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PATHWAYS TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM DEPICTING GORBACHEV SUMMER 2018

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Cover image: Oleg Vassiliev, *White Skiers*, 1990. Oil on canvas, 51 x 39¼ in. Courtesy of the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation, www.KolodzeiArt.org.

Image on this page: Oleg Vassiliev, 2 from the *Metro Series*, 1961–62. Linocut, edition 15. Courtesy of the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation, www.KolodzeiArt.org. Design and Art Direction: Columbia Creative

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Opposite page: Alexander Cooley (Photo by Jeffrey Schifman)





hen we renovated the Harriman Institute thirteen years ago, under the leadership of the late Catharine Nepomnyashchy, we created a beautiful exhibit space. One of the first exhibits mounted was *Perestroika + 20: Selections from the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art*, a series of works by contemporary Russian artists. This began a long-standing collaboration with the Kolodzei Art Foundation, with the Harriman mounting several fantastic exhibits from the organization's collection over the years.

The Kolodzei Collection consists of more than 7,000 works, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, and videos, by more than 300 artists from Russia and the former Soviet Union, and chronicles more than four decades of Russian and Soviet nonconformist art from the post-Stalin era to the present. It is an honor for us to feature a cover story by the foundation's executive director, curator and art historian Natalia Kolodzei. She writes about the prominent nonconformist artist Oleg Vassiliev, whose work we displayed at the Harriman Institute in 2017.

We are also delighted to include a profile of our alumnus, the Pulitzer Prizewinning biographer William Taubman, who recently published *Gorbachev: His Life and Times*, the first full-length English-language biography of Mikhail Gorbachev. Taubman earned a certificate from the Russian Institute in 1965 and a Ph.D. from Columbia's Department of Political Science in 1969; in 2004, he was named our Alumnus of the Year. His new biography is not only a literary feat but also a great resource for understanding U.S.-Russian relations.

We are pleased to publish a timely article from another alum, Peter Zalmayev ('08), who comments on the current political situation in Ukraine, in light of the recent wave of protests there, as well as a piece from our postdoctoral research scholar Edward Lemon. Lemon discusses his research on the pathways to violent extremism in Tajikistan, work that is particularly relevant given the recent spike in media attention devoted to Central Asia and the region's potential connections to Islamic terrorism. In his article, Lemon helps to debunk some of the myths surrounding Central Asia and violent extremism, and to add nuance to the generalizations that have prevailed in the mainstream media narrative.

Also in this issue, we have a profile of historian Catherine Evtuhov, who joined the Columbia faculty from Georgetown University two years ago, and the second part of our two-part interview with journalist and Carnegie Europe senior fellow Thomas de Waal. De Waal discusses his book *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, the interviews for which have recently become available in audio and transcript formats at Columbia University Libraries.

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

Alexander Cooley Director, Harriman Institute

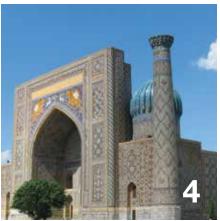


4月 COVER STORY

The Journey of Oleg Vassiliev By Natalia Kolodzei

Oleg Vassiliev belongs to the generation of Soviet nonconformist artists that emerged during the post-Stalin "Thaw" of the 1950s, championing an alternative to Socialist Realism. Like many of his fellow artists, Vassiliev escaped the ideological confines of the Soviet system by exploring spiritual dimensions within the self. Vassiliev never considered himself a political artist; his main purpose in art was to capture his impression of the world, as well as to comment on the relationship linking viewer, artist, and painting.

Like Levitan, the major interpreter of the Russian landscape in art at the close of the nineteenth century, Vassiliev explores and expands the concept of landscape as emotion, while reminding the viewer about the process and construction of painting. He can render the true beauty of nature in all the diversity of its changing states and all the subtleties of the human soul and human memory.



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Pathways to Violent Extremism: Evidence from Tajik Recruits to Islamic State By Edward Lemon

In recent years, Central Asia has received an unusual share of mainstream media attention due to the involvement of some Central Asians in Islamic terrorist groups. But is the region really a "hotbed of extremism"?

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<u>A Portrait of Catherine Evtuhov</u> By Ronald Meyer

Catherine Evtuhov is best known for her prize-winning *Portrait of a Russian Province*. She has said, "I had a very strong sense of swimming against the current, of wanting to undermine approaches and paradigms."





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A Revolution! Depicting Gorbachev: William Taubman in Profile By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

Following his 2003 Pulitzer Prizewinning biography of Nikita Khrushchev, Harriman alumnus William Taubman published the first full-fledged English-language biography of Mikhail Gorbachev last fall. What few people know is that Taubman had not originally intended to become a biographer.

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<u>The Radicalization of Post-Maidan</u> <u>Ukraine</u> By Peter Zalmayev

Many Ukrainians are unsatisfied with the post-Maidan trajectory of their country, but a recent wave of popular protests in Kyiv attracted few followers. Harriman alumnus Peter Zalmayev explains why. 30

Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War An Interview with Thomas de Waal By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

The journalist and Carnegie Europe senior fellow Thomas de Waal has donated a collection of audio files to Columbia Libraries and the Harriman Institute, containing all the interviews for his first two books, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* and *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War.* In this interview about his book on Armenia and Azerbaijan, de Waal discusses the origins of the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict and the tensions that continue to plague the two countries.



Alumni & Postdoc Notes

Giving to Harriman

Pathways to Violent Extremism EVIDENCE FROM TAJIK RECRUITS TO ISLAMIC STATE

BY EDWARD LEMON

ver the past few years, Central Asians have attracted international attention for their involvement in Islamic terrorist groups. Attacks in New York, St. Petersburg, Istanbul, and Stockholm have all been linked to Central Asian citizens. In May 2015, the head of Tajikistan's paramilitary police (OMON) dramatically defected to the Islamic State. At these moments, Central Asia received rare attention from mainstream news agencies. Coverage from outlets such as the Wall Street Journal, the Atlantic, and Business Insider painted the region as a "growing source of terrorism" and "fertile ground" for recruitment.

Central Asia as a "Hotbed of Extremism"?

This latest concern over militancy in Central Asia is nothing new. During the Soviet period, many Sovietologists viewed Central Asia as the USSR's soft underbelly by virtue of its recalcitrant Muslim population. After the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, the doyen of Sovietological commentators on Central Asia, Alexandre Bennigsen, wrote in his 1983 book, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, that "the Muslim community is prepared for the inevitable showdown with its Russian rulers." Since Central Asian republics became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991, observers have continued

to frame Central Asia as a potential source of chaos and considered ways to calm local tensions.

But, with the exception of Tajikistan's bloody civil war between 1992 and 1997, the region has seen limited political violence. A search for Central Asian states within the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), an open-source database that provides information about terrorism events around the world, yields 269 results. The dataset is problematic. Despite its purported focus on nonstate actors, it includes incidents such as the Andijan massacre in 2005, when Uzbek troops attacked protestors, and the 2014 violence in Khorog, Tajikistan, which pitted local commanders against the

"Trekking and climbing in Fann Mountains 2013" photo by Oleg Brovko, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0.



central government. Almost half of the entries for Central Asia (126 in total) took place during the Tajik civil war. While the GTD covers incidents dating back to 1970, there are no entries for the Soviet period. The GTD includes deaths that occurred during the May 1992 protests in Dushanbe, but not those during the February 1990 clashes between the Communist government and organized criminal groups. Setting these issues aside, Central Asia, home to 1 percent of the world's population, accounts for only 0.001 percent of entries in the attacks recorded in the GTD.

Even if Central Asia itself has not seen many attacks, this does not

exclude the region from becoming an exporter of terrorists, with citizens going to fight in foreign conflicts or immigrants like New York attacker Saifullo Saipov radicalizing in Western countries. Mapping the precise number of Central Asians who have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq is difficult. Many spend time in Russia before flying to Turkey and crossing into Syria or Iraq, making efforts to track them across these multiple jurisdictions challenging. The authoritarian governments in the region are not known for producing accurate statistics. Central Asian regimes are caught between the desire to instrumentalize the terrorist threat in order to crack down on other groups, as we have seen in Tajikistan, or to downplay the terrorism issue, which has been the case in Uzbekistan. The process by which the numbers on terrorism are established is often opaque. Syria's grand mufti, Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun, for example, claimed that 190 Tajiks were fighting

in Syria by October 2013. Despite its dubious origins, this figure quickly became widely circulated, including by the London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, the leading think tank focusing on foreign fighters. But, even if we rely on the figures available, the involvement of some 2,000 to 4,000 Central Asians in the conflict in Syria and Iraq is still rather marginal, with recruits making up just 0.0001 percent of the region's population. The unnewsworthy story of terrorist groups in Central Asia is one of widespread popular ambivalence toward extremist messaging.

What Do We Know about Radicalization in Central Asia?

We do know that a few thousand citizens from Central Asia have traveled to Syria and Iraq. But the paucity of reliable evidence makes it difficult to talk about root causes of radicalization or to make generalizations. Although thus far I have spoken about Central Asians in toto, important differences between each individ-



ual country exist. Political systems vary across the region, from Uzbekistan's closed state under Karimov to Kazakhstan's modernizing "soft authoritarianism" and Kyrgyzstan's chaotic pluralism. Whereas most Tajiks seem to be have been recruited while working as labor migrants in Russia, Emil Nasritdinov's research on Kyrgyzstan, published by the United Nations Development Programme in 2018, suggests that Kyrgyz migrants have been more resilient to radicalization. Most Tajiks seem to have joined ISIS in Raqqa and Mosul, but more Uzbeks have joined several groups linked to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) around Aleppo. These different contexts and pathways matter.

