder scholarship and teaching and new debates about the fine points differentiating diaspora, émigrés, and refugees from hyphenated hybrid citizenships in a “globalizing” world.

I developed a new appreciation for the theme of diasporas when I began teaching and later serving as dean of the philosophy faculty at the Ukrainian Free University in Munich. I teach, in my own version of *surzhyk* (somewhere between Ukrainian and Russian), about the first period of independence nearly 100 years ago and the world war and civil war that enabled that first Ukrainian state and then crushed it a few short years later. The very history of the University is a mirror of the history of the Ukrainian diaspora (and many other diasporas from our region). After its founding in 1921 in Vienna by Ukrainian intellectuals fleeing Bolshevik dictatorship in Ukraine, the University moved to Prague for most of the interwar years, where it thrived alongside a Russian Free University until German annexation in 1938 and then the arrival in Prague of the Red Army and NKVD in 1944. Most of the faculty and staff were deported to Soviet Ukraine and Moscow along with the archives; those



Debate in fall 1979 cohosted by the Speech Communication Association (USA) and Student Council of Soviet Union, held in Tallinn, Estonia. From left to right: von Hagen (taking a year off between IU and Stanford), Diana Bielauskas, James Petrila (then at Stanford)

who managed to escape and survive the journey to Bavaria and the U.S. occupation zone after World War II refounded the University. Many of the current faculty and former rectors are themselves children of Ostarbeiter and others who made their way to Germany; now they teach a new Ukrainian diaspora.

All our students are pursuing graduate degrees; they come from all over Ukraine and remain in constant and frequent contact with families and friends back home, but have decided to try to make it in Germany for as long as the situation in Ukraine does not offer them the kinds of life and opportunities that they have come to expect. To capture the different sort of existentially charged atmosphere in which I teach about Ukraine 100 years ago, I frequently repeat the question of a student, Borys, in my very first class in Munich: What has changed in 100 years that might justify our returning to our native country? At one level, that

*I soon realized that we had dozens of veterans at ASU who had actually seen war themselves and whose stories were also worth hearing.*

was easy to understand; Russia is once again a very threatening neighbor, but Poland and Intermarium nations are now Ukraine's most vocal advocates and partners in European and other international fora.

My next transition after launching the new school at ASU was to learn about the wars that had shaped the United States and our relationship with the world since 9/11—the Afghan and then Iraq wars.<sup>6</sup> Since coming to ASU, I would get questions every year in my Soviet history course about the Soviet Afghan war from students

who had served in the U.S. war in Afghanistan. I soon realized that we had dozens of veterans who had actually seen war themselves and whose stories were also worth hearing. I taught a new course in oral history, America's Most Recent Wars, and with President Crow's blessing I launched the Office for Veteran and Military Academic Engagement. It was in the oral history course that I also first discovered (and taught) Svetlana Alexievich's work—namely, her *Zinky Boys*, about the Soviet Afghan war as told by the men and women who were eyewitnesses and participants. I have also incorporated oral history into my Soviet history course itself, now that there are several excellent translated collections. In the hopes of my students being able to feel some empathy for historical actors in other times and places, I propose that oral history helps them understand the freedoms, the options, the possibilities individuals faced, but also the limits, the bans, the place



of violence in shaping the political and social orders in which they lived. Teaching forms of empathy for human beings who live (and lived) in other lands and other times has also become a major task of area studies (and the humanities more broadly).

### Most Recent Developments: The Russia-Ukraine War, Civilizational Conflict, and Area Studies

Russia's war in Ukraine, coming on the heels of the Georgian-Russian war (and the longer "frozen conflict" in Moldova), has divided the field (of Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies) along some familiar lines but also with some realignments and often-strange political-intellectual bedfellows. Vladimir Putin has cast himself as the leader of a new Right International that is anti-EU, anti-U.S., antiliberalism, antidemocracy, and antitransparency, but also attracts far-left critics of U.S. imperialism and EU capitalism in a strange amalgam. In Germany, my colleagues Andreas Kappeler and Karl Schloegel debate in the press with so-called *Putinverstehers*, those who argue against economic sanctions on Russia or otherwise seek to "understand" Russia's motives in its neighborhood (and more recently in Syria).<sup>7</sup>

After a long career of trying to convince Americans that Russians and Soviet citizens more generally were not only human beings (the title of a now forgotten 1950s area studies book) but were diverse, changed over time, and needed to be understood not as a gray mass of *sovki* who seemed to want to stand in lines for basic products or in the Gulag, it has become more difficult in an America (and the West more broadly) where Russophobia

has frequently resurfaced when tensions are heightened between our countries, and now Russian charges of Russophobia present other challenges. The other side, however, is Americaphobia in Russia and among those who identify or affiliate with Russia's presentation. Americaphobia is reinforced by Ukrainophobia, EU-phobia, and other hatreds in the Russian media, against backdrops both in Russia and the West of rising "Islamophobia" and, with some caveats, "Sinophobia."

My closest experience of the Russia-Ukraine war came during a ten-day visit to Kyiv in September 2015. Marko Suprun, a former Columbia student, and his American-Ukrainian wife, Ulana, a doctor from Detroit, founded Patriot Defence ([www.patriotdefence.org](http://www.patriotdefence.org)) to train Ukrainian doctors to train Ukrainian soldiers on the front in trauma medicine. I met one of their colleagues, a thoracic surgeon, who recently had been awarded for his bravery and service on the front lines treating ATO soldiers. Oleksandr Linchevs'kyi came with his wife and two young sons. We had a remarkable conversation about how he tries to explain to his six-year-old, Hrihorii, and his three-year-old, Taras, why their father wears camouflage and is so often away from home. He has decided to tell the truth from the start; the greatest difficulty is how to talk about the enemy; are they "terrorists" or are they Russians? Since boys not only hear Russian around them in Kyiv all the time, but also speak Russian in addition to Ukrainian, Oleksandr worries about prejudicing them against a people as they grow older.

The workshop on "The Russian Military Threat: Myth or Reality?" is another characteristic sign of

the changing times. The workshop was introduced by Volodymyr Ohryzko, former foreign minister of Ukraine (2007–9) and CEO of the independent policy research Centre for Russian Studies (*Tsentr doslidzhenii Rosii*); Ambassador Ohryzko noted that even in Ukrainian official circles the implications of Russia's threats to Ukraine's security took some time to crystallize, but now Russia is identified as a major, if not the major, threat to Ukraine's security in the new military doctrine signed that week by President Petro Poroshenko. Ohryzko also reported that he had very much wanted to have Russian participants at this meeting and had extended invitations to several of his colleagues in the defense and security think tanks and institutes of Russia, but all of them declined out of fears that they would be charged with state treason for any participation in such a forum organized in Ukraine today. Such, Ohryzko lamented, is the sad state of affairs in Russia regarding anything Ukrainian.

Against this backdrop, the most recent place my area studies identity and training have taken me is my role in shaping an online master's degree in global security, where I've done most of my learning from two ASU colleagues—an international humanitarian lawyer; and an engineer-lawyer and U.S. Army veteran, Braden Allenby, who coined the phrase "civilizational conflict" to capture what NATO has been calling hybrid warfare, and what the chief of the Russian General Staff, Valerii Gerasimov, has called "new-generation warfare," and what Chinese writers call "unrestricted warfare." He cites Russia's invasion of Crimea as an illustration of how important identity and narratives have become in this conflict; indeed, where identities have

become weaponized. Allenby defines “civilizational conflict” to include “all dimensions of a civilization in a process of long-term, intentional, coordinated conflict, one aspect of which may or may not be conventional combat.” Those dimensions of civilization in today’s world make up what he calls the “ringfenced zeitgeist” and is captured by “the creation of a belief system that can be maintained within a much larger chaotic information system by adroit manipulation of culture, psychology, beliefs, ideology, perceptions and opinions, and religions of subgroups using appropriate levers such as comment boards, blogs, websites, and, yes, even traditional print and broadcast media if necessary.” Whatever is happening between the states of Russia and Ukraine is new and unfamiliar, despite seemingly familiar aspects. The “facts” are indeed being “weaponized” by framing contemporary politics in historical narratives of often-spurious ancestry and veracity, but we also witness new roles for social media and the

multifaceted information or propaganda wars that accompany more traditional forms of armed conflict, diplomacy, and economic competition.

### **What Is to Be Done? Or How Do You Study and Engage with the Region? Area Studies in an Era of Civilizational Conflict: Eurasia as an Anti-Paradigm**

If you find the civilizational conflict framework persuasive or helpful, then we are in for a long, multipronged and multilayered, largely undeclared conflict that will in turn shape funding and to some degree academic priorities in area studies centers like the Harriman Institute and the Melikian Center. At ASU the Critical Language Institute is able to offer a dozen less-commonly-taught languages (from Albanian to Uzbek) with the support of the Department of Defense (under Project Global Officer), the State Department (Title VIII), and, recently, the National Security Agency

(for StarTalk, an intensive summer introductory course in Russian for high school students). Students from across the country and even some from abroad are pursuing careers in academia, but also in the military-security complex and in civilian humanitarian work. The Global Officers (Project GO) program is a good example of how we continue to balance “policy-relevant” teaching and scholarship with the academic and intellectual standards and rigor universities continue to aspire to. My colleague Kathleen Evans-Romaine, director of the Critical Language Institute, recalled a conversation with the Air Force ROTC commander who explained that the ROTC Language and Culture Project, an earlier version of Project GO, “exists to ensure that an officer’s first experience of culture shock does not come when he finds himself in Afghanistan with a gun in his hand.” The Afghan example dates from 2007, but Kathleen updated the commander’s definition: “Project GO

Roz Abrams (Journalist, WABC-TV, New York), Nadia Matkiwsky (Executive Director, Children of Chornobyl Relief Fund), von Hagen, and Yuri Shcherbak (Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States)





With Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma (*front row center*) and Dean John Ruggie (*front row, right*), on the occasion of Kuchma being presented SIPA's Distinguished Service Award.



World War II conference at Rockefeller Center, Bellagio (Summer 1991). With colleagues from Stanford, Cambridge, Harvard, and the Soviet Union.



Teaching the Harriman's "Legacies" seminar with Cathy Nepomnyashchy (*at far end of the table*)

exists so that the first time a young officer faces a foreign culture, it's not with a gun in his hand."

The tensions between impartial scholarship and the funding priorities of the national security agencies have not changed what remains central to our study of the region. Area studies is still about empires (and their legacies), borderlands (and their conflicts), and diasporas (and their challenges to maintain ties to their former homelands while preserving some measure of their identities and communities in new homelands). Area studies is also allied with ethnic studies as they have evolved in American academia. Among our missions is to help fellow citizens to understand the diaspora populations who make up our national mosaics, quilts, or whatever the best metaphor for our hybrid, constantly changing, and contested societies and to understand the histories and cultures of the countries they left, whether for the short or, usually, longer term. Many Americans have a Las Vegas attitude that extends to much of the world outside the United States: what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas. But our job is to remind our fellow citizens that

what happens in Ukraine and Russia matters to us in America.

And this brings me back to the question Borys asked in Munich about what has changed that might make him want to think about returning home to Ukraine. Though few of our colleagues shared the often-caricatured view of the future in Francis Fukuyama's end of history, 1991 did inaugurate a set of reforms that promoted globalization and neoliberal goals of deregulation and austerity. Many of our political science colleagues pursued research projects that came to be known as "transitology," but already in the 1990s there were challenges to the overly teleological and optimistic predictions and questions about how well "transitology" really traveled. And while many citizens were able to take advantage of the greater freedom that came with open borders and the withdrawal of many forms of state controls over movements of goods, peoples, and ideas, for many, many more that was ultimately not the case. Instead of the anticipated freedoms, human trafficking flourished and international criminal empires operated shadow economies in drugs, arms, and people.