My research on the subject has mostly focused on Tajikistan, the region's poorest and most migration-dependent country. I have been collecting data since the first reports of Tajik citizens fighting in Syria and Iraq. Again, finding reliable sources is problematic. Government accounts need to be treated with a degree of skepticism. Parents' testimonies about their children invariably describe them as "good" boys or girls, but this could be a result of them not being close to their children or not wanting to be blamed. Testimonies of returnees have generally conformed to the government narratives, framing themselves as having been "tricked" into joining ISIS and undermining their own agency in making that decision. By triangulating sources, I have managed to find basic biographical data on 236 recruits and more detailed profiles of more than forty fighters.

My tentative findings, published in the *RUSI Journal* in 2015, run counter to the government of Tajikistan's narrative that blames youthful naïveté, unemployment, and strong religious beliefs for driving its citizens to violent extremist groups. Each individual Tajik's pathway to violent extremism is different and catchall explanations of recruitment do not apply. Nonetheless, it is possible to make some general observations.

Far from being young and naïve, as the government claims, the aver-

age age of fighters from Tajikistan is twenty-eight years old, with over half of the fighters between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-nine. Almost all the fighters have at least a high school diploma; some have attended university. For example, Nasim Nabotov, the young Tajik who made news when he was killed in Syria in 2015, studied economics at Russia's prestigious Moscow State University before dropping out to fight with the Islamic State.

Being a strict Muslim, Central Asian governments tend to argue, makes individuals more susceptible to radical Islamic ideas. Societal Islamization is equated with political radicalization. The Tajik government,

(Above, far left) Sher-Dor Madrassa in Samarkand; (middle and right) Dushanbe's Central Mosque (Hoji Yaqub Mosque). All photos by Edward Lemon.



Celebrating Eid-al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan, in Vanj, Tajikistan (2013).

for instance, has claimed that 80 percent of those who have joined ISIS are Salafis, followers of a fundamentalist Islamic movement. In response to this perceived threat, the government has introduced restrictive religious laws, such as forcing bearded men to shave and women to remove their hijabs. An assertively secular system, Central Asian governments argue, is the best way to guarantee stability and prevent radicalization. But evidence suggests that very few recruits could be considered pious before they were recruited. Fewer still have any formal religious education. After a video of Islamic State fighter Akhtam Olimov appeared online in September 2014, his family was in shock. Neighbors commented that he was never particularly pious when growing up. "He never wore a

beard" before he went to Russia, his mother told Radio Ozodi in September 2014. Muhammad al-Tojiki, born Alan Chekhranov, also did not practice Islam until he migrated to Russia. With the exception of six of the earliest recruits, who were all studying at madrassas in Syria at the time of the start of the conflict in 2011, I have found no evidence for reports that other recruits had any formal religious training.

Conversely, those with formal religious education have been involved in countering recruitment. On a warm July evening in Moscow in 2014, I sat down with a group of young Tajiks living on the outskirts of the city. Over the fast-breaking iftar meal, conversation turned to the Islamic State, which had just declared its "caliphate." "We real Muslims are disgusted that they are using our terms-caliphate, jihad, umma-and blackening the name of our peaceful religion," one young participant from Gharm, in the east of Tajikistan, stated. My host qori Abdulrahmon, who studied in a madrassa in Pakistan until 2010, related a story about his friend:

Sadriddin came to Russia from a mountain village in the Rasht Valley for the first time in 2013, when he was nineteen years old. He worked as a porter (araba kash) in a bazaar in the Moscow region. He was approached in the gym one day by a Tajik man who invited him to a meeting. There he was told about the importance of jihad and was connected to Russian speakers in Raqqa. Soon we noticed he had changed. He spoke of the killing of Muslims in Syria and called for the death of nonbelievers (kufr). So I invited him to dinner and we staged an intervention. I invited other religious individuals who knew the Quran and hadith, and we explained to him the true meaning of Islam. Eventually, he realized his mistake and came back to proper Islam.

Such community-led informal counterextremism is not uncommon among Tajik migrant communities in Russia. During my fieldwork in Moscow in 2014 and 2015, I heard three similar stories. If ideology does not drive young Tajiks to join extremist groups, what does? Again, it differs from case to case. But many of the cases for which we have sufficient evidence mirror Olivier Roy's observations about Muslim migrants and converts in Europe. Roy argued in *Foreign Policy* that we are seeing "not the radicalization of Islam, but the Islamization of radicalism." In the *Guardian*, he described the "typical radical" as "a young, second-generation immigrant or convert, very often involved in episodes of petty crime, with practically no religious education, but having a rapid and recent trajectory of conversion/reconversion."

Evidence from Tajikistan reflects this description. Many Tajiks migrate to Russia, leaving their authoritarian system and close-knit communities behind. They come from a society where the government has closely monitored and restricted religious practices for the past hundred years, to migrant communities where religion in its different guises is discussed more openly. According to a 2014 brief published by the Central Eurasia-Religion in International Affairs (CERIA) initiative, almost none of the Tajiks who embrace Islam as a way to negotiate the difficulties of migrant life in Russia gravitate to violence. But a small minority of disillusioned migrants do. In April 2015, I sat down to tea with a group of young Tajik construction workers in their converted container homes. At the time, they were in the process of building a new overpass for the 2018 World Cup near Moscow's Spartak stadium. They recounted to me how recruiters from the North Caucasus had come around their encampment calling people to Islam. One young man, whom they called Nasim, was drawn to the group:

He arrived in Moscow back in 2013. He was a smart guy, spoke good Russian, and wanted to find a good job. But he couldn't. So he ended up in construction. In 2014, he went home and married a girl from his village. But he soon came back. The marriage was not good. He became angrier and more bitter. When the recruiters came, he found their promises attractive. He never praved before or talked about religion, but now he talked about jihad. One day he disappeared. The next thing we heard, he was in Syria.

The allure of adventure and brotherhood in a violent extremist organization appeals to many young Tajiks like Nasim, who have experienced personal failures and become disillusioned with their lives. Central Asian states are not "exporting" terrorists, and migration itself is not a causal variable in recruitment. Radicalization is a dynamic, nonlinear process. It is transnational; cumulative experiences while living in Central Asia and as migrants in other countries have shaped the pathways by which a small minority of Central Asians have been recruited to violent extremist organizations.

Perspective Is Needed

A threat of political violence, albeit limited, does exist within Central Asia. A few thousand Central Asians have joined terrorist groups and been involved in attacks outside the region. Despite the challenges to conducting

research on and limitations of our understanding of radicalization, it is the topic of attempting to explain radicalization that draws the most attention from journalists, policy makers, and civil society. As someone who studies extremism in Central Asia, I have been drawn into these debates and asked to comment on what drives citizens to join violent extremist groups. But this is not my main research focus. Instead, my research primarily focuses on government-led counterextremism, mapping the ways in which Central Asian governments have used the specter of Islamic extremism to repress observant citizens and opposition groups. Although conducting research on this topic is challenging in itself, sources are more abundant. Instead of focusing on the 0.0001 percent who have joined terrorist groups and carried out attacks, a more interesting question is why the other 99.9999 percent have remained quiescent, despite widespread poverty, corruption, and authoritarian governance. The absence of extremismrather than its limited presence-is a far more pertinent puzzle.

Edward Lemon is a postdoctoral research scholar at the Harriman Institute. His research has appeared or is forthcoming in Central Asian Affairs, Review of Middle East Studies, Foreign Affairs, Central Asian Survey, First World War Studies, Central Asian Survey and the RUSI Journal. Lemon wrote the Tajikistan chapter for Freedom House's Nations in Transit report in 2015.

A PORTRAIT OF Catherine Evtubov

BY RONALD MEYER

Philosophers (Portrait of Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov) by Mikhail Nesterov (1917). Opposite page: Catherine Evtuhov.

atherine Evtuhov, professor of history, is now finishing up her second year at Columbia, after being lured away from Georgetown University-her first teaching appointment after defending her Berkeley dissertation in 1991-where she had been happily teaching and writing for a quarter century. Though to be fair, she was hardly a stranger to Columbia before her new appointment. She is a long-standing member of Richard Wortman's History Workshop; a founding member of Valentina Izmirlieva's Black Sea Networks initiative, run out of Columbia's Department of Slavic Languages; and coeditor, with Columbia colleagues Boris Gasparov and Mark von Hagen, and Alexander Ospovat from UCLA, of the collection Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg: Multiple Faces of the Russian Empire (1997), the fruits of a conference held in Kazan three years earlier.

We met on a sunny February day, the light streaming into her Fayerweather office. The ponderous oak desk that had dominated the room previously had been banished in favor of a modern table just right for small groups and conversation. We talked about, among other things, her current projects, her books, and becoming a historian just at the time when the Soviet Union fell apart.

As Evtuhov is quick to acknowledge, she landed at Berkeley at a very good moment. Graduate school in the 1980s was still "open minded and open ended and a true learning experience." Her dissertation was guided by Nicholas Riasanovsky and Martin Malia-the latter in many ways the intellectual inspiration for the dissertation. In fact, a decade later she would coedit with Stephen Kotkin The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789-1991, dedicated to Malia's scholarship. The research for her dissertation on the religious philosopher Sergei Bulgakov came at an exceptionally propitious moment, as she was able to reap the benefits of Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost in the form of newly opened archives. Subtitled "A Study in Modernism and Society in Russia in 1900-1918," her dissertation-which she would rework into her first book, The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy, 1890–1920 (1997)-represented an attempt to understand the cultural and spiritual movement in the Russian Silver Age as a historical phenomenon in its own right and to rescue this period "from the shadow of the Russian Revolution," which for obvious reasons had dominated historical inquiry on that period. Evtuhov found the nexus for her study in religion, since

many prominent intellectuals had attempted to make social change through the church, which led her to the whole notion of religious reformation and the Church Council of 1917–18. The council's documents had been under seal for decades, and she had unsurprisingly been denied access when beginning her dissertation research in the Soviet Union, only to have them become available some months later.

She defended her dissertation in 1991, and then the Soviet Union fell apart. "The '90s were like a festival. I was able to go to Russia, pose new questions, talk and collaborate with colleagues in Russia in new and meaningful ways." And it was in this almost giddy atmosphere that the seductive opportunity to write a post-Soviet history of Russia arrived. "My wonderful Georgetown colleague Richard Stites had this offer, and it seemed like an interesting project: to write the history of Russia at the moment when history itself had changed. Although we thought our idea of the Soviet Union would change a great deal with information from the archives, etc., it actually didn't. Interpretations of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, changed dramatically. And I got to be one of the people doing that." A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces-Since 1800 came out in 2003; Evtuhov wrote the chapters on the long nineteenth century, ending in 1914, and Stites took the twentieth century. The volume ends with her other contribution: the first large-scale synthetic account of the three waves of Russian emigration in the twentieth century, by no means a standard component of a history of Russia but one which might be read as a tribute to her grandparents, who immigrated to the United States from the postwar displaced persons camps in Germany. The book includes a personal photo of a German mili-



tary barrack turned Russian Orthodox Church, the center of religious and cultural life, from the camp in Schleissheim, outside Munich. She had first approached the topic of the earlier interwar Russian emigration as a graduate student in Paris at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques, but she ultimately

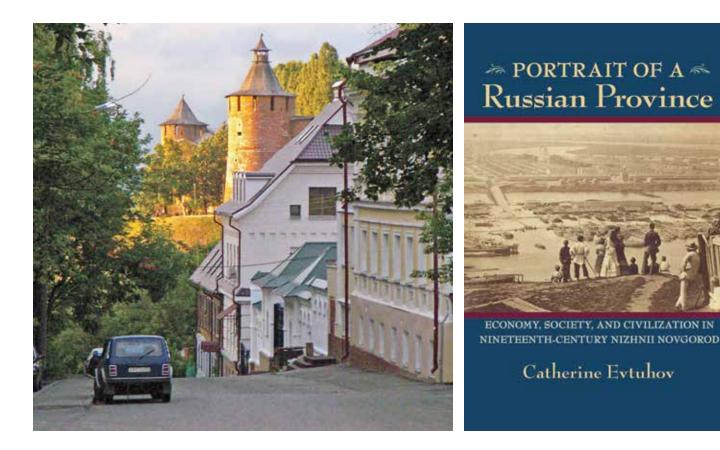


Nizhny Novgorod. Lower Bazaar by Alexei Bogolyubov (1878).

wrote her French thesis on economic relations between France and Indochina, which she researched in the New York Public Library.

Evtuhov is best known for her prize-winning Portrait of a Russian Province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod (2011). At a time when studies of borderlands, empires, and the non-Russian nationalities dominated historical inquiry, Evtuhov was consumed by the feeling that we really did not understand how Russia itself functioned. "I had the hypothesis that a study of the province would contradict many of the assumptions about how Russia works. The big narrative, which is centrally structured and linear, would fall apart, and we could put it together in new and interesting ways." Portrait of a Russian Province is not local or regional history, the domain of kraevedenie in Russian, but rather it views the province as "an integral and indispensable part of a larger historical narrative." In other words, the book presents a slice—and it could be any slice, she says—to illustrate how connections work and how people interact and how the economy functions. Before Evtuhov, the standard view of the provinces had it that these were peasant lands, thus industry and artisanal trades were largely ignored. In nineteenth-century Russia, however, heavy industry was often located outside the cities; moreover, the stereotype of cultural backwardness seemed suspect to her, given many indicators, including the number of important cultural figures in the Russian Silver Age from provincial backgrounds. As she told a Georgetown University reporter, "While I was working on this book, I had a very strong sense of swimming against the current or wanting to undermine approaches and paradigms that had dominated the field of Russian history for many decades."

Going to Nizhnii Novgorod in the early 1990s was an adventure. From 1932 the city had been known as Gorky (named for the author of *Mother*, a native son) and had



View of the Nizhnii Novgorod Kremlin from one of the streets that slopes down into the town. Photo by Catherine Evtuhov (2007).

become a "closed" city after the war, until it reassumed its original name in 1991. Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Elena Bonner, lived in exile there for much of the 1980s. Evtuhov went to the university, unannounced, and visited faculty members, who quickly offered to take care of all the permissions required for living and working in the city. They found her a place to live in accommodations outside the city, in Sormovo, a working-class neighborhood since the 1840s, from which she commuted via a sardine-packed bus. She had full access to the library and archives. During Soviet times regional studies, like so many topics, had been proscribed and difficult to publish; and so librarians had occupied themselves with the next best thing-namely, organizing and cataloging the archives. To a certain extent, the portrait of the province had been created for her in outline to find and interpret.

Evtuhov's approach is entirely "space-specific": "Human beings' activities are played out in entirely concrete

"I had the hypothesis that a study of the province would contradict many of the assumptions about how Russia works."

surroundings, and we must first understand specific, locally circumscribed interactions before proceeding to analysis in terms of sociological categories (class, status, civil society) or generalized historical processes (industrialization, modernization, urbanization)." As a result, one is immediately struck by the physicality and tactile nature of her descriptions of the "soil, forest, river: the ecology of provincial life"—categories then largely absent from the Russian historian's arsenal of analytical tools. To this Evtuhov adds portraits in the more conventional sense; for example, the great and at the same time typical

Alexander Gatsisky (1838–93). Photo by Andrei Karelin. Alexander Gatsisky (1838–93), who appears throughout *Portrait of a Province* and dominates the final chapter in particular. Gatsisky, like his counterparts throughout the Russian provinces, was responsible for organizing statistical investigations of artisanal production; published local guidebooks and histories; championed the provincial press; and came up with the principle of "province as total biography," by which the history of a province can be captured through telling the stories of all the people who ever lived there. Following his example, Evtuhov interweaves his life story into the events of local history, thereby inscribing his personal biography into the larger story.

Sergei Bulgakov, whose Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household Evtuhov translated for Yale University Press (2000), reappears in this same chapter as another figure who contributed to the idea of province. As she explains, for Bulgakov "economy was conceived as the working, interactive relation of man and nature"; the essential economic functions are production and consumption. "The economic process itself-inspired by Sophia, the Divine Wisdom-becomes the creative essence of human existence." Evtuhov credits Bulgakov's philosophy of economy for setting her on the path to look at the province as a whole, taking into account the physical environment, and local administrative structures and services, and finally understanding economy as politics: "the transformation of material existence (byt) is politics or becomes politics."

Portrait of a Russian Province was awarded the prestigious Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize by the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) for her paradigm-shifting treatment of the Russian province.

"The book offers a deeply pleasurable reading experience and provides a strong impulse for scholars to rethink the dynamics and texture of Russian life in the late imperial era."

-ASEEES

To quote an excerpt from the citation: "She examines Nizhnii Novgorod both as a concrete space (soil, rivers, ravines, urban spaces, market networks) and as an imagined project for local intellectuals, professionals and activists in the post-reform period. ... [The book] offers a deeply pleasurable reading experience and provides a strong impulse for scholars to rethink the dynamics and texture of Russian life in the late imperial era." (One does not read the phrase "deeply pleasurable reading experience" often enough in praise of academic writing.)

We moved on eventually to discuss current projects, of which three are listed on her curriculum vitae: (1) Russia in the Age of Elizabeth (1741–1761); (2) New Directions in Russian Environmental History; and (3) This Side of Good and Evil: Vladimir Soloviev for the Twenty-First Century.

As Evtuhov remarked, one can observe her creeping back in time, from the early twentieth century, then spending a long time on the nineteenth, and now happily ensconced in the middle of the eighteenth. She explained that she became aware of the very large blank spot between the two Greats, Peter and Catherine, and yet Elizabeth ruled for twenty years. And it had been a brilliant and important reign, which Catherine tried to obscure as much as possible. Evtuhov is modeling her work on Isabel de Madariaga's magisterial *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (1981), hence the allusion to the title.

It should come as no surprise to the reader of Portrait of a Russian Province that Evtuhov has embraced the study of Russian environmental history. For over a decade she has been a member of a working group with scholars from Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, which in 2013 received a Leverhulme Trust Grant for "Exploring Russia's Environmental History and Natural Resources." The funding has allowed them to organize a series of conferences in places as diverse as Solovki, Lake Baikal, and Chernobyl. In July 2016, Evtuhov organized the conference "Industry, Mining, Transport, and Industrial Heritage Tourism," which took the group to Ekaterinburg and Perm. Her "Postcard from the Ural Mountains"-detailing the group's travels to the Romanov salt mines in Perm, which date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the eighteenth-century iron foundries in Ekaterinburg, which catapulted Russia into its place as the biggest iron exporter in Europe on the eve of the "industrial revolution," not to mention underground lakes and magnificent wooden architecture-can be accessed on the website Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective, published by the Ohio State University and Miami University.