War has rendered millions stateless and refugees. And corrupt elites in power, whether the new political economy be called clientelism, crony capitalism, patronalism, or something else, has led to new forms of proletarianization—which has hit many of our academic and cultural colleagues especially hard—and hidden and open forms of unemployment and underemployment.

I doubt I have been alone in receiving requests from endangered scholars and other vulnerable populations, including gay men and lesbians seeking asylum in the United States and the West. I teach Ukrainian students who have chosen to build their futures in

*Our mission continues to be the back-and-forth translation of cultures, primarily translating the cultures of Eurasia for our American students and colleagues.*





With writers Inna Varlamova, Inna Lisnyanskaya, and Semyon Lipkin, in Peredelkino, the writers' colony outside of Moscow, 1980s

Germany, together with many scholars and teachers. This is a situation those of us who experienced the formative parts of our career in the waning decades of the Cold War might recall, but there are still important differences to this round of displacements. All these migrations of individuals and communities have given new meanings for “home” and “former home” and have compelled us once again to start making distinctions between refugees, exiles, émigrés, and diasporas in familiar and not so familiar ways. Area studies centers will be called on to help prepare students who will work in human rights organizations, with refugees and others seeking asylum from dictatorial regimes, from Turkey to Russia to Ukraine, with Hungary and Poland perhaps not far down the line.

I have continued arguing with myself (and several others, especially among the Ukrainian diaspora community) about my introduction and reinterpretation of the concept of

Eurasia to help orient us as area studies folks. I was flattered and humbled when my successor as president of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, my dear friend and esteemed colleague Bruce Grant, proclaimed in his presidential address in 2011 that “we are all Eurasians” and gave a rhetorical footnote to my *AHR* essay. Bruce pointed to a new generation of scholars, “who are offering examples of worlds far less closed, or at least less contained, than we might otherwise have been casting them. . . . Being Eurasian, in this context, is nothing more than a reminder of how difficult it is to do what the best of scholars from our community have long already done for decades—keep our eyes and ears open to the multiple flows of sense, sensibility, context, and experience that constitute the worlds we seek to better understand.” Bruce returned our attention to area studies centers (and humanities scholars more broadly) as

our collective project, “a recognition of the impossibility or, perhaps better put, the quixotic project of living in someone else’s shoes, no matter what part of the world we are from, of occupying other times, other spaces, other knowledges, and other lives.”

Eurasia as an anti-paradigm was meant to capture some of what Edward Said called for in his critique of Samuel Huntington’s 1993 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, “A Clash of Civilizations?” and the book that followed (no longer with a question mark), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996). Said criticized Huntington for his (mis-)understanding of watertight, hermetically sealed, unchanging, and monolithic civilizations that can only exist in a permanent “clash,” eternal conflict, and ever-increasing militarization of our democracies. Instead, Said (and Eurasia in Bruce’s and my interpretation) insisted that civilizations, like cultures or societies, were not one thing, but mixtures, migrations, and boundary crossings and characterized by diversity, complexity, hybridity, and contestation. Huntington’s vision of the West demands that the West keep all the Others at bay, but as the recent debates over the European Union and immigration, or the Brexit vote, should also remind us, what “the West” is, even what Europe means, is not settled and has rarely been settled. Instead of isolation and confrontation, Said called for a “profound existential commitment and labor on behalf of the Other,” a lifelong dedication to humanistic exchange.

Although the focus of Said’s critique was Huntington’s simplistic portrayal of Islam—and Huntington had very little to say about one of the most important divides in that civilization between

Sunni and Shia—what he has to say about another important “civilization” of our region that he calls Orthodox—and sometimes Slavic—can also be found quite lacking. What Huntington seeks to capture as “Orthodox” civilization has for centuries lived with and among large and diverse Islamic civilizations, later Jewish civilizations and Catholic-Protestant (a.k.a. Western) civilizations. Relations were not always clashes and these cultural exchanges, borrowings, and influences, sometimes forced, also contributed to what are usually considered the Golden Ages of these civilizations.

Any assumed or alleged monolithic unity of Orthodox civilization—something that is part of Vladimir Putin’s challenge to the “decadent” United States and the European Union—might be challenged by this past summer’s aborted effort at unity called for by the patriarch of Constantinople on the island of Crete. Even before that meeting failed, Moscow’s patriarch had been waging a struggle for dominance over the Orthodox world and found allies in the Serbian and Greek Church hierarchies against a loose

coalition of Constantinople, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate, and others. In 2008 “Orthodox” Russia waged war with “Orthodox” Georgia over mixed Muslim-Orthodox populations in Abkhazia and southern Ossetia. Or, in the most dramatic pseudonarrative, “Orthodox” Russia is at war with “Orthodox” Ukraine in part over “Muslim” Crimea, rechristened by Vladimir Putin as the baptismal site for Russian civilization (in Chersonesus).

Returning again to Bruce’s very generous and provocative—in the best sense—rereading of my idea of Eurasia, I think what unites us all is an ethnographic spirit, a comparative framework that almost kicks in automatically and helps keep us more resistant to any kinds of exceptionalisms, whether American or Russian (or Turkish or Ukrainian). And coming back to those all-important scholarly and educational exchanges and discussion fora with our Eurasian colleagues, we should work hard to keep them supported, funded, and open-ended to sustain the important work of dialogue

and, when the circumstances are right, reconciliation between the citizens of formerly hostile or enemy states. Our mission continues to be the back-and-forth translation of cultures, primarily translating the cultures of Eurasia for our American students and colleagues. But we cannot avoid also occasionally—if not often—attempting to translate “our” cultures for outsiders, however we define inside and outside these days, and, in so doing, to help shape “global citizens” for a nation that continues to exercise extraordinary, if declining, power and influence in the world. ■

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*An earlier version of this essay was delivered at the Harriman Institute on September 15, 2016, as part of the Harriman at 70 lecture series.*

<sup>1</sup>Any attempt to capture where we are in area studies can only be a snapshot in a continually evolving and transforming world of rapid and slower change. And I can only lay claim to my experience, which has included listening to and learning from others’ experiences, and my processing of that experience, which has led me to a method or perhaps better sensibility for how I learn, teach, and maybe even live in the world of what we once called area studies, more specifically Soviet studies. Regarding my current disciplinary location at ASU, I am still (or once again) where I have always been—between history, my primary discipline, and the humanities.

<sup>2</sup>A conference in Kazan with Boris Gasparov and Catherine Evtuhov, where my concluding session with Boris Ananich led to my first manifesto in the imperial turn, “Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg: The Multiple Faces of Empire.”

<sup>3</sup>Those meetings were jointly funded (1993–96) by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Alexander-Humboldt Foundation (Bonn), and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies.

<sup>4</sup>This merger was part of a bigger transformational mission of President Michael Crow, who seeks to make ASU a New American University with strong commitments to transdisciplinary units formed around real-world problems.

<sup>5</sup>I was in New York City on leave during 9/11 and still feel like a New Yorker every year on that date.

<sup>6</sup>I’ve had my own analogous discussion in private with my American colleague Stephen Cohen over his commentary on Ukrainian history and the recent war.

<sup>7</sup>Bruce’s own scholarship has been a powerful expression of that vision, ranging from fieldwork on Sakhalin Island among the Nivkhi to Baku in Azerbaijan and elsewhere. Indeed, the “revival” of anthropology treating our region has been one of the most exciting and dynamic developments since 1991.



# NEGOTIATING TRANSITION

## JENIK RADON'S QUEST TO HELP DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

In 1990, when the Republic of Estonia was striving for independence from the Soviet Union, Jenik Radon, an ardent champion of the cause, accompanied Estonia's minister of foreign affairs, Lennart Meri, and a small delegation of Estonians, to the office of President Ronald Reagan, who had recently finished his second term. They had arranged the meeting in order to secure Reagan's support for Estonia's independence, but, while sitting there, all Radon could think about was the candy on the President's desk. "They gave us these hors d'oeuvres, and coffee, but *staring* at me was this bowl of jelly beans, and I was getting really upset because he wasn't offering them to

us," Radon told me. Finally—"to the absolute horror of the Estonians"—he got up, walked over to the bowl, and took "a handful or two," lingering to select his preferred colors. There was a brief pause before Reagan smiled, and said, "That's what they're there for," then asked Radon which colors he had chosen.

This may seem like a bold move, but Radon, a Columbia College grad ('67) and Stanford-educated lawyer ('71) who runs his own international corporate law practice and teaches classes at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), can make himself feel at home in just about any situation. Perpetually on the go—he has traveled to



105 of the world's 195 countries, and lectured and worked in about sixty of them—Radon possesses boundless, somewhat childlike, idealism and enthusiasm for life, as well as interminable energy and desire to make the world a better place. He is notorious for going above and beyond for his students (he won SIPA's "Top Five" teaching award twice in the past six years and has been invited to more than seventy-five student weddings across the globe, only missing two, due to extenuating circumstances). And he is also devoted to his clients, representing them on matters of international corporate law and policies and agreements relating to the extractive, a.k.a. energy and mining industry. But what's perhaps most striking about Radon's career is his dedication to the nation-building process in developing countries: He cofounded the Afghanistan Relief Committee to restore Afghan independence after the Soviet invasion; coauthored investment, privatization, and corporate laws for Poland, Estonia, and Georgia; and drafted the interim (2006) peace constitution of Nepal, which helped restore order to a civil war-ravaged nation, granted citizenship to millions of stateless people in the Terai region, and ensured that all voices in this multiethnic nation were heard. It is not unusual to catch Radon, a slender, gray-haired man in prominent, round glasses, rapidly wheeling a suitcase across the lobby of the International Affairs building, joking with any number of acquaintances he might pass while rushing from the airport to class (or from class to the airport). Students are often perplexed by his constant comings and goings—by receiving an e-mail from him signed "Cheers from Namibia" one day and seeing him at the head of their seminar table the next. "Who is he, *really*?" they wonder. "And what does he *do*?"

Radon has known what he wanted to do since he was an eight-year-old enrolled in a New York City Catholic school. One day a nun told him that he had to "merit heaven" and that the older he got, the more sins he would accumulate, to which the young Radon replied by asking the nun why he shouldn't just commit suicide so he could get to heaven before committing too many sins. She responded that suicide was a sin itself.

"I didn't quite follow the logic," Radon told me, reclining in a leather chair in his office, his antique wooden desk piled with papers and his laptop plastered with stickers. "So I started thinking a lot about why we are here and came up with a very simple thought: I just want to leave the world a little bit better than I found it and make people

*From that point on, he possessed a fervent hatred for communism and an undying curiosity about international affairs.*

smile when I'm gone." He spent hours reading a book on 100 professions, ranging from fireman to doctor, before deciding that law would give him the tools to improve the world. He hasn't doubted his decision since.

Radon was born in Berlin, Germany, in the aftermath of World War II. After the Berlin Blockade of 1948, his father, a dealer of German porcelain, saw no future in Europe and applied for entry to the United States. Admission was granted in 1951, when Radon was five. The family left Europe and settled first on Manhattan's East Side, where they opened a lamp and chandelier business, and then in the Bronx.

At the time, Radon's mother, from Germany's Baltic region, had a brother in communist-controlled East Germany. The brother sent letters, but by the time they arrived in New York, communist censors always blacked out the majority of the text, leaving only a nonsensical string of words on the page. Radon's mother would read them and cry. Bearing witness to her anguish, Radon developed misgivings about the communist system. Then in 1956 he watched on television as Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest to stop the anticommunist Hungarian Revolution. Though he couldn't understand the complexity of the event, he grasped its injustice, incessantly asking his parents for explanations. From that point on, he possessed a fervent hatred for communism and an undying curiosity about international affairs.

In the summer of 1966, after his junior year at Columbia, Radon traveled abroad for the first time since leaving Germany. The National Science Foundation-sponsored anthropological research excursion to an arid Catholic pilgrimage town called Bom Jesus da Lapa, in Bahia, Brazil, had little to do with his academic interests—he was an economics major on a prelaw track, taking advantage of the opportunity to see South America—but it unleashed an insatiable desire to see new places. By the time he enrolled in Stanford Law School in 1968, he had visited more than thirty countries.



*From top to bottom: Radon with his daughter Kaara on the Bridge Climb in Sydney, Australia; Radon flanked by Dr. Guo Xiaoke, Tsinghua International Center for Communication Studies (left), and President Ram Baran Yadav of Nepal (right) in the office of the Nepalese president, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2011; Radon with Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves after receiving the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana from him at the Tallinn Award Ceremony on February 23, 2016*

At the start of his second year as a law student and fresh from a trip to Japan, Radon went to an impromptu dorm-room party dressed in a summer Japanese kimono, ready to bore everyone with talk of the Japanese economy. He ended up meeting Heidi Duerbeck, a fellow German immigrant one year behind him. They married three days before Radon graduated, and celebrated with a three-month honeymoon around the world.

Radon had always wanted to pursue international development (he had studied it at Berkeley after graduating from Columbia), but law school had convinced him that he would first need to work in the field in order to learn the tools of the trade. “I’m a big believer in the apprenticeships of the Gilded Age,” he says. After returning from his honeymoon, he began a decadelong stint working for large corporate firms on matters ranging from real estate to financings and corporate trusts, where he learned the intricacies of deal making and contract drafting. Believing that to become a good lawyer one has to “go through boot camp,” he now laments the transformation large U.S. law firms have undergone since the 1980s, when hedge funds and mergers and acquisitions began taking a very prominent role in the field. “Law used to be a profession,” he says. “You were a counselor, an adviser. Now it has become a business, and young lawyers feel that they are just a cog in a wheel.”

Though he works, technically speaking, in the private sector, Radon considers himself a public interest lawyer; international public interest work, which he funds in part with proceeds from his corporate clients, comprises a substantial portion of his practice. His involvement in the public sphere began in 1980, in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. One day Radon received a flyer in the mail targeting the 100 or so U.S. subscribers to *Afghanistan* magazine, a cultural publication from Austria, asking for volunteers to help organize a relief committee. Fond of Afghanistan and its people since researching there as a graduate student, he agreed to participate and became a founder. He used his legal expertise to set up the legal framework of the Afghanistan Relief Committee, an NGO providing assistance to Afghan refugees and anticommunist freedom fighters, and effectively became the organization’s executive director.

Around that time a chance encounter at a barbecue landed him an invitation to an academic conference in the mountains of southern Poland, where he presented a paper on Polish joint ventures. Shortly thereafter the U.S. Chamber

of Commerce asked him to present the U.S. government position on the same topic at a roundtable in DC. When Radon asked the chamber to send him its position, he was surprised to receive a shortened, uncredited version of his own paper (he had no idea how they got it). At the roundtable, he caught the attention of a Polish official, who asked him to advise the Polish reform government. He agreed, but soon the Polish military put the country under martial law, and Radon's work was put on hold. When the situation liberalized a few years later, he revived his efforts. He delivered lectures to Polish institutions (often being the first Western foreigner to do so) and became the principle drafter of Poland's foreign investment law.

By this point, Radon had his own corporate practice, which he operated out of his home office, the first floor of his Upper West Side brownstone, and which supported his pro bono endeavors. But it wasn't until 1988 that he felt the disparate pieces of his career falling into place. One day he received an invitation from a Soviet reformer

## *The USSR had liberalized under Gorbachev, and Estonia had just sown the seeds for its independence movement.*

familiar with Radon's lectures in Poland to deliver a keynote address in Estonia on joint ventures in the Soviet Union. It was an exhilarating time to be in the Baltics. The USSR had liberalized under Gorbachev, and Estonia, along with the other Baltic republics, had just sown the seeds for its independence movement. Motivated, among other things, by his passionate anticommunist sentiment, Radon wanted to help, and he set off for the conference ready to engage and assist the movement however he could.

He took to Estonians, he says, "like a fish takes to water." And, as an adviser throughout the country's struggle for independence, he identified and connected with many of the country's future leaders. One figure he worked closely with during this period is the now prominent politician and academic Marju Lauristin, founder and leader of the

country's first independence movement, the Popular Front of Estonia. Lauristin, who is still close to Radon, told me that Radon was one of the few Westerners to believe that Estonian independence was possible and that his faith in the movement was invaluable to its success. "He instilled confidence in us that things would go the way we wanted, that we could do whatever we wanted to do."

During the late '80s and early '90s, Radon became the first foreigner to receive the Medal of Distinction from the Estonian Chamber of Commerce; founded the American Chamber of Commerce in Estonia; reclaimed the premises of Estonia's U.S. Embassy, becoming the first person since the 1940 Soviet invasion of Estonia to officially raise the U.S. flag there; and guided the process of Estonia's privatization, coauthoring its foreign investment, mortgage/pledge, privatization, and corporate laws.

He also facilitated athletic and academic exchanges between U.S. and Estonian students. At the time his daughter, Kaara (CC '95), was on the high school basketball team at the Dalton School in New York; the first exchange, which took place in the summer of '88, only months after his initial visit to Estonia, occurred between Dalton and School 21 in Tallinn. He told me, "the concept that soft skills like sports are a good way to break the ice and build up personal relations had always struck a nerve in me." The program, inspired by the historic ping-pong diplomacy between the United States and China, lasted three years and was the first privately sponsored high school student exchange program between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. "It was pretty impossible for Estonian students to study abroad at the time," says Lauristin. "I'm not sure what artistry Jenik used to arrange it."

Kristel Hunt (CC '94 and P&S '98), an Estonian student, participated in the program in November 1989 (she watched the fall of the Berlin Wall from the other side of the Iron Curtain). During that trip Radon convinced her to apply to Columbia. "I hadn't been planning anything like that," Hunt, who currently teaches medicine at Mount Sinai and practices gastroenterology and hepatology at the Bronx VA Medical Center, told me over the phone. But, Radon, who had become a mentor, egged her on, and, before she knew it, she was going to Moscow to take the SATs and to Helsinki for the TOEFL. She became the first Soviet-born Estonian to attend Columbia.

Throughout the early- to mid-'90s, Radon would facilitate the application, acceptance, and full financial support of sixteen students from Estonia and the USSR to





Radon at the PCCB (Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau) of Tanzania with Edward Hoseah, chair of PCCB (*right*), and Brad Demon, Columbia LL.M., in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 2015

universities in the United States—all of whom had his full emotional support (and access to his home) throughout the experience. He also founded, in 1990, Columbia's Eesti Fellowship, the first public service internship program allowing U.S. students to work in the USSR. As a result, more than 100 U.S. students, selected personally by Radon through a rigorous interview process, worked in Estonia at organizations ranging from hospitals to governmental ministries. (Since then, the program has been expanded to include Cambodia, Ecuador, Georgia, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, and Uganda; and many of its participants have won Rhodes, Fulbright, Marshall, and other prestigious fellowships.)

In February 2016, on the eve of the Republic of Estonia's ninety-eighth anniversary, Radon was personally awarded a national decoration (the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana) by President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, for his support of Estonian students and education. "Getting enough people to obtain a decent liberal arts education is the best way to guarantee the maintenance of a democratic society," Ilves (CC '76) told me in New York last September. "And Jenik, who is always full of ideas and persistence, brought over many Estonians to study in the U.S."

For Radon, his early efforts in Estonia marked the beginning of an exciting and fulfilling professional future. "There," he wrote of Estonia in an inspirational essay for

Stanford Law School's Job Placement Office, "my dreams became my life."

And Estonia, the least corrupt and most prosperous of all post-Soviet republics, came to be regarded as a success story. "In typical Jenik fashion, once we started to develop on our own, he didn't expect any rewards and just moved on to other countries," recalled Lauristin. "He is very keen on making the world a better place."

In 1995, in his capacity as a civil law expert, Radon started advising the Georgian government on various ministerial issues. At the time Georgia was considering its prospects as an oil producer and undergoing oil and gas exploration negotiations with energy companies. Though Radon knew little about production-sharing agreements, he agreed to advise on the matter, hiring a British attorney to help him navigate the new territory. "I basically gave him all the money I earned so I could learn about oil and gas," Radon told me. "It was an expensive education." The more agreements he examined, the less he liked what he saw. "The terms were unconscionable," he told me. "Georgia would be taking the brunt of the risk while the companies earned all the money." The Georgian government appreciated his honesty and determination and hired Radon when it needed a consultant to negotiate the terms of the Baku-



*From left to right: Radon with former president Ronald Reagan; Lennart Meri, then foreign minister, later president of Estonia; Anu Part, member of the Chamber of Commerce of Estonia; and Jaak Treiman, honorary consul of Estonia in Los Angeles, in Reagan's California office, 1990*

Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline (BTC), a 1,099-mile-long crude oil pipeline stretching from Azerbaijan to Turkey.

"This was a crucial time for Georgia," Zurab Gumberidze, Georgia's ambassador to Azerbaijan throughout the BTC negotiations, explained via e-mail. At the time, the newly independent country was struggling to build its foreign policy, develop its economy, and strengthen its internal institutions. Negotiating its role as a transit nation for the pipeline would "show the world that Georgia was capable of building, on its territory, the shortest, most economically viable, and politically reliable energy transit corridor."

The process took years. Then in September 1999 Radon's wife, Heidi, passed away. He was devastated. "I not only lost my wife, but my best friend, my partner, and soul mate," he told me. It was during this period that the Georgian government asked Radon to come to Georgia for the negotiations. "There was no way I could do it," he recalled. "I was not mentally there."

But the agreement had to be signed by mid-November. The Georgian government delayed the negotiations by three weeks, until Radon felt ready. Then he found himself on a plane to Georgia to begin the arduous process of representing the country's interests before

some of the world's leading international oil companies (including British Petroleum [BP] and Statoil) and Azerbaijan's national oil company, SOCAR.

"We were negotiating with companies represented by law firms with vast resources and experience," Gumberidze wrote. "He very frequently outperformed" the lawyers and economists he was dealing with. "As I remember, he barely slept, leading talks during the day and preparing for the next day's sessions at night."

Ambassador Tedi Japaridze, currently a member of the Georgian parliament and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, met Radon during the negotiation process. "I said, 'Who is this guy? He's so disciplined, he must be German,'" he told me over the phone. Japaridze credits Radon with helping Georgia define its strategic function as a transit country in the region. The pipeline, said Japaridze, is a key reason why Russia did not move farther into Georgia during the 2008 war. "We were freshmen in these negotiations, and Jenik played an immense role, making us take our time and pore over every detail. There is no way to imagine we would have accomplished what we accomplished without him." For Radon's contribution, President Eduard Shevardnadze gave Radon the Order of Honor, Georgia's highest civilian award.