Together with David Moon (York University) and Julia Lajus (Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg), Evtuhov received a Rachel Carson Center Fellowship and spent a month in the summer of 2017 in Munich

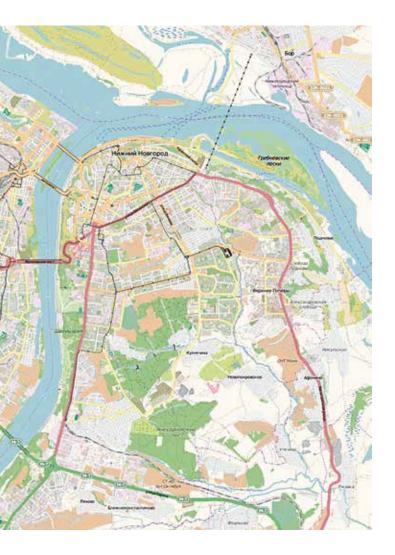


Clockwise from upper left: Stroganov residence at Usolye, 1720s; map of Nizhnii Novgorod, created from OpenStreetMap project data (2015); Factory-Museum of Nizhnii Tagil—a metallurgical plant that had functioned consistently from the first half of the eighteenth century up until the 1980s. Photos of Stroganov residence and Factory-Museum by Catherine Evtuhov (2007).

assembling a volume of articles from the group on Russian environmental history over several centuries, to be accompanied by a substantial, coauthored interpretative introduction, formulating the current "state of the art" of this relatively young field. She hopes to meet with her coauthors this summer to wrap things up.

She is currently completing a précis on Vladimir Soloviev for the *Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Philosophy* and also envisions a very brief book, written for nonspecialists, that highlights what is interesting about this poet and pamphleteer, who is best known for his religious philosophy but is also an environmental philosopher and is considered by many to be Russia's foremost academic philosopher. A signal feature of Soloviev's thought is that it builds a philosophical system whose point of departure is not the isolated self but the self in productive, loving interaction with another person.

Evtuhov is the editor of the collected volume Across the Black Sea: Russian-Ottoman Encounters in the 18th and 19th Centuries, which will be published as a special issue of the journal Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History. Her engagement with Black Sea studies goes back to the late '90s, when she first taught what is now a staple course



on the Black Sea in history and politics. She started learning Turkish in the '90s and spent a Fulbright year in Turkey, living on the banks of the Bosporus and teaching Russian history to Turkish students. As she explained to me, while she did not jump on the borderlands and empire bandwagon, what she found interesting was the idea of Europe and its peripheries; her particular interests were the Ottoman Empire and Spain. She even delivered a paper on the "Spanish Anna Karenina," penned by Clarín (Leopoldo Alas).

In mid-May 2018, Evtuhov will convene a conference at the Harriman Institute in collaboration with *Kritika* as its

special projects editor. She hopes that this will become a regular event, every two years. The conference, "Information in the Russian-Eurasian Space," is an attempt to introduce the notions of communication and knowledge as important historical factors.

For now, Evtuhov eagerly looks forward to her sabbatical next year, to forge ahead with Elizabeth and take a breather from the administrative grind. ■

Books (authored and coauthored)

- Portrait of a Russian Province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011. Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize for "the most important contribution to Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies in any discipline of the humanities or social sciences," Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), 2012.
- A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces–Since 1800. With Richard Stites. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 2003.
- —Also published in full-length version as A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces. With Richard Stites, Lindsey Hughes, and David Goldfrank. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 2004.
- -Turkish translation as 1800'den İtibaren Rusya Tarihi: Halklar, Efsaneler, Olaylar, Güçler. Istanbul: Islık. Forthcoming.
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- Across the Black Sea: Russian-Ottoman Encounters in the 18th and 19th Centuries. Special issue of Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History. Forthcoming.
- Reginald Zelnik, Lichnost', protest, istoriia: sbornik statei [The Individual, Protest, and History: collected articles]. St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia (Academy of Sciences Press), 2007.
- The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789–1991. Coedited with Stephen Kotkin. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2002.
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GORBACHEV

HIS LIFE AND TIMES

Gorbachev: His Life and Times William Taubman W. W. Norton & Company (2017) ISBN 978-0-393-64701-3

WILLIAM TAUBMAN

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

A Revolution! Depicting Gorbachev: William Taubman in Profile

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

ne day in November 1985, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, who had just met with President Ronald Reagan at the Geneva Summit, was giving a standard press conference, when, in the middle of an otherwise forgettable statement. he looked into the sea of reporters and flashing cameras and said that the Soviet Union's security depended on the United States also feeling secure. Watching on television from his home in Amherst, Massachusetts, William Taubman (Russian Institute '65; Ph.D.,'69) leapt out of his seat. "That was a revolution!" he said to his wife, Jane. "That single sentence!"

Gorbachev's tenure had just begun, but he had already distinguished himself from his predecessors. Not only was he significantly younger and more dynamic but also he had proposed reforms—perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness)—that would revamp his country's economy and policy, while adding a previously unthinkable level of transparency and accountability to the Soviet system. And now he was allowing that the entire standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States was no longer a zerosum proposition. "It was a total reversal of a key axiom of Soviet thinking," Taubman told me recently.

Taubman, a political scientist, derived his insights into the Soviet Union from decades of research and travel. He'd been going there since the 1960s, but visits to Moscow during Gorbachev's first years made him anxious to experience, firsthand, how the new leadership was affecting the lives of ordinary citizens. So, in January 1988, he and Jane, a Russianist, moved to Moscow, with their two children, for a five-month academic exchange sponsored by IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board). Taubman would work at the Academy of Sciences, and Jane at Moscow State University (MGU).

Immediately after arriving, the couple felt skeptical about the extent to which Gorbachev's reforms could transform the system. They lived in a standard two-room apartment building on Ulitsa Gubkina. Every day, it seemed, they encountered long lines at food stores and overwhelming bureaucracy. But when they left Russia in June, they concluded that the "Moscow Spring," their term for this period of Gorbachev's reforms, "may prove to be more revolutionary than the Russian Revolution itself."

The quote is the opening sentence of *Moscow Spring* (Summit Books), a book the Taubmans coauthored about their experiences in the USSR. At the time of publication, in 1989, the couple had no way of knowing that, nearly two decades later, they would return to Moscow to interview Gorbachev, alone in his office, about his life, his career, and the events that had precipitated the demise of the Soviet Union.

A sunny late-winter morning. Taubman-a tall, fair-skinned man with a booming voice and a friendly, inquisitive demeanor-sits in a magenta chair in his daughter's Brooklyn home. He is in town from Amherst for the 2017 National Book Critics Circle Awards. His biography, Gorbachev: His Life and Times (W. W. Norton & Company), is one of five finalists for the category, and this evening he will be attending the awards ceremony with his wife and family. (The last of his books to be nominated-a 2003 biography of Nikita Khrushchev-won the award. It also received a 2004 Pulitzer Prize.)

Taubman leans back and recalls Moscow in 1988: long lines accumulating at the newsstands every morning, Muscovites eagerly waiting to buy thick, previously neglected liberal literary journals like Novy mir (New World), magazines like Ogonyok (Little Light), and liberal newspapers like Argumenty i fakty (Arguments and Facts). Millions of people devouring publications that divulged the atrocities of the Stalin era. Atrocities that, just a couple of years prior, had only been written about in samizdat (self-published and clandestinely distributed literature). In Moscow Spring, the Taubmans compare the Moscow of that period to a seminar "where, miracle of miracles, everyone had done the reading." Taubman brings up the parallel today, too. "A whole damn city, and everybody was reading everything."

"I had never written a biography. I hadn't even read that many biographies." The period was exciting, but it was also riddled with tension. Party leader Nikita Khrushchev had attempted to liberalize the Soviet Union more than two decades prior, and he was eventually silenced by hardliners and removed from office. No one knew whether Gorbachev's reforms would meet the same fate. "We lived on tenterhooks, constantly filled with suspense," Taubman recalls. "What was going on? Would it last?"

Taubman became fascinated with the Soviet Union as a child. Perhaps the fascination arose from the stories passed down from his maternal grandparents, who had immigrated to the United States from Mykolaiv, a Ukrainian city near the Black Sea, or maybe it emerged because of his parents, who had traveled to the Soviet Union during the 1930s and instilled in him an avid interest in world politics. Either way, Taubman was a "news junkie" from an early age and clearly remembers the headline announcing Soviet General Secretary Joseph Stalin's death in 1953.

Stalin had always been something of a puzzle to Taubman. Dating back to his adolescence, Taubman wanted to understand the process by which the leader had turned the utopian vision of Karl Marx—"this kind of heaven on earth"—into a "killing ground." He read avidly about Soviet life and studied Russian language and history as an undergrad at Harvard University. Then, he enrolled as a Ph.D. candidate in Columbia's Department of Political Science. In 1964, during his second year in the program, he finally saw the Soviet Union for himself. Part of Indiana University's summer language program, the trip was a whirlwind tour during which Taubman and his colleagues visited nine Soviet cities, including Moscow, Riga, and Donetsk, and faced a barrage of questions from Soviet citizens. He left there in awe of the Soviets' insatiable interest in the United States.

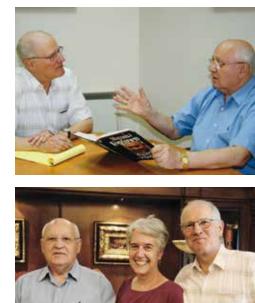
The following academic year, Taubman returned for a longer, less chaotic experience as a student at Moscow State. He lived in the dorms, worked on his dissertation about the mechanics of governing Soviet cities, and attempted to get to know his Soviet counterparts. But no matter how much time he spent with his peers, Taubman found it difficult to truly get inside their heads. He always wondered, What are people really thinking? He returned from the exchange, postponed his dissertation, and sat down to write a memoir about his year at MGU. The resulting book, The View from Lenin Hills: Soviet Youth in Ferment, was published by Coward-McCann in 1967. Taubman was twenty-six years old.

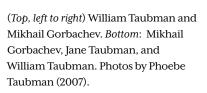
The desire to understand the Soviet mentality remained at the forefront of Taubman's work. Decades later, it would be the guiding force behind his Gorbachev biography: What was Gorbachev really thinking as he rose up through the ranks of the Communist Party? How did others perceive him? And what went through his mind as he precipitated the demise of the very system that had brought him to power?

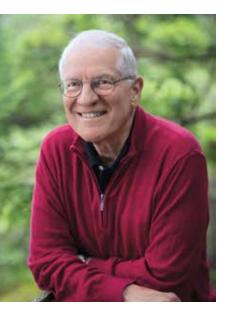
When he began his career, Taubman never imagined that he would become a biographer. In 1967, he joined Amherst College's political science department, a rewarding job that came with its own challenges. Teaching, which he had not been prepared for as a student, was more difficult than he had anticipated. And the field of political science was quite different from what he had envisioned. At Harvard, he had been exposed to a qualitative approach to the discipline. When he chose to pursue it in graduate school, he expected to study "contemporary history." And, at Columbia's Russian Institute, that is precisely what he did. His professors, many of whom had entered academia after careers in government or journalism, had been "observers of the contemporary Soviet Union," rather than theoreticians or quantitatively oriented scholars.

But as soon as Taubman departed from student life, he realized that, in the broader context of political science, the theoretical and quantitative approach overshadowed the qualitative one. And it unmoored him. "For a long time, I tried to be what I thought a political scientist should be," he confessed to me over the phone last February.

For the next decade, Taubman struggled to find book ideas that would both capture his interest and stay within the parameters of his field. He considered writing political philosophy, but felt no spark; he edited a book of commentary on U.S. foreign policy, which he enjoyed.







William Taubman. Photo by Michele Stapleton.

Then, in the late 1970s, he started a book project on the debate about the origins of the Cold War. While researching, he discovered a series of transcripts, published by the U.S. government, from the negotiations between Stalin and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Instantly hooked, he adjusted the topic of his book. The resulting work, *Stalin's American Policy: From Entente to Detente to Cold War*, came out with W. W. Norton in 1982, and, Taubman said, "it really amounted to history."

He wanted to do something similar for his next project and decided to research Khrushchev's U.S. policy. There were few primary sources available on the subject, and what he found most interesting was the material about Khrushchev as a person. But he pitched a Khrushchev U.S. policy book to W. W. Norton anyway. They suggested he write a biography of Khrushchev instead.

Taubman was initially taken aback. "I had never written a biography," he told me. "I hadn't even read that many biographies." But he decided to give it a try. Instantly, he felt rewarded. The more he researched, the more engrossed he became in trying to understand the driving forces behind Khrushchev's behavior and decision-making. "I discovered a three-dimensional person with all his shrewdness, intelligence, crudeness, and insecurity."

Taubman spent nearly two decades on the book. Ten years in, he developed chronic fatigue syndrome. It got so bad he had to write in ten-minute intervals, resting on the floor between paragraphs. But he never considered stopping. "I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it," he said. He published the biography, in 2003, to critical acclaim. Then it won the Pulitzer. More than three decades into his career, Taubman had tapped into his passion.

The first time Taubman interviewed Mikhail Gorbachev, in April 2007, Gorbachev was talking about his childhood in the small southern Russian village of Privolnoe, when, completely unprompted, he launched into a detailed personal narrative about his mother, Maria Gopkalo. She was a tough, illiterate peasant whose relationship with the hyperintellectual and analytical Gorbachev had been rather strained. And so, Gorbachev hadn't devoted much interview time to her, preferring to discuss

his father and his maternal grandparents, with whom he'd been very close. But suddenly he was recalling an incident from early adolescence, when his mother, the family disciplinarian, once again picked up a belt to whip him. This time, instead of acquiescing, Gorbachev grabbed her arm and pulled it away, saying, "That's it! No more!" She burst into tears. "I was the last object she could control," Gorbachev told Taubman.

Taubman felt that he had struck gold. "I remember thinking, Aha! Aha! So she whipped him; she treated him this way; this must have meant that he desperately needed affirmation and adoration, which he could get as a political leader!" Later, when Taubman shared his theory with Jane, who was helping him with the research and had been present at the interview, she challenged his thinking. "Don't leap to conclusions," she said. "We don't know that yet." In the end, Taubman agreed. He mentions the incident in the book, but shies away from lending it great weight.

It is this approach—a presentation of the facts without overpsychologizing or nudging the reader to oversimplified causalities—that allows Taubman to portray Gorbachev as a complex and often contradictory character; a man who is arrogant and humble, conservative and liberal, and endlessly devoted to his wife as he prioritizes his political ambitions above her well-being and personal career satisfaction.

Taubman makes the relationship between Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, a prominent theme in the biography. We follow the couple from the moment Gorbachev notices her at a university ballroom dance—she pays no attention to him—through their courtship, the various stages of their marriage, and, of course, his political career, in which she participated until she died of leukemia in 1999.

Taubman's focus on the relationship makes sense-Raisa was a sensation. Unlike the wives of previous Soviet leaders, who tended to dress drably and remain largely invisible, and who always seemed subdued and expressionless when they did appear in public, Raisa was, Taubman told me, "a real first lady-intelligent, sophisticated, tastefully dressed, elegant in every way." But what was most shocking, he said, was that Gorbachev involved her in state affairs. Within months of his ascent to power, "She [had] pretty obviously become one of his main advisers."

As Taubman spoke about this relationship, I found it hard not to notice the parallels between Gorbachev and Raisa and Taubman and his own wife. Like Raisa with Gorbachev, Jane has been instrumental in Taubman's career. And, like Raisa with Gorbachev, Jane did not look up when, during his second year at Amherst, Taubman walked into the room where she was sitting. Taubman took her aloofness as a challenge and "spent the evening trying to evoke her interest." What finally "won her heart," he told me, was his impression of the announcer from Moscow Radio.

They've been inseparable since.

Morning has turned to afternoon at Taubman's daughter's home. Jane comes down the stairs and sits on the couch. She is a tall, dignified woman, with closely cropped white hair and stylish earrings.

"Bill is getting tired," she says, shaking her head. "He can talk about this stuff forever, but he needs to eat."

Taubman smiles and agrees to wrap up our interview. Behind them is a wall of photographs: their daughter's wedding; their grandchildren; a young Taubman, full head of curly blonde hair, looking down lovingly at a young Jane.

In 2007, when Taubman and Jane arrived at Leningradsky Prospekt and entered the modern building that housed the Gorbachev Foundation, they wondered whether their first interview with Gorbachev would be their last. Through Anatoly Chernyaev, Gorbachev's close confidant and former foreign policy adviser, Taubman had received Gorbachev's tacit support on the biography project, but he had never officially asked the former leader for his permission.

To hedge his worries and allay his nerves, Taubman prepared a strategy. He would begin his questions with something that Gorbachev had already said, thereby proving he'd done his homework and encouraging Gorbachev to say something new. And he'd start at the beginning of Gorbachev's life, ensuring that there would be big, crucial topics, like perestroika, that they couldn't cover in the first interview.

But the tension dissipated the moment he and Jane sat down

"I discovered a threedimensional person with all his shrewdness, intelligence, crudeness, and insecurity."

with Gorbachev around the long, rectangular conference room table. Gorbachev, wearing short sleeves and allowing the couple to interview him in Russian, without the presence of an interpreter, was warm and informal.

"We felt entirely comfortable in his presence," recalled Taubman. And his tactics worked: Gorbachev granted them seven more interviews.

I test my theory—that, with their various collaborations and utter devotion to one another, Taubman and Jane resemble Gorbachev and Raisa.

Taubman pauses. "You know, it's possible that my showing up for that first interview with my wife may have helped to convince Gorbachev that I was a good guy who would do an objective job."

THE RADICALIZATION OF POST-MAIDAN UKRAINE

n the fourth anniversary of Euromaidan, Kyiv faced yet another round of popular protests pressing for change. These demonstrations took place over the course of five months in the form of an encampment by the Rada, Ukraine's Parliament. They were much smaller in scale than those that ignited the 2013–14 revolution, but the protesters were just as angry. They accused President Petro Poroshenko and his government of betraying the spirit of Euromaidan and demanded that the current leadership make way for genuine reformers.

Most of the protesters—whose numbers dwindled from the initial several hundred to a few dozen by the time the camp was dismantled by riot police on March 3, 2018 were followers of opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili, formerly president of Georgia and briefly governor of Odesa. The rest were members of the ultranationalist Svoboda Party and the conservative Samopomich Party.