Radon's modus operandi for working in developing countries is that as an expert you must fully engage with the country you are advising. "It's always easier to do the work yourself, but you're trying to transmit knowledge; you have to work with people as they learn. And you cannot just leave when you think your work is done; you have to keep coming back," he said.

Radon started teaching—first at Stanford's law and business schools, then at SIPA—the year after Heidi passed away. And he applies the same principles to his students as he does to the countries he works with. He has been known to stay up nights helping students with grad school admissions essays, guiding them about their future. "He will spend hours upon hours counseling undergraduates and graduates on where to move forward in life," Chris Glaros (CC '96), an Eesti program alum, told me. "He got me to think critically about myself and the future."

For Radon, critical thinking is a fundamental element of any process, whether it is writing a grad school essay, crafting a law, or negotiating the terms of a contract. "You have to try to anticipate the problems before they become problems," he told me in the lobby of the SIPA building in early October, right before teaching a class on the Panama Papers, which focuses on corruption and the hidden ownership of tax haven companies. "We always have

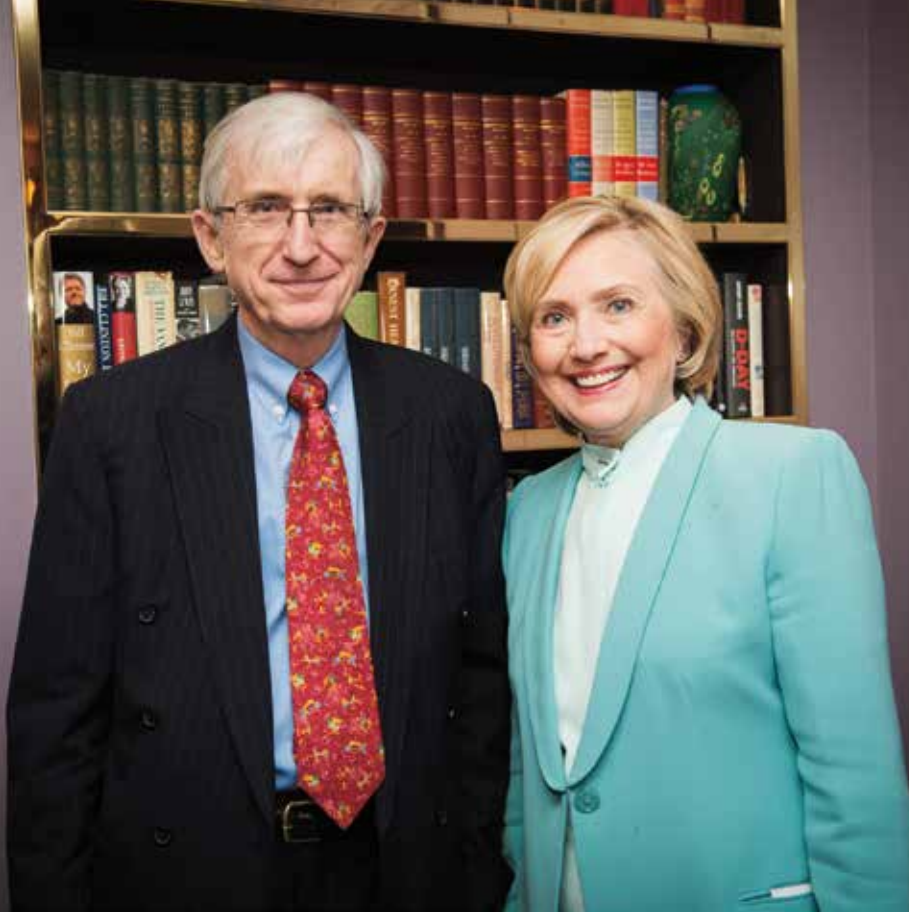
heroes, white knights, and they are the people resolving the problems after they come up. Shouldn't the hero be the guy who identifies the potential problems and prevents them before they occur?"

Identifying problems before they occur is one of Radon's greatest strengths, says his close friend David Graubert, a fellow lawyer and Stanford graduate who was his housemate in Palo Alto in the years after Heidi's death. "One thing I always thought was remarkable about him was that he came up with issues and things that were ahead of their time in terms of concerns," Graubert told me. "Something would become a popular issue, I'd read articles about it, and I'd say, 'Gee, that's something that Jenik was dealing with ten years ago.'"

It was precisely with the intent of solving problems before they became problems that Radon founded a conference on Eurasian pipelines at the Harriman Institute in 2006. Every April the conference brought together experts and practitioners who discussed, and tried to resolve, pertinent energy issues in the region. But due to the crisis in Ukraine it has been on hiatus since 2014. "When the atmosphere is so politically charged, people start losing the ability to be rational and discussions become fruitless," Radon told me.

When we got to his Panama Papers class, which Radon coteaches with journalist and longtime friend Anya





Schiffrin, Radon sat at the head of the table and leaned back in his chair. The *New York Times* had just published an article exposing then-presidential candidate Donald Trump for not having paid his taxes since 1996. “We’ll start with Trump just to make it exciting,” said Radon. “Are you upset that he hasn’t paid his taxes?” The class murmured, no one venturing to respond. “Well, I’m not upset,” he said, provoking raised eyebrows. “The problem is that this is the way the system was set up. As Trump himself has said, the loopholes are in our laws. And these loopholes demonstrate poor draftsmanship. Who’s at fault? Is it Trump? Or the draftsman? Or how the law has been enacted? Do I like it? Well that’s a different story.”

Last winter, in the medieval town of Radon, France (no relation), Radon celebrated his seventieth birthday. Yet, he possesses an ageless quality. “He hasn’t slowed down at all,” says his longtime friend Kristel Hunt. “He keeps on climbing, and each mountain just gets higher and higher.” ■

*From left to right: Radon and his Energy, Corporate Responsibility and Human Rights class, with Bishop Edward Hiiaboro Kussala (left), 2014; Radon with former secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton*

- In addition to Stanford and Columbia, teaching appointments across the globe, including in Europe (first Westerner to lecture, after Estonian independence, at the University of Tartu School of Law); Asia (participant in inaugural law-economics program at IGIDR, India); Africa (as a Fulbright expert at Makerere University, Uganda); and Latin America (named as distinguished professor at Tecnológico de Monterrey, Querétaro, Mexico)
- Advising Namibia and Peru on sustainable natural resource development
- Current adviser to Afghanistan on TAPI, the multibillion-dollar Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas and pipeline transaction
- Addressed, as a non-African expert, an annual meeting of the Southern African Forum Against Corruption (SAFAC) of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (2014)
- Past member of UN Global Compact Academic Initiative task force, which seeks to have business schools incorporate the Compact’s ten environment, labor, human rights, and anticorruption principles into curriculum and teaching
- Former trustee of Vetter Pharma, the world’s leading manufacturer of aseptic prefilled syringes (1999–2007)



# RUSSIAN POLITICAL POETRY

## IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

BY LEV OBOBIN

Poetry can serve as a means of liberation and does not need to be called “political” in order to do so. Political poetry, then, requires some sort of definition or clarification. In an interview the poet and literary critic Kirill Korchagin states, “We are used to thinking that political poetry is all about satire on the shortcomings of a political system. I think there is a more meaningful understanding.” Korchagin goes on to refer to the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, who “defined politics as a clash between two

contradictory tendencies. One of them, which he called ‘policy,’ aims for the collective unity of different people, and, hence, total control. The other, ‘politics’ as such, or ‘emancipation,’ aims for equality for all, for granting a voice to those who lack one: the poor, victims of oppression. . . . The political emerges when these two tendencies collide, and it is in the space between policy and politics that the new political poetry exists.”<sup>1</sup>

Political poetry of the final Soviet decades was largely dedicated to escaping “policy”; politics was not even up for discussion. Contemporary

political poetry in Russia has to some degree inherited this defensive stance; now left activism and poetry have once again appeared on stage and sparked domestic and international interest. For instance, the fall 2016 issue of the influential U.S. magazine *n+1* includes a selection of new Russian political poetry with a brief introduction by Keith Gessen. The featured poets are Kirill Medvedev, Galina Rymbu, Elena Kostyleva, Roman Osminkin, and Ketī Chukhrov, most of whom are grouped around *Translit*, the leading publication for contemporary Russian left philosophy and poetry based in

Lev Oborin. Photo courtesy  
of Stanislav Lvovsky





Alexei Tsvetkov. Photo by Mark Polyakov

St. Petersburg. Some of the poets are familiar to Western readers: Medvedev, perhaps the best-known Russian poet of his generation, garnered critical acclaim for his collection *It's No Good*,<sup>2</sup> while Rymbu's poetry has appeared on a number of prominent English-language literary websites in advance of the publication of her book *White Bread*, translated by Jonathan Brooks Platt (After Hours Ltd.). Owing to limitations of space, I am unable to take into account here the full range of the poetics and politics of contemporary Russian political poetry, but will focus my essay on a handful of important developments and poets.<sup>3</sup>

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In the early 1990s, Russian poetry found itself no longer vital to the nation's cultural code. No one was being jailed for writing poetry, but

neither were poets performing to stadiums full of fans, as had been the case with Yevgeny Yevtushenko, for example. Instead readers were devouring works from abroad that had been concealed from them—everything from Brodsky and Nabokov to Henry Miller and William S. Burroughs, not to mention literature suppressed in the USSR. They had to learn to talk about sex and crime, pop stars and millionaires, to struggle through waves of economic crisis and unemployment. This was not a good time for enjoying poetry—and yet it turned out to be a great time for poetry to truly diversify. Poets began to experience new languages, drawing upon the “uncensored poetry” of the past (and, of course, fully legitimizing it) and other sources as well, including rock music and the new political discourse. Perhaps it did not occur to

poets that the liberation of language was a political idea or act, but the boundaries of the possible widened greatly: for example, now for the first time in Russian history, poets could freely use swear words and openly talk about sex (e.g., Vera Pavlova and Yaroslav Mogutin).

Contemporary politics and current events now became subjects fit for poetry: the poet and publisher Dmitry Kuzmin put out an anthology endorsing the liberal presidential candidate Grigory Yavlinsky (acknowledging the uselessness of the act at the very beginning); Soviet-nostalgic poets raged about Yeltsin and the democrats; Yunna Morits, once a fine lyric poet, wrote profane poems condemning NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia; and, of course, many poets were appalled by the war in Chechnya—Mikhail Sukhotin's “Verses on the First Chechen Campaign” still shocks us with its blunt account of war crimes, torture, violence, and political cynicism. On a lighter note, witty and funny political satire emerged and would later become a significant phenomenon (e.g., Dmitri Bykov).

During the Putin years, the state grew increasingly concerned with the image of the Soviet past. Not, however, without a certain ambiguity: the Russian government officially welcomed home Solzhenitsyn and condemned Stalin's crimes, and yet state-run TV denigrated the liberals for “dismantling our great country.” An integral part of this complex image is the Great Patriotic War, i.e., the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and the siege of Leningrad, which took the lives of a million civilians. Soviet poetry praised Leningrad's

heroism, yet the scope and depth of the human tragedy remained largely unacknowledged. In recent years, a number of important books and poems about the siege have appeared, including those by Polina Barskova, Sergei Zavyalov, and Igor Vishnevetsky. In 2009, Vitaly Pukhanov wrote a poem that sparked a raging fire on the Russian Internet:

In Leningrad, on Marat Street  
In 1943  
Somebody ate a bowl of soup.  
Thus the order of things was  
broken.