The hostilities in eastern Ukraine have further fanned the flames of popular discontent by recycling former fighters back into civilian life and politics. Several of the most radical soldier-cum-populist politicians who have

"Barricade with the protesters at Hrushevskogo street on January 25, 2014, in Kiev, Ukraine. The anti-governmental protests turned into violent clashes during last week" photo by Sasha Maksymenko, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0. demobilized in the last three years came from nationalist and often xenophobic private battalions. The latter proliferated at the start of the hostilities in the Donbas, to make up for the army's woeful lack of fighting capacity.

In January, Kyivan residents were stunned by the sight of several hundred well-built men clad in identical paramilitary gear, many of them wearing balaclavas, marching down central Khreschatyk Street. They were apparently members of the "National Corps" of Andrei Biletsky, an ultranationalist member of parliament (MP) and former commander of the Azov battalion. Their slogans included the ominous, "Ukraine needs Ukrainian order!"

Of all the movement's leaders, Saakashvili in particular has attempted to shape this militant protest energy by trying to unite the disparate elements of radical opposition under the banner of his Movement of New Forces. Though his early reforms earned him the reputation of a democratizer in Georgia, Saakashvili drifted toward an authoritarian-like model during his second presidential term. In Ukraine, where he was granted citizenship and appointed governor of Odesa by his former university buddy, President Poroshenko, he ran out of reformist steam after a series of setbacks and a general inability to reform the notoriously corrupt region. Rather than acknowledge defeat, the Georgian firebrand decided to go rogue on his now former friend and benefactor, declaring the entire ruling political class corrupt and eventually branding Poroshenko a traitor working in Putin's interest. Unsurprisingly, he was deported from Ukraine and

stripped of his short-lived Ukrainian citizenship in July 2017, only to charge back in over the border in September and surround himself with a group of between one and two thousand dedicated supporters. Ever since, he has resorted to revolutionary rhetoric and populist demagoguery. In February 2018, Saakashvili was deported from the country once again, but he has continued to rally his troops via social networks, promising a speedy and triumphant return.

Meanwhile, the slogans at his rallies in the center of Kyiv have acquired an increasingly radical character, with occasional anti-Semitic undertones. At one demonstration in early March 2018, a speaker described a "Zionist takeover of Ukraine" and called for an "ethnically pure Ukrainian nation." While Saakashvili never explicitly endorsed such views himself, it is often the case that he and his movement do not convincingly disavow the extremist rhetoric of their supporters.

At the same time, two MPs from the otherwise mainstream conservative Samopomich Party—Semyon Semenchenko and Egor Sobolev—held a rally attended by several hundred supporters, where they decried the ineffectuality of peaceful demonstrations, hinting that arms may be considered for future protest actions. Such pronouncements are especially dangerous in view of the several armed skirmishes that have taken place between police and protesters over the last three years. But, for fear of further inflaming tensions, the government has failed to hold such violent demagoguery criminally accountable, which inadvertently lends further weight to the perception of its weakness.



(*Left to right*) "Mikheil Saakashvili" photo by European People's Party, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0. Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko at Columbia's World Leaders Forum (September 29, 2015); photo courtesy of the World Leaders Forum.

The words and deeds of Ukrainian populists and radicals feed off legitimate popular demands, but they have added to the climate of disenchantment and distrust of all politicians, all reforms, and all institutions. They have also helped undermine support for the programs required by Western financial institutions as a condition for assistance to Ukraine's economy and have provided ample fodder to Russian propaganda TV shows, parading Saakashvili's escapades as evidence of Ukraine as a "failed state."

Echoing the populist wave flooding Western liberal democracies, the protest leaders denounce Ukraine's political elites as being out of touch with regular people, hopelessly mired in corruption, and in cahoots with venal oligarchs. And their accusations are not far from the truth—five top Ukrainian oligarchs, President Poroshenko among them, are said to control nearly 10 percent of the country's GDP. In comparison, the top ten Polish businessmen control only 3 percent of Poland's GDP.

With the national currency, the hryvna, losing two-thirds of its value over the last four years; the parallel precipitous drop of living standards; the unrelenting Russian propaganda; and no end in sight for the war in the Donbas, the only surprise is that the demonstrators have attracted so few followers and that Poroshenko's government remains in charge.



The simple explanation for the dearth of revolutionary zeal is that Ukrainians are exhausted by the cataclysms of recent years and in no shape for another upheaval along the lines of Euromaidan. A more generous explanation, however, highlights Ukrainian wariness of staging another revolution during a do-or-die confrontation with their giant neighbor to the north. There is also the matter of the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in 2019, which many believe may well be the best way to register their discontent.

A year before these elections, Ukrainian voters are disappointed and distrustful of the entire political elite from mainstream politicians to extreme nationalists The only surprise is that the demonstrators have attracted so few followers and that Poroshenko's government remains in charge.

and populists. President Poroshenko's support is at a record low, but it seems that he may be banking on being reelected as the least of all evils. According to recent polls, populist slogans continue to fall on deaf ears, and most Ukrainians, at least for now, seem impervious to pie-inthe-sky promises from the opposition, such as a threefold raise in pensions or rollbacks in energy prices. The polls also show that the majority of Ukrainians are even more wary of the appeals of those political fringe elements that peddle the traditional tropes of Ukrainian nationalists with a wholesale demonization of the moneyed class, calls for a total ban on the Russian language, and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

Euromaidan may have inaugurated Ukraine's decisive break with Russia and "Eurasianist" policies in favor of integration with Europe's political and economic institutions, but Ukraine's gains have not translated into a sense of well-being for the majority of Ukrainians. In 2014–15, after the loss of Crimea and industrial Donbas, where Ukraine has been fighting local insurgents and Russian mercenaries, the country's economy nose-dived with a cumulative GDP contraction of 16 percent. Since then the GDP per capita has been hovering under \$2,500 (though significantly higher if we include the black market, which makes up between 30 and 50 percent of the nation's GDP-the highest percentages in the region), making Ukraine Europe's second poorest country, after Moldova. Exacerbating the economic crisis are the disruption of trade with Ukraine's biggest trading partner, Russia, and an influx of 1.5 million internally displaced persons from eastern Ukraine.

It is no surprise, then, that a majority of Ukrainians have soured on the country's trajectory, believing that "nothing has changed," and that the political class lacks the will to root out corruption and implement genuine reforms. According to the latest poll, 80 percent of respondents consider the war on corruption a lost cause.

Yet this pessimism belies the fact that a series of significant reforms have been enacted, notably in education and medicine, as well as in the pension system. Reform of the pricing structure of the state oil and gas company, Naftogaz, has allowed it to rid itself of many of the old corrupt schemes prevalent under presidents Kuchma, Yushchenko, and Yanukovich. Economic growth is projected to be 3 to 4 percent in 2018–19—impressive considering the precipitous drop in GDP in 2015–16. And last year, in acknowledgment of Ukraine's efforts, the EU finally granted Ukrainians visa-free entry to its twentyeight member states.

The pro-European, protransparency zeal of Euromaidan protesters has led to the creation of several anticorruption agencies, not yet fully independent of the government but vested with broad discretion to pursue violators. A law on the creation of an anticorruption court-among the EU's and IMF's long-standing demands-has been drafted and is pending the president's signature. Purchases of goods, services, and works for public needs are now made transparently though a public e-procurement system, ProZorro-the result of painstaking collaboration brokered by Ukraine's government, business sector, and civil society. And, finally, more than a million Ukrainian government officials have been subjected to one of the most comprehensive and detailed income and asset e-declaration procedures anywhere in the world. These require officials to itemize any personal object above \$3,000. (Of course, these reforms have famously resulted in retaliation from MPs, who have responded to the measures by requiring human rights activists and civil reformers to submit to a similarly stringent disclosure procedure, which they view as an intimidation tactic and an attack on civil society.)

Ukraine retains its robust, albeit fractious and divisive, system of democracy, where a denial of the effectiveness of any and all recent reforms is part and parcel of the

According to the latest poll, 80 percent of respondents consider the war on corruption a lost cause. opposition's intensifying presidential and parliamentary campaigns. Western aid programs, though, have been a double-edged sword—they are vital to Ukraine's development, but their slow progress has engendered the belief that they are ineffective. In their pursuit of an uncompromising vision of instant and absolute transparency and justice, civic activists have attacked the ruling elite, often appearing to play politics, wittingly or not, which has boosted the government's political opponents. Claiming that the e-declaration system has been inadequate, several of these activists have themselves refused to volunteer to submit to the procedure. Others have fallen victim to their own prescription, after failing to declare substantial assets, including, in several cases, lavish 2,000-square-foot apartments.

Ukraine's fate hangs in the balance. Cool heads have prevailed so far, but populism and nationalism are awaiting the chance to fill the political void, as they have elsewhere in Europe. Unless President Poroshenko steals the initiative and reignites a reform process that made substantial progress in the first two years of his administration, the situation may spin out of control, encouraging Russia to increase its already significant efforts at destabilization.

Throughout his presidency, Poroshenko has urged Western leaders to support Ukraine as Europe's main bulwark against "revanchist, barbarian" Russia. In his speech celebrating the visa-free status with the EU last June, he went so far as to mock Russia with lines from Mikhail Lermontov's poem: "Прощай немытая Россия / Страна рабов, страна господ" (Farewell, unwashed Russia / land of slaves, land of lords).

Poroshenko would do well to temper this premature jubilation. Ukraine's shift toward Europe has been dramatic, but it is far from assured and irrevocable. Indeed, amid rising public discontent and increasing populism, Europe's future itself, as a federation of liberal democracies, is far from certain. And unless the Ukrainian president demonstrates the will to continue with difficult reforms, sometimes at the expense of his political allies, the forces of populism, nationalism, and xenophobia—for now still consigned to the margins—will step in and take Ukraine in an unknown direction, toward social chaos and political darkness.

As this was going to press, Ukrainian TV viewers were getting a shocking glimpse of what that political darkness may look like. Addressing MPs, Ukraine's prosecutor general, Yuri Lutsenko, showed secretly taped footage



Peter Zalmayev, standing to the right of U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch, asking a question during a presentation by Newt Gingrich at the Victor Pinchuk Foundation in Kyiv (May 2017).

of their fellow MP, former POW Nadezhda Savchenko, in which she was huddled with two of her coconspirators in a cramped tiny apartment, discussing the various options for taking out the country's political elite. Savchenko's proposed solution: set off bombs inside the Rada during a presidential address. Ukraine may not have the luxury of continuing to waffle on the hard choices it needs to make, as other Savchenkos surely wait in the wings. Peter Zalmayev is director of the Eurasia Democracy Initiative, a nonprofit organization. Currently, he divides his time between New York and Kyiv, where he takes active part in local civil society, hosts a weekly TV program, and provides frequent commentary to print and broadcast media on international and local political developments. He received his M.I.A. from Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs in 2008, along with a certificate from the Harriman Institute. МИРЗӘЈЕВ РИЗВАН САБИР оглу 1957-1992

Azerbaijani refugee from Karabakh (1993). Photo by Ilgar Jafarov.

Black Garden Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War

n 1988 the unthinkable happened: two Soviet republics—Armenia and Azerbaijan—entered into a violent territorial dispute, and the previously omnipotent Kremlin was powerless to stop them. The dispute—the first in a series of nationalist uprisings that would contribute to bringing down the Soviet Union revolved around Nagorny

An Interview with Thomas de Waal

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

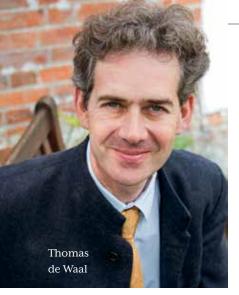
Karabakh, a predominantly Armenian region located inside Soviet Azerbaijan. Technically, the conflict ended when the two newly independent nations agreed to a ceasefire in 1994, but the agreement did not bring peace. To this day, the Armenian-Azerbaijani border remains closed and heavily militarized. Not to mention that violent flare-ups between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces

University Libraries as part of the new Thomas de Waal Interviews Collection. I spoke to de Waal about *Black Garden* over Skype last spring. What follows is an edited version of our conversation. (You can read my interview with him about *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, the other book in the Thomas de Waal Interviews Collection, in the Fall 2017 issue of *Harriman Magazine*.)

continue—the two sides clashed in April 2016, causing thirty casualties; and, most recently, in May 2017, when Azerbaijan destroyed an Armenian air missile defense system.

Six years after the ceasefire agreement, journalist Thomas de Waal, currently senior fellow with Carnegie Europe, embarked on a book project about the conflict. Thanks to a grant from the U.S. Institute of Peace, de Waal spent the year from 2000 to 2001 poring over archives; interviewing conflict victims, witnesses, and participants; and traveling intensively between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The logistics were complicated-to circumvent the closed border, he had to travel hundreds of miles each time he wanted to get from one country to the other. But the trouble was worth it-in 2003. de Waal published Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War (New York University Press), a nuanced portrayal of the conflict and its aftermath. The book was rereleased in an updated tenth anniversary addition in 2013 and continues to be the definitive account of the conflict.

In November 2017, all 120 of the original interviews de Waal conducted for the 2003 edition became available at Columbia



Masha Udensiva-Brenner: Your book opens with you crossing the ceasefire line between Armenia and Azerbaijan. No one had crossed it since the two nations signed a ceasefire agreement in 1994. But there you were. How did this happen?

Thomas de Waal: In May 2001, when they were gearing up for big peace talks in Key West, Florida, the U.S. cochair [of the OSCE Minsk Group mediating the conflict], Carey Cavanaugh, invited some journalists to come with him on a symbolic crossing of the ceasefire line, which is also called the Line of Contact. I was one of the people he invited. Just to give you an idea, the ceasefire line had started as trenches-not very fearsome-but it became more and more fortified over the years. Now it's incredibly militarized, with artillery and drones and minefields and helicopters. So, it's basically this big scar running through the territory of Azerbaijan. When we crossed it, we started in Azerbaijan and walked across. They demined it for us, but we were actually crossing a minefield. Most of the time we do this metaphorically, but I did this literally in 2001.

Udensiva-Brenner: Has anyone crossed the line since then?

De Waal: I think there have been a few crossings, but you can probably count them all on one hand. It's a very rare occurrence.

Udensiva-Brenner: Your reporting for this book took place from 2000 to 2001, six years after the conflict ended. How did the project come about?

De Waal: I'd been spending time in Azerbaijan since '95 and in Karabakh, in Armenia, since '96. I liked both places. But, obviously, the narrative from each one was very black-andwhite. When you're on the Armenian side and you hear about this conflict, you begin to inhabit their worldview; you begin to see everything through their eyes-that they were the victims of this injustice, that they tried political means to give freedom to the Karabakh Armenians and were met with violence. That's their version of reality. When you go over to the Azerbaijani side, you see a different reality. That they thought they were living in a peaceful republic with all these Armenians, and suddenly the Armenians start revolting. It's very scary for them; they aren't sure whether the Armenians are backed by Moscow, and the whole thing descends into violence. They've lost control, they try to reassert control over their republic, and the Armenians start attacking them.

Both sides obviously have a certain validity to their view, but the problem is that they have no empathy for one another. I wanted to get a deeper understanding of what was happening. But there was nothing written about the conflict that presented the view from both sides. Everything was quite biased, quite partisan, very propagandistic. So, eventually, I decided I wanted to write the book I wanted to read.

Udensiva-Brenner: Can you give us some historical context for the relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan before the conflict broke out?

De Waal: There's this concept I've come across frequently in the Caucasus, that all these conflicts are ancient conflicts and people have hated each other for centuries and waited for the opportunity to fight one another. It has been debunked by scholarship and also by the empirical experience of the people living there.

Armenians and Azerbaijanis began to come into conflict perhaps in the nineteenth century, and certainly in the early twentieth century. But, at the same time, they've always had a lot in common; they've shared the same territory. I think both sides would tell you that in cultural terms they have a lot more in common with each other than they do with the Georgians, the other big nation in the Caucasus. They've always traditionally done business with one another more than they have with the Georgians. And if you look at the culture in terms of music, in particular, there are a lot of songs that an Armenian would say are Armenian songs and an Azerbaijani would say are Azerbaijani songs. And there's always been some intermarriage, particularly in Baku. So these are people who have mixed together culturally, historically, demographically.

But, politically, there had been collisions between them. Part of this was for socioeconomic reasons— Armenians were closer to the top of the social pile, particularly in Baku, and Azerbaijanis were down toward the bottom. But the main clash has always been over the highland part of the Karabakh region, which we tend to call by its Russian name, Nagorny Karabakh. This ambiguous place had been part of the culture and history of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis. As long as Armenians and Azerbaijanis were part of the Russian Empire, or the Soviet Union, it didn't matter so much whose territory it was. During those times, there was this kind of central policeman who looked after things. People lived together, and if there was a dispute, the Russians could always restore order. But at times when the empire weakenedsuch as during the early twentieth century with the Russian Empire; after the Bolshevik Revolution when the Russians left the Caucasus; and then again during perestroika, when the Soviet Union started to

weaken under Gorbachev—during all those periods, tensions about who this place owed its allegiance to, who deserved to be there, and who deserved to be running things resulted in conflict.

Udensiva-Brenner: The conflict erupted during perestroika in 1998. What happened?

De Waal: For that we have to take a brief excursion to 1921, which is when the Bolsheviks held a meeting in Tbilisi that decided what to do with all these conflict regions in the Caucasus, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Stalin chaired the meeting—he was the Commissar for Nationalities—and they basically allocated Nagorny Karabakh to Azerbaijan, but with autonomous status. The idea was that it would become an Armenian majority There was nothing written about the conflict that presented the view from both sides. Everything was quite biased, quite partisan, very propagandistic.

province in Azerbaijan, run by Armenians but within the Republic of Azerbaijan. That was in 1921. In 1923, the autonomous region of Nagorny Karabakh was created. There is lots of speculation about why this decision was made. But I think a primary reason was economic. It was part of the economic space of Azerbaijan, and there wasn't even a good road at that point between Yerevan and Karabakh.

Men working by war-ruined building in Shusha, Nagorny-Karabakh. Photo by Adam Jones (2015).





Shell-pocked facade, Stepanakert, Nagorny-Karabakh. Photo by Adam Jones (2015).

Udensiva-Brenner: And this is interesting because while the Soviet regime separated Nagorny Karabakh from Armenia, it also gave Armenians a homeland for the first time in recent history. And this had an effect on Armenian attitudes during the conflict . . .