Two cars of militiamen emerged:  
You shouldn't eat!  
You've broken the rules!  
We don't eat meat here.

.....

Neither awake, nor dreaming  
Can you be alive here?  
We will win  
Because we won't eat!

At the end of time,  
Our flesh will turn into stone.  
Our enemy will remember  
Our transfiguration.<sup>4</sup>

It is telling that critics who found the poem to be blasphemous were shocked not only by the idea that this self-murderous heroism was bestowed upon Leningrad as a kind of ultimate weapon, but also by the meter of the poem, a trochaic tetrameter commonly used in Russian poetry for children. This was viewed as inappropriate fiddling with the sacred context.

War and the Soviet experience were familiar ground for many poets.

Terrorist attacks were not; they were new to post-Soviet Russia and had a profound impact on society and culture. One of the finest poets of the 1970s and 1980s, Alexei Tsvetkov, had been absent from the poetry scene for some seventeen years. "It was the third of september . . .," one of the first poems written after he broke his silence, takes as its subject the horror of the three-day Beslan school siege, when 1,100 people were taken hostage and in the ensuing siege 330 were killed, almost half of them children.

It was the third of september  
they were treating our runny nose  
with plague  
the servants of herod the king  
were wanking their greedy stings  
they sodomized the whole country  
they did as they said  
a sweaty slave served  
a dish with children's eyes

music ring louder  
approve of the beast's  
entertainment  
if there is heaven for someone  
i don't believe in it anymore  
i won't go with the saints  
i agree to live in hell

the blood has dried at the sunrise  
in herod's kingdom  
it's daybreak over the country  
children play on the grass  
all of them innocent everyone's  
ours  
i will betray and you will betray

The grammatical ellipsis in the poem marks the brusque intonation. The poem engages some of Tsvetkov's crucial motifs: death, the rejection of God, ancient history. Among other notable poems on Russian domestic



Keith Gessen and Kirill  
Medvedev at the Harriman  
Institute (April 24, 2013)

***"I am interested exclusively in the position of the artist undertaking a 'battle for his art'—which in our own time will mean a battle for his position"***



Roman Osminkin. Photo by Vadim F. Lurie

terrorism is Kirill Medvedev's "The End of the Ceasefire (The End of the Objectivist School)," which opens with a description of an encounter in the metro: The day after the expiration of the ceasefire with Chechens, a man sees the narrator on the metro, mistakes him for a terrorist, panics, and leaps out the doors. This sudden crisis of identity reminds Medvedev of the end of the "objectivist" poetic school, which, contrary to its name, cannot provide an objective view of any thing or situation.

Medvedev began as a confessional poet and Bukowski translator, but by 2005 he had become a poet whose work made critics seriously reconsider the aesthetic value of left poetry.<sup>5</sup> As Keith Gessen puts it: "[In 2005 Medvedev] announced that he

was leaving the literary world. It was an extension of global capitalism, he writes, and he wanted nothing more to do with it. He renounced copyright to all his works and published only on the Internet or through other self-publishing mechanisms." "I am interested exclusively in the position of the artist undertaking a 'battle for his art'—which in our own time will mean a battle for his position," writes Medvedev in his "Communiqué."<sup>6</sup> According to Gessen, "Medvedev's announcement, generally ignored or misunderstood at the time, appears now to have signaled the return of political engagement to the Russian literary scene."<sup>7</sup>

Medvedev's political-literary theory was backed by poetry and methodology, including

instructions to critics on how they should perform their work ("Ten Instructions to a Critic"). Despite the utter seriousness of his theoretical statements, in Medvedev's poetry the narrator/speaker often plays with changing identities or the forceful collision of theory and practice. More than once Medvedev reacts to current events by imagining extreme outcomes. For example, depicting a routine protest action, Medvedev suddenly turns it into a violent gun fight between protesters and OMON forces; afterward the typical intelligentsia-style political talk anecdotally resumes ("But the main thing is for there to be no revolution," said the environmentalist Evgenia Chirikova, as we stood over the bloody troops of the riot police, wondering what to do next"<sup>8</sup>).

Medvedev's poetic interests fit naturally into the left agenda, e.g., his stance on Israel and its ongoing conflict with Palestine. One of Medvedev's latest works is the book-length rhymed poem *Жить долго умереть молодым* ("Live Long, Die Young"), describing his interview with well-known French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann, director of *Shoah*. The interview immediately goes bad: Lanzmann is put on guard at the sound of the term "holocaust industry," which causes the narrator to interrupt his own story and explain in detail why he is not an anti-Semite. Yet throughout the whole affair, the narrator is trying to prove that Lanzmann is just like him and his friend and they are "like Lanzmann." This striving to portray Lanzmann as an ally pushes the limit, as Medvedev tries to decipher the hidden message of Lanzmann's words and manner:



He has just one moment left  
To die young.

But what did the fog of those eyes  
Communicate?  
Vague sentence fragments,  
A dry, unpleasant refusal?

•

“Hang in there, boys.  
Be strong just one more time.

Communists never surrender.”<sup>9</sup>

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On December 4, 2011, Russian legislative elections were held. Putin’s United Russia easily won the majority, but there was evidence of massive fraud. Many Russian citizens felt that they had been deceived. On December 10, the biggest rally since the fall of the Soviet Union was held in Moscow on Bolotnaya Square; a parallel rally was held in St. Petersburg, where activists unrolled a banner with the slogan that would quickly become famous: *ВЫ НАС ДАЖЕ НЕ ПРЕДСТАВЛЯЕТЕ*. The phrase, coined by St. Petersburg poet Pavel Arseniev, is a clever pun on two possible meanings: “You don’t even imagine us” and “You don’t even represent us” (i.e., as parliamentarians). *Translit* entered the spotlight.

Founded in 2005 by Arseniev and friends, the almanac *Translit* features articles concerning actual problems of literature, literary theory, and art. The almanac and publishing house are, obviously, leftist; not in the vulgar sense of the Russian Communist Party, but more in the manner of French or American left

circles, which discuss philosophy, social issues, and discrimination. Poetry itself was mainly allocated to the book series \*kraft, printed on kraft paper, with a notice on every book: “What you hold in your hands does not look like a ‘normal’ book, and this is due to the authors’ ambition to emphasize the material aspect of the cultural process.”

Roman Osminkin’s two books, *Товарищ-вещь* (Comrade-Thing) and *Товарищ-слово* (Comrade-Word), show the evolution of one poet’s method. Osminkin’s verse deliberately sounds lighthearted, often referencing folk and pop songs, and engaging rhyme and meter. Sometimes he deals in buffoonery plain and simple: “I came in and Putin left / maybe it wasn’t even him / although it seemed like Putin / I came in and he took off // and wherever I might go / Putin in a flash disappears / I just logged in to Facebook / there’s Putin’s heel on its way out.”<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the theoretical works in these books serve as explanations for the poems and sound much more sophisticated and philosophical, referencing Marx, Althusser, Negri, and Benjamin. “When you hold a position (prescribed by your political beliefs), you can’t equivocate any longer and hide behind aesthetic autonomy,” Osminkin writes. “We have no

right to desert the frontline of our inexpressible, for surely there will be those who will express it their way, thus denying our feelings and thoughts, and, consequently. Existence.”<sup>11</sup> That said, there is a lot of self-irony in Osminkin’s poems, which are often sincerely serious and self-ironic at the same time. In a 2011 poem, Osminkin speaks about a worker who wakes up and goes to work the same hour as the poet goes to sleep. Could it be, then, that the poet serves as guardian of the sleeping worker? The poet deliberates on this for a moment, then suddenly says to himself:

ah let’s be plain  
this worker doesn’t exist  
you have imagined him to guard  
his sleep  
because otherwise how can  
you exonerate yourself  
of not sleeping at night  
though there’s no one to exonerate  
yourself to  
since you’re no real use for the  
national economy

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One might argue that the narrative was the last aesthetic resort before poetry plunged into the element of plain manifesto; for example, Galina Rymbu’s most powerful, best-known, and finest poem:<sup>12</sup>

***Osminkin’s verse deliberately sounds lighthearted, often referencing folk and pop songs, and engaging rhyme and meter. Sometimes he deals in buffoonery plain and simple.***



Galina Rymbu. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Brooks Platt

I change at Trubnaya metro and  
see — fire  
I get off at the university and  
see — fire  
I go down the escalator at Chistye  
Prudy and see — fire  
when we fall at Begovaya, at  
Vykhino,  
we see — fire, fire, fire  
  
boys and girls their eyes filled with  
blood  
(to hell with '68)  
students in hats with pompons  
walking silently next to me  
and suddenly they start to shout:

“FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!”  
  
.....  
  
while we were writing and screwing  
while we were tortured by  
loneliness  
while dealing with the dead body of  
politics and burying the state's  
lamented carcass in heaven  
Bulgarian students have occupied  
Sofia University demanding the  
government be dissolved,  
they say: “because we felt, we knew,  
that our fellow citizens would  
support us”

and you say: “well, Bulgaria isn't  
Russia, less poison and rot,  
here in old Russia, under the heel,  
under pressure, we have to bend  
over backward thinking up slow  
methods of struggle, clear political  
positions”

Rymbu's poem goes on to  
enumerate weaknesses of those  
who could become allies in the  
struggle with the filthy and macabre  
regime; it fiercely speaks of the  
regime's lies and atrocities, mingling  
them with images of sex, gore,  
and consumption. Yet the *fire* that  
propels the poem forward is strong  
enough to let Rymbu speak of the  
ecstatic visions of a clear, fire-  
cleansed future:

I see students, fire  
people marching, fire  
trembling, feeling, blind  
invincible and kind, fire  
I see you fire  
love you fire  
knowledge rage emotion and fire  
for those who have occupied our  
reality prison and fire  
where all the city squares are  
ours — fire  
thinking what's next — fire  
other galaxies books science fire  
death to the anthropological  
machine fire  
Diderot in the Kremlin with a skull  
in his hands fire  
I see Benjamin with a red flag and a  
cup of coffee in the Kremlin fire  
everyone rising from the camps  
and  
marching with us to the squares  
and into the institutes fire  
for our grandfathers and great-  
grandfathers the forests and the  
wheat

fields fire  
 for wine and cigarettes fire  
 for the possibility of a personal  
 stance fire  
 for solidarity for weakness for  
 breaking the blockade fire  
 for death to the consumer system  
 for an end to media violence fire  
 for our meetings real meetings of  
 people alive speaking us fire  
 beyond alienation beyond limits  
 and nations fire

This is not Rymbu's only poetic manifesto; see, for example, "Sex Is a Desert"<sup>13</sup> or the seemingly more composed *White Bread*, where the measured intonation meets the central image of white bread, the food of the poor, a substance merely to fill one's bowels. This text somehow makes the reader feel guilty, or, at least, uneasy, and one could argue that this is the same thing as making the reader think. Gessen calls Rymbu's poetry, "part confession, part social commentary, part incantation."<sup>14</sup>

This "new social poetry," however, led by the likes of Rymbu and Medvedev, is not without its critics. Some have criticized it for the very urge to politicize virtually everything, or to reduce everything to oppositions (if not in poetry itself, then in literary strategy).<sup>15</sup> One of the most interesting points was made by literary scholar Aleksandr Zhitenyov, who in 2013 took this kind of poetry to task precisely for

the way it makes a reader unable to dislike or disregard it:

When the most important news comes from the courtroom, the whole culture becomes an agora. Everyone's attention is focused on gestures and formulae. The actor's charisma and oratorical talent are prized. The flamboyancy of statement is the criterion of truth. The one who is the first to get applause is right. . . . "The new social poetry" is a colossal fake, but it didn't emerge out of the blue. It emerged out of the dreams of sociality. In an atomized society, there always will be a demand for unity. In a society like this, you always want to say "we," and that euphoric "we" has to have its own voice. . . . An artist in the middle of this field is absolutely invulnerable for criticism. It is indecent to question his or her creative credibility. He will always have an indulgence for working in a hotspot of culture.<sup>16</sup>

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The annexation of Crimea and the war with Ukraine caused a dramatic rift within the Russian literary world; bonds were broken and unspeakable things were said. Some poets emigrated; others took a firm pro-Russian stance. Ukrainian

Russian-language poets no longer tolerated being called Russian poets. Ukrainian poet Anastasia Dmitruk's poem "We Will Never Be Brothers" went viral on the Internet.<sup>17</sup> Ukrainian Russian-language poets produced many notable poems on the war. Boris Khersonsky, the renowned Odessa-based poet and psychiatrist, wrote his book *Missa in tempore belli* (published, significantly, by a St. Petersburg-based publisher). Although Khersonsky's allegiance to one side of the conflict is unconditional, he implies that there is a place for complex feelings about the war. His book is mainly about the forced choice of identity and about rage in the face of the rapid return of the past: the annexation of Crimea is seen as an act completely in keeping with Russia's Soviet character, where the Soviet monster arises zombie-like from its grave. Kharkiv-based Russian-language poet Anastasia Afanasyeva also wrote some striking poems about the war, such as this one, reflecting Theodor Adorno's thought about the impossibility of writing poetry after Auschwitz:

Is poetry possible after  
 Yasynuvata  
 Horlivka  
 Savur-Mohyla  
 Novoazovsk  
 After  
 Krasnyi Luch  
 Donetsk  
 Luhansk  
 After the division of people  
 Between those who rest and those  
 who perish  
 Those who starve and those who  
 party

.....

***The annexation of Crimea is seen as an act completely in keeping with Russia's Soviet character, where the Soviet monster arises zombie-like from its grave.***





Maria Stepanova. Photo by Mikhail Stepanov

Is poetry possible  
When history has woken up  
When its steps  
Rock every heart  
You can't speak of anything else,  
But you can't speak.

As I write this  
Somewhere very near  
Any possibilities are being  
canceled out.

***And yet poetry still  
makes things happen  
in the minds of the  
people who live, read  
about, and contribute  
to these events,  
sometimes knowingly,  
sometimes not.***

Many Russian poets, such as Tsvetkov or Elena Fanailova, felt the need to express their sense of shame and guilt before Ukraine. In 2016, Fanailova wrote a very personal poem summarizing her attitude toward the Russian government that had gone to war with Ukraine. The poem condemns the willingly unnamed man who personalizes this power ("I know by heart your wolfish habit / your yellow teeth your hardliners your tanks"); Fanailova mixes propagandistic clichés with personal images of a childhood spent in southern Russia, close to Ukraine:

[I am] a lame duck, and agent  
of the  
Department of State,  
a traitor to the Motherland, a  
damned symbolist  
and the Milky Way above my  
grandmother's hut  
by the middle course of the Don

Finally, Maria Stepanova's latest book, *Spolia*, consists of two long fragmentary poems where the daily buzz is pierced by the absurdity of war news and propaganda. Here the fabric of the folklore song, Stepanova's natural element, cannot incorporate those piercing word bombs, and it looks as if they drop and leave holes in the fabric:

a fascist is the mousiest faciest  
sweetest  
and mossiest and longest-shanked  
but the air knows that none  
of you and us is fascist

remove the threads from  
the words,  
let them be in their corner,  
and the forest will call its  
heralds back  
and I shall not all die.

These poems can be read as an attempt to put together the pieces

of a shattered world, an attempt to coordinate “normal” politics and cultural life; they chronicle this attempt and bear witness to its failure.

The war in Ukraine arguably came as the biggest shock for Russians since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Three years later, society has sunk into a state of sluggish equilibrium—this likely accounts for the fact that virtually no significant poems written after 2014 concern such major events as the murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov or

the Russian military involvement in Syria. Most certainly changes lie ahead; yet the vision is still unclear. So perhaps it is the right moment to summarize the ways and achievements of contemporary Russian political poetry, if only to conclude that Auden’s idea that poetry makes nothing happen is probably true in terms of its direct impact on historical events. And yet poetry still makes things happen in the minds of the people who live, read about, and contribute to these events, sometimes knowingly, sometimes not. ■

*Lev Oborin (b. 1987) is a poet, translator, and literary critic. He has two collections of poetry to his name, with more forthcoming. He has received the Znamya Award and the Tadeusz Rózewicz Prize for translators. He works as an editor at New Literary Observer Publishing House and curates the Razlichie Prize for poetry. He has also worked for the Russian edition of Rolling Stone magazine. Among his translations of poetry are works by Robert Frost, Czesław Miłosz, John Ashbery, and Mary Jo Salter. His poems and articles on contemporary Russian poetry have appeared in numerous Russian literary magazines. His poetry has been translated into English, Polish, German, and Latvian and has appeared in international magazines, including Poetry, Columbia, and International Poetry Review. In 2015, Oborin delivered a talk on contemporary Russian poetry at the Harriman Institute.*

<sup>1</sup>Danil Burygin, “Taktika uskol’zaniia: Kirill Korchagin o tom, kak poniat’ sovremennuiu poeziu,” <http://theoryandpractice.ru/posts/8736-modern-poetry>. Accessed December 21, 2016. Unless credited otherwise, all translations from Russian are mine—L.O.

<sup>2</sup>See D. Garner, “A Litany of Betrayals, Petty Yet Terrifying,” *New York Times*, March 20, 2013; L. McKeon, “New Emotion: On Kirill Medvedev,” *Paris Review*, April 8, 2013; D. Peak, “It’s No Good by Kirill Medvedev,” *Rumpus*, April 13, 2013; P. Missaghi, “In Review: *It’s No Good* by Kirill Medvedev,” *Asymptote*, April 21, 2013; M. Liu, “*It’s No Good* by Kirill Medvedev,” *Independent*, June 25, 2015.

<sup>3</sup>My essay here is excerpted from a much longer survey of contemporary Russian political poetry. I intend to publish the full version in the near future.

<sup>4</sup>Translated by Polina Barskova, in “Poetry after the Siege of Leningrad: Montage, Ekphrasis, Allegory,” (<http://jacket2.org/article/poetry-after-siege-leningrad>). See this article for details about the siege of Leningrad in contemporary Russian poetry. Accessed December 21, 2016.

<sup>5</sup>For details on Medvedev’s background, see Marijeta Bozovic, “Poetry on the Front Line: Kirill Medvedev and a New Russian Poetic Avant-garde,” *Arcade* (<http://arcade.stanford.edu/content/poetry-front-line-kirill-medvedev-and-new-russian-poetic-avant-garde>). Accessed December 21, 2016.

<sup>6</sup>Kirill Medvedev, “Communiqué,” translated by Keith Gessen, in Kirill Medvedev, *It’s No Good* (Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012), 104. Furthermore, Medvedev announced that he had decided to quit writing altogether, but a few years later he began to publish his poetry again.

<sup>7</sup>Keith Gessen, “New Russian Political Poets: Introduction,” *n+1*, no. 26 (Fall 2016), 108.

<sup>8</sup>Medvedev, *It’s No Good*, 285.

<sup>9</sup>Medvedev, “Live Long, Die Young,” translated by Keith Gessen and Michael Robbins, *Poetry* (December 2016), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/detail/91315>. Accessed December 21, 2016.

<sup>10</sup>Roman Osminkin, “I Came In and Putin Left,” translated by Jonathan Brooks Platt, in *Not a Word about Politics!* (New York: Cicada Press, 2016), 131. The poem is not included in either of the \*kraft collections, but illustrates the author’s method just as well.

<sup>11</sup>Osminkin, “S kem vy, mastera kul’tury,” *Tovarishch-slovo* (St. Petersburg, Svobodnoe marksistskoe izdatel’stvo); *Al’mankh*, *Translit* (2013), 4.

<sup>12</sup>Galina Rymbu, “Untitled,” translated by Jonathan Brooks Platt, *n+1*, no. 26 (Fall 2016), 111–17.

<sup>13</sup>See <http://www.thewhitereview.org/poetry/sex-is-a-desert/>.

<sup>14</sup>Gessen, “New Russian Political Poets,” 108.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, the debate between Pavel Arseniev and Igor Gulin concerning “protest poetry readings” in 2012 (<http://os.colta.ru/literature/events/details/37230>). Accessed December 21, 2016.

<sup>16</sup>See Aleksandr Zhitenev, “Megafon kak orudie proizvodstva,” <http://archives.colta.ru/docs/27338>. Accessed December 21, 2016.

<sup>17</sup>For details on Dmitruk’s poem, see V’iacheslav Iaremchuk, and Alina Zuikov’ska, “‘Nikogda my ne budem brat’iami’: fenomen polytychnykh virshiv u konteksti ukrainsko-rosiys’koi informatsiinoi viiny,” *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsional’nykh doslidzhen’ im. I. F. Kurasa*, no. 1 (2015), 163–78.

<sup>18</sup>On Ukrainian poetry about the war, see: <https://pionline.wordpress.com/2014/03/07/letters-from-ukraine/>. Accessed December 21, 2016.

# In Memoriam

**Edward Alfred Allworth**, professor emeritus of Turco-Soviet studies at Columbia University and member of the Harriman Institute faculty for more than a half century, died at St. Luke's Hospital in Manhattan, on October 20, 2016.

Professor Allworth was founding director at Columbia of both the Program on Soviet Nationality Problems (1970) and the Center for the Study of Central Asia (1984). The Central Eurasian Studies Society honored Edward Allworth posthumously at its conference in November 2016 with the CESS Lifetime Service to the Field Award.

A groundbreaking researcher and connector of scholars, Allworth made his first tour of Soviet Central Asia and Russia in 1957 as one of the early unsponsored American visitors. As a Columbia faculty member of what was then the Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures, Professor Allworth headed a series of official exchanges between American and Soviet scholars to the Soviet Union in 1983 and 1985. Later he was invited to the region by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and by the Academies of Sciences of the Republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to study a variety of subjects, ranging from Central Asian firearms to Uzbek and Kazakh theater and drama. His own papers (now in the New York Public Library) include extensive and rare collections on Soviet Afghanistan, the Crimean Tatars, Tajikistan, and the "Uzbek Intelligentsia Project."

Professor Allworth's voluminous writings span nearly six decades, ranging from "How the Soviets Interpreted the Lines of Two Asian Poets," in *The American Slavic and East Europe Review* (16:2, 1957), to a 2015 entry on Tamerlane for the *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*. He is best known for his books *Uzbek Literary Politics* (Mouton, 1964); *Central Asian Publishing and the Rise of Nationalism* (NYPL, 1965); *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule* (Columbia, 1967); *The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia* (Praeger, 1973); *Nationality Group Survival in Multiethnic States* (Praeger, 1977); *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (Hoover, 1990 [2013]); *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland* (2d ed., Duke, 1998); and *The Preoccupations of Abdalrauf Fitrat, Bukharan Nonconformist: An Analysis and List of His Writings* (Das Arabische Buch, 2000). He updated his seminal 1967 work with a second (*Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule* [Duke, 1989]) and third (*Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Rule* [Duke, 1994]) edition. Allworth was editor of the Central Asia Book Series at Duke University Press.

Edward Allworth was born on December 1, 1920, the son of Edward and Ethel (Walker) Allworth. He received his bachelor's degree from Oregon State University, a master's degree from the University of Chicago, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University (1959). After working at both Reed College and the Ford Foundation, Professor Allworth

returned to Columbia. His long-standing contribution to Columbia University spanned decades of teaching a wide variety of courses on Central Asian studies, including language, literature, history, and politics, and culminated in 1984 when he established a center at what was then the Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures to focus on the study of contemporary Central Asia. Beyond his impressive body of research and scholarly accomplishments, Professor Allworth was widely known for his infectious enthusiasm for Central Asian studies and his dedication to students. He mentored dozens of accomplished researchers and scholars from around the world and introduced the rich culture and history of the region to countless more.

Charitable contributions in Professor Allworth's memory may be made to Friends of Fort Tryon Park Trust or to the Nature Conservancy.

**Frank J. Miller**, professor of Russian language at Columbia University, passed away on January 24, 2016, after a long and courageous battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 75.

Professor Miller devoted his entire life to studying, teaching, and writing about the Russian language. A graduate of Florida State University (1962), he received his Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1976 with a dissertation on folklore of the Stalin Era. He taught at the University





Edward Alfred Allworth



Frank J. Miller



Stanislaw H. Wellisz

of South Carolina (1972–77), Bryn Mawr College (1977–78), and Colby College (1978–85) before embarking on his legendary career at Columbia University in 1985. Frank was a vital member of the Columbia Slavic Department for thirty years, down to his very last day, teaching language—and language teaching—at every level, directing the Russian language program for decades, and chairing the department from 1994 to 1998. He was a long-term colleague of the Russian School at Middlebury, served as president of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) from 1999 to 2000, and was the recipient of the Hettelman Award for Distinguished Teaching and Service at Columbia University in 1988 and the AATSEEL Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1996.

A prolific author, Frank was endlessly fascinated by the beauty and subtleties of the Russian language. His *Handbook of Russian Prepositions and Handbook of Russian Verbs* became classics. But his magnum opus will remain the three volumes of Russian-language textbooks: *Beginner's Russian*; *В Игру: Russian Grammar in Context*; and *Russian: From Intermediate to Advanced*, all written in collaboration with Professors Olga Kagan and Anna Kudyma. He also wrote dozens of articles and book reviews and never missed an AATSEEL conference.

However distinguished, Frank's scholarship always came second to his teaching. He lived for the classroom,

for interaction with students, and they in return adored and respected him. His enthusiasm was contagious, as were his laughter and the jokes he liked to tell. He trained and inspired several generations of Russian scholars, leaving his most enduring imprint on the field through them.

Frank was a remarkable human being, a model of kindness and caring, always ready to listen and sympathize, to understand and respond, and simply to be there for a friend in need. His was the exemplary life of a man who gave generously of himself, who was utterly devoted to his teaching and his students. It is impossible to imagine that he is gone, that the door—always open to colleagues, students, and friends—is now closed for good. We will miss you, Frank! Rest in peace.

—Valentina Izmirlieva, *Chair, Department of Slavic Languages on behalf of colleagues and friends at Columbia University*

**Stanislaw H. Wellisz**, a Polish-born economist and longtime Columbia University professor who helped guide his native country's transition from communism to capitalism, died in New York on February 28, 2016, after a long illness. He was 90.

Professor Wellisz specialized in development economics, a field that satisfied his fascination with world cultures and his deep desire to help the poor. He helped draw up a new

tariff structure for Nepal, aided Venezuela's efforts to restructure its finances, and advised city planners in Calcutta and Istanbul. He was a member of World Bank missions to Iran, Jordan, Algeria, and the former Yugoslavia. Wellisz's efforts to improve living standards were not limited to developing nations. He sought to identify opportunities to start minority businesses as director of the Harlem Development Project from 1968 to 1969, a time when the Columbia campus was rocked by student protests against the war in Vietnam and racial injustice at home.

But it was to Poland that he devoted most of his intellectual energy throughout his career. He returned to his native country time and again, twice serving as a visiting professor and sending his two sons to summer camps there. He often said his desire to rebuild postwar Poland motivated him to study economics. When Poland threw off Soviet-backed communist rule in 1989, Professor Wellisz returned to serve as an adviser to the new Solidarity-led government, working with Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz on a program of economic "shock therapy" to end price controls, limit industrial subsidies, and reduce barriers to trade. While causing high unemployment at first, the plan laid the foundations for years of strong growth that made Poland one of the most successful post-Soviet economies.

From 1991 to 1997, Professor Wellisz taught at the University of Warsaw, overhauling the economics curriculum and helping to train

a generation of postcommunist economists who would later move into important roles in government, academia, and business, helping solidify Poland's success. His efforts earned him an honorary doctorate from the university as well as the Order of Poland's Rebirth (*Polonia Restituta*), the nation's highest civilian honor.

Stanislaw Wellisz was born in Warsaw on March 28, 1925, into a family of wealthy industrialists whose interests in railroad-locomotive construction, munitions, and steel powered Poland's industrial development following independence in 1918. His family fled Poland as German and Soviet troops invaded in 1939, and his father, Leopold Wellisz, served as an adviser to the Polish government-in-exile on plans for postwar reconstruction, which he would never be able to carry out because of the communist takeover of Eastern Europe.

The family, which included an older brother and a sister who are no longer living, settled in New York City, where Stanislaw Wellisz attended Trinity School. He graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he also earned a Ph.D. after spending two years as a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Cambridge.

Professor Wellisz was the author or coauthor of three books, including *The Economics of the Soviet Bloc*, published in 1964, as well as numerous academic articles. At the time of his death, he was working

on a book about the economics of the state with former Columbia colleague Ronald Findlay, a frequent collaborator. As chairman of Columbia's renowned economics department during 1977–82, Wellisz lured luminaries such as Jagdish Bhagwati, a specialist in international trade, to its faculty.

Professor Wellisz was fluent in French, Italian, and English, as well as his native Polish, and his intellectual interests ranged from anthropology and literature to art and architecture. He was a charming storyteller who loved to regale guests with quirky tales of obscure happenings in distant lands, and he compiled a huge collection of slides from his travels in Asia and Africa. He was an avid skier and outdoorsman who loved nothing better than mushroom hunting in Vermont's Green Mountains or canoeing in the Adirondacks.

In 1955, Stanislaw Wellisz married a fellow Polish immigrant, the former Isabel Gajewska, who has since died. He is survived by his two sons from that marriage, Tadeusz and Christopher; a nephew, Michael Temmer; and four grandchildren. His remains will be laid to rest at the Lutheran cemetery in Warsaw. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to St. Joseph's Indian School, P.O. Box 300, Chamberlain, SD 57325-0300.

—Department of Economics

# Alumni & Postdoc Notes

I have spent my entire professional career dealing with the U.S.-Soviet, and now the U.S.-Russian, relationship. Currently, I'm a member of the Board of Directors of PJSC "LUKOIL." I'm also president of TTG Global LLC, an international strategic advisory company.

From June 1997 to April 2016 I served as senior international advisor at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, an international law firm, where I focused primarily on Russian foreign and economic policy, U.S. foreign policy, U.S.-Russian relations, and the global challenges facing both countries in an increasingly turbulent international system.

I served as special assistant to President Clinton and senior director for Russia, Ukraine and the Eurasian States at the National Security Council in the White House in 1993, and then as assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research (INR) until May 1997.

Before joining government, I was senior vice president for policy studies at the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), where I worked for many years.

I'm a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a Board member of the U.S.-Russia Business Council (USRBC), and also participate actively in the Valdai International Discussion Club and the Astana Club.

I have frequently provided commentary for major networks and newspapers in both the United States and the Russian Federation on American foreign policy and U.S.-Russian relations.

—**Toby Gati** (Russian Institute, 1970; M.A., Slavic Languages, 1970; M.I.A., SIPA, 1972)



Toby Gati



Eagle Glassheim

I am an associate professor of history at the University of British Columbia, where I teach Central European and environmental history. I recently published my second book, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016).

—**Eagle Glassheim** (Harriman Certificate, 1998; Ph.D., History, 2000)

After graduating from Salem College in North Carolina with a degree in international relations and economics, I arrived at the Harriman Institute to study democratization in post-Soviet states. While there I learned a great deal more about the challenges of effecting change in any given society (I also met my husband, David!). Following graduation from Columbia, I wanted to build some experience in nonprofit management. I spent about eight months as a program officer and then became executive director of the Sunflower County Freedom Project, a college-prep program based on the Freedom Schools model of the 1960s.

In 2011, I made the move to my current position. Now I live in East Africa and work for One Acre Fund, a leading social entrepreneurship organization that helps





Sarah Hylden

subsistence farmers grow their way out of poverty. One Acre Fund serves about 400,000 farm families in sub-Saharan Africa. Part of our “market bundle” approach to addressing the issue of poverty among the world’s smallholder farmers is to deliver high-quality inputs to within walking distance of their homes. I am the logistics director of my team, which focuses on that piece of the bundle (the other pieces being access to credit, training, and a market at the end of the growing season). David and I are currently based in rural Tanzania and just welcomed our first son, Arthur.

—**Sarah Hylden** (née Hoftiezer) (MARS-REERS, 2009; Harriman Certificate, 2009)



Casey Michel

Originally from Portland, Oregon, I’m a freelance researcher and journalist who has written for *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Foreign Policy*, and *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project*, among other platforms. I have also worked on post-Soviet-related projects with International Crisis Group, Nuclear Threat Initiative, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Prior to receiving my master’s degree from the Harriman Institute, I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in northern Kazakhstan and completed my undergraduate degree at Rice University—where I also taught a course on the history of Batman.

—**Casey Michel** (MARS-REERS, 2015)



Emily O'Dell

I am an assistant professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Sultan Qaboos University. Previously I held the Whittlesey Chair of History & Archaeology at the American University of Beirut, and taught at Columbia University, Brown University, and Harvard University—where I received an award for excellence in teaching. In addition to my master’s in Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies from Columbia University, I also have a Ph.D., M.A., and M.F.A. from Brown University.

I completed my postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University under the direction of Homi Bhabha. My writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Salon*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *NPR*, and *Huffington Post*. My most recent academic publication is “Subversives & Saints: Sufism and the State in Central Asia” in Pauline Jones Luong’s *Islam, Society, and Politics in Central Asia* (University of Pittsburgh Press). For my field research on Sufism, Islamic law, and cultural heritage in Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia (made possible by my proficiency in Russian, Czech, Persian, Arabic, Mongolian, and Uzbek), I have been chosen as a Fulbright-Hays Scholar (Indonesia); an Edward A. Hewett Policy Fellow (Tajikistan and Afghanistan); a Columbia University Pepsico Fellow (Uzbekistan); an IREX Fellow (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, and Hungary); an American Council Fellow (Turkmenistan); an NEH Summer Fellow (American Center of Mongolian Studies); and a State Department Fellow in Critical Languages (Persian and Tajiki) in Dushanbe. I have also excavated medieval Islamic archaeology and preserved Sufi shrines on the Silk Road in Turkmenistan.

—**Emily O'Dell** (MARS-REERS, 2010; Harriman Certificate, 2010)

At the Russian Institute my certificate essay dealt with the Czech Legion and the Bolsheviks. I was fortunate to have studied with remarkable teachers like Philip Mosely (political science), who awarded me a modest grant to study and compile a bibliography and summary of Yiddish-language materials composed before and during the Bolshevik Revolution, and Ernest Simmons (literature), who introduced me to the magisterial nineteenth-century Russian novelists. Both of these gifted teachers added to the knowledge I had inherited from my Ukrainian-born Jewish family who survived World War I, the Revolution, and the Civil War. My student years were interrupted by military service. I served as a military intelligence analyst and later as chief of the USSR desk at the Far East Command Psychological Warfare branch of the U.S. Army.

Back home, when a college dean asked why it had taken me so long to complete my studies, I responded, “the military, marriage, and three kids.” I wrote here and there about Russian and Soviet history and American life, but after teaching in colleges in the U.S. and Canada I changed direction and became a longtime editor of books and magazines. I also wrote many books, including three related to the Vietnam War (*No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran*, another on the men who refused to serve in Vietnam, and coauthored a dual biography of Daniel and Philip Berrigan, two antiwar Catholic priests), plus others dealing with foreign policy, religion, and sports, including a biography of Branch Rickey, the Brooklyn Dodger executive who brought Jackie Robinson into baseball and thus desegregated the game. I’m currently the book review editor, and a blogger, for the History News Network, and write for several other websites.

—**Murray Polner** (Russian Institute Certificate, 1967)



Murray Polner



Marilyn Schuman Wertheimer

The first person to receive a B.A. in Russian language from Stanford University, I attended the Russian Institute. I spent a summer studying Russian at Middlebury College, and then in 1953 I received a certificate from the Russian Institute and a Columbia University M.A. in public law and government. After further graduate work in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, and earning a master’s degree in library science at UCLA, I became a reference librarian and political science bibliographer at the University of Colorado, Boulder, for twenty-five years and taught a general honors seminar on Soviet civilization there for sixteen.

My first visit to the Soviet Union was in 1960, during which I met a young Russian woman who wanted to correspond with me; we carried on an innocent correspondence for twelve years. I visited the Soviet Union again in 1973, traveling to Siberia and Central Asia. In 1988 I was a member of a delegation of librarians visiting the Soviet Union; we were the first U.S. librarians to visit Odessa. I was also a member of a delegation of librarians to China in 1985. In 1998, I participated in a Waterways of Russia tour led by Professor Mark von Hagen of the Harriman Institute. On this excursion I met two young Russian girls in Goritsy who were delighted to meet an American who could speak some Russian; they took me by my arms and proudly escorted me around their tiny village.

—**Marilyn Schuman Wertheimer** (Russian Institute Certificate, 1953; M.A., Political Science, GSAS, 1953)



# THE ROOFS OF ST. PETERSBURG

BY MARK SERMAN





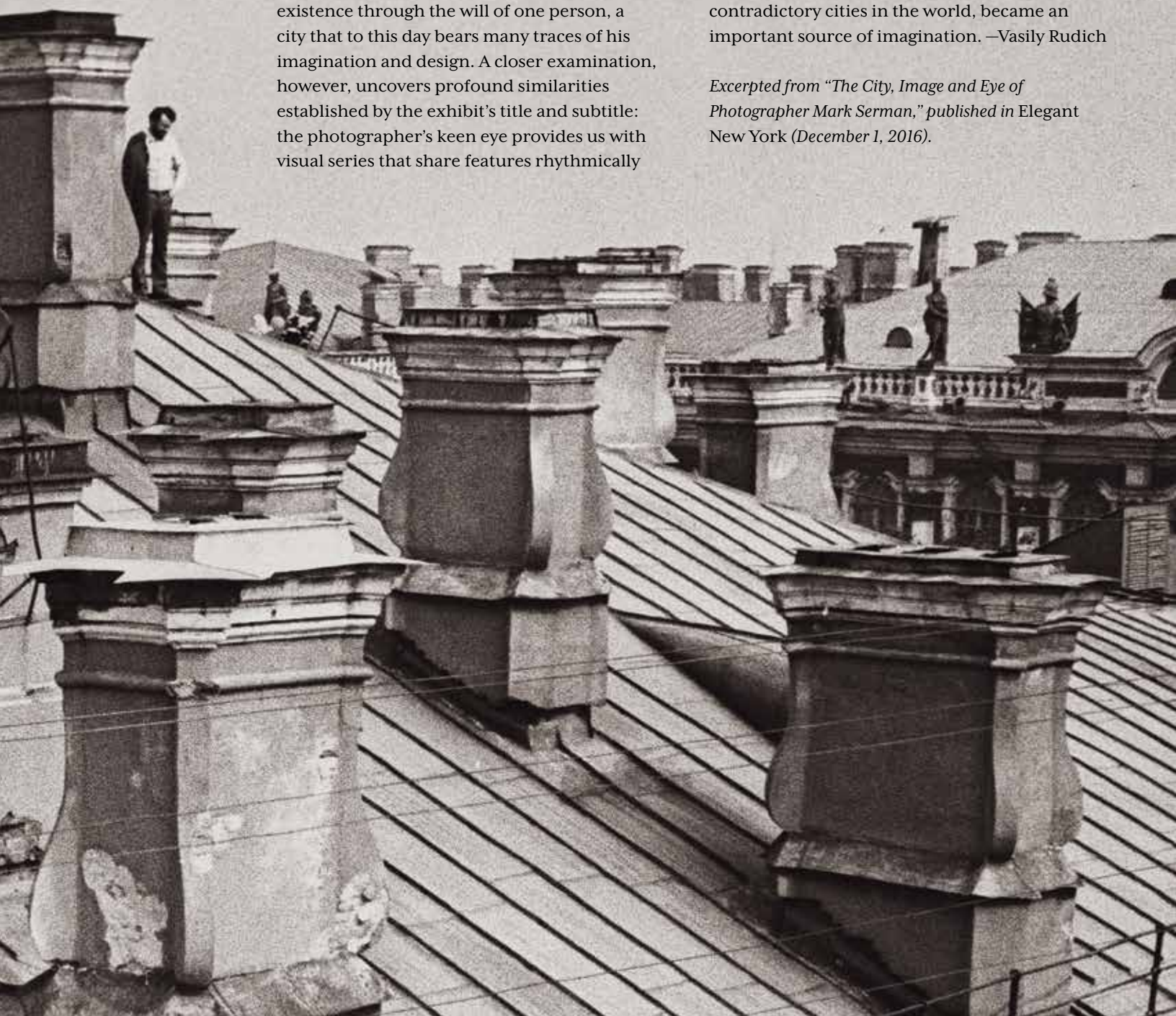
### URBAN POETRY: ST. PETERSBURG—NEW YORK

The subtitle of Mark Serman's exhibit at the Harriman Institute (October 19–December 16, 2016) appeared to invite an aesthetic comparison of these two cities, which seemingly have nothing in common. And indeed, at first glance one sees little in common between the enormous metropolis on the Hudson River, which has undergone numerous architectural metamorphoses over the centuries, and the imperial capital on the Neva, which came into existence through the will of one person, a city that to this day bears many traces of his imagination and design. A closer examination, however, uncovers profound similarities established by the exhibit's title and subtitle: the photographer's keen eye provides us with visual series that share features rhythmically

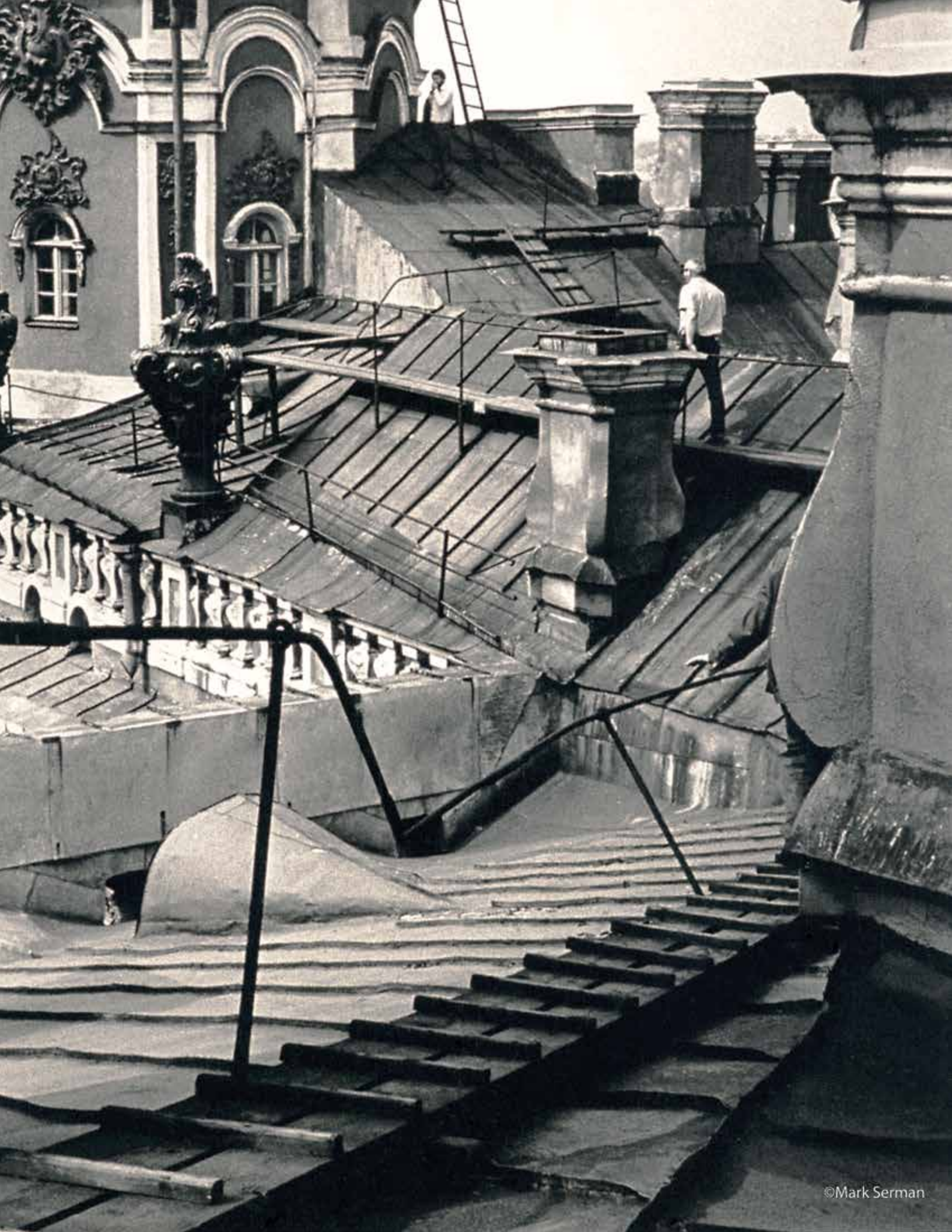
or metaphorically, by means of camera angle, perspective or intonation, which ultimately lead to a complex game of associations characteristic for both poetry and any form of fine art.

In Serman's words, the exhibition reflects both periods of his work: the period of his pervading interest in cinematography when he worked as a cameraman for Lenfilm (the time when his photo-series "The Roofs of St. Petersburg" was created) and his more diverse artistic activity in emigration, when New York, one of the most contradictory cities in the world, became an important source of imagination. —Vasily Rudich

*Excerpted from "The City, Image and Eye of Photographer Mark Serman," published in Elegant New York (December 1, 2016).*









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