De Waal: That's right. Prior to the formation of the Soviet Union, there were Armenians scattered all over the Caucasus, in Anatolia and what's now eastern Turkey. But they'd had very little statehood. They had had some statehood back in the Middle Ages. They had a brief independent republic again for a couple of years after the Bolshevik Revolution. But this was a completely devastated place because it was taking in refugees from the Armenian genocide in Turkey in 1915–1916. All of this shaped the collective Armenian mentality. It left them with this fear of being killed, fear of reprisals, a need for belonging, a need for solidarity.

Udensiva-Brenner: How did these fears, and this sense of victimhood, affect the evolution of the conflict?

De Waal: In part, it explains the very strong emotional reaction in Armenia toward the cause of Karabakh Armenians. And it certainly meant that both sides escalated pretty quickly. In the Soviet Union, there were no mechanisms for dialogue or for working things out through democratic means. Basically, the center decided what got done, and when the center broke down, no one decided what got done. The result? You end up with a conflict. And so, certainly, this fear of Turkey, fear of being massacred, was pervasive. And, ironically, it meant that Armenians engaged in some preemptive aggression against Azerbaijan, which only fed the whole cycle of violence.

Udensiva-Brenner: And how did the violence start?

De Waal: It all happened within a few days. On February 20, 1988, there was



Young woman with photos, including her missing brother, at the Museum of Missing Soldiers in Stepanakert, Nagorny-Karabakh. Photo by Adam Jones (2015).

a resolution from the local Soviet of the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan, asking for the transfer of Nagorny Karabakh from the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Republic of Armenia. There was this huge naïveté that "justice" could be restored at the stroke of a pen. That Mikhail Gorbachev would sign the order and everything would miraculously turn out well. That Karabakhis would live in their homeland and this kind of nationalist dream would fill the Soviet vacuum that was being created.

At first, there were some isolated, violent incidents. People grew scared and started to flee. Within a few days there was a march by some Azerbaijanis on Karabakh and two of them were killed, Azerbaijanis who had fled Armenia and turned up in this seaside town of Sumgait just north of Baku on the coast. It was a very poor, industrial, criminalized town. And they were telling tales of horror, which were exaggerated, but they were in a traumatized state, saying that they'd been thrown out of Armenia. The local leadership was out of town, and then, suddenly, this crowd-most of them not so much nationalists as opportunist thugs-started rampaging through the Armenian part of town and doing a classic pogrom, violently attacking Armenians. There were murders, there were rapes; it was pretty horrific. And it lasted twenty-four hours.

The Politburo was completely blindsided. They didn't know what to do. It took twenty-four hours to deploy Interior Ministry troops to restore order. By that time, twenty-six Armenians and six Azerbaijanis had been killed. The six Azerbaijanis were killed mainly by Soviet troops. Many more were injured.

Hundreds of Armenians were taking refuge in a building. One of my most extraordinary interviewees was this guy called Grigory Kharchenko, who was basically the first official from Moscow to arrive on the scene trying to restore order. He gave this incredibly vivid interview about what he had seen there. The Armenians





(*Top*) Armenian village guards from Nagorny-Karabakh (1918–1921); photo by Movses Melkumian (1891–1937). (*Bottom*) Tank monument near Mayraberd (Askeran), Nagorny-Karabakh; photo by Adam Jones (2015).

in the building took him hostage at one point, in order to guarantee their own safety. These were completely unprecedented scenes in peacetime Soviet Union, and it was a point when the political system started to melt down. As a result, there was this massive outflow of Armenians fleeing from Azerbaijan. There were reprisals in Armenia against Azerbaijanis. So just one week after the resolution on February 20, everything was pretty much out of control and remained so from that point on.

Udensiva-Brenner: And what's the relationship like between Karabakh Armenians and Armenians on the mainland?

De Waal: So, Karabakh is this highland territory that's quite geographically separate from the Republic of Armenia, eastern Armenia. They speak a very different dialect. I don't speak Armenian, but, even to my ear, it's fairly obvious. They also have a very different history. They're more pro-Russian. This is partly because, during the Soviet years, many of them didn't go to Baku to study-they didn't want to go to the regional capital of Azerbaijan; they went straight to Moscow. They're fluent Russian speakers. Both Karabakh Armenians who've been president of Armenia, Robert Kocharian and Serzh Sarkisian, certainly used to speak better Russian than they do Armenian, although they wouldn't admit that publicly. So, they have a very different mentality as well.

Karabakh Armenians are famous for being more stubborn, being good fighters. And what we've seen throughout this conflict is the Karabakh tail wagging the Armenian dog. This small group of Karabakh Armenians has basically dominated Armenian politics, and they've kind of set the course of modern Armenian history, where defending Karabakh has been the number one priority. And this is a bit of a paradox, because Karabakhis as a people are often rather unpopular and disliked in Yerevan because they are perceived to have taken over. There's even a joke that you hear in Armenian-that first the Karabakh Armenians occupied Azerbaijan, and then they occupied Armenia.

Udensiva-Brenner: How did regular citizens feel about the conflict when it started?

De Waal: In my book, I have a lot of examples of Armenians and Azerbaijanis who were friends and didn't want to fight each other and even passed messages to one another across the radio while the conflict was going on. "How are you getting along?" "How is it on the other side?" This was a conflict between neighbors who didn't really want to fight but were forced into it.

Udensiva-Brenner: And you played a role in passing messages back and forth between the two sides. Can you discuss some of the experiences you had?

De Waal: When I started writing the book, I decided that I wasn't just going to try to be an academic author. I was interested in trying to be helpful in the conflict. If anyone, whether a politician or an ordinary person, wanted to send a message to the other side, I would try and help

them send that message. And when people said things that I disagreed with or thought were untrue, I wouldn't just keep silent. I would actually engage them in dialogue and try to give them a different point of view. I met a lot of people who'd been displaced. There was one Armenian lady from Baku, whom I met while she was working as kind of a hotel servant in Armenia, in pretty poor circumstances. She really missed Baku, and I was able to deliver a message back to her friends there, who hadn't heard from her for years. In another instance, I met a group of Azerbaijanis in Baku who were from Shusha, a town in Karabakh that had been a major center of Azerbaijani culture. They, too, really missed their homes. I passed a message to some of the Armenian friends they'd grown up with in Shusha. It was very touching; quite difficult, at times, too, because there was obviously resentment there as well as friendship.

There was one case where an Azerbaijani from Shusha gave me the address to his old apartment and asked me to check whether or not it was still there. The town was pretty badly destroyed during the war, but his apartment was still standing. There was an Armenian lady leaning over the balcony. She invited us up, and we had a friendly conversation that turned a little bit tense as it became clear that I'd actually met the previous occupant. It was a very complicated story, because this woman had had her house burned by some Azerbaijanis during the war, and then found this apartment in Shusha. So, the question was: "Who does this apartment belong to? Does it belong to the guy who was thrown out and

There was this huge naïveté that "justice" could be restored at the stroke of a pen.

now lives in Baku, or does it belong to this Armenian lady who's found a home because she lost hers?" In a way, it belongs to them both.

Udensiva-Brenner: Was the swap of houses governed by any official body?

De Waal: I think in the beginning it was pretty improvised. But then I'm sure there was some kind of system. More recently, it became much more organized and people were allocated to houses. And then, of course, on the Azerbaijani side, all these hundreds of thousands of IDPs [internally displaced persons], refugees—many of them lived in tent camps for ten, fifteen years until they were rehoused. There was nowhere for them to go.

It's a great tragedy. More than a million people were displaced in a very small region. Many of those people were displaced from towns and cities that are not very far from where they ended up, but they could never go back or see their original homes. There was a lot of loss and longing.

Udensiva-Brenner: And you mentioned that there had been a lot of intermarriage between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. What happened to those couples during and after the conflict?

De Waal: A lot of people went to Russia. A few stayed in Azerbaijan,

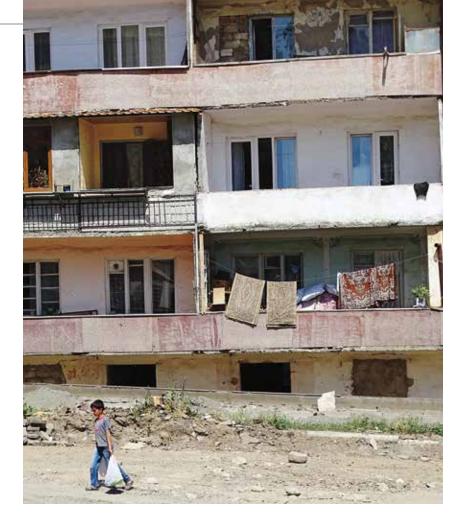
but mostly they went abroad. I actually got a letter from someone in Australia; I think she was of mixed parentage. She wrote: "As far as I was concerned the world went mad when that conflict started, and I ended up in Australia. Thank you for writing a book that describes the conflict and describes my life. It makes me feel a little bit saner." There are people like that all over the world.

Udensiva-Brenner: How did the collapse of the Soviet Union affect the evolution of events?

De Waal: You could make an argument that this conflict was the first stone in the avalanche of territorial conflicts that ended the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union collapsed, it became a conflict between two states, the newly independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan. This gave a certain trump card to Azerbaijan, because the world recognized the territorial integrity of these new states on the basis of Soviet borders. Armenians could argue for as long as they wanted that this was a border drawn by Stalin, but this was de jure how the world recognized the former Soviet states. Then, in 1994, Armenia won the conflict by capturing not just Karabakh itself, but all of the surrounding regions as well-a much bigger territory, and certainly home to a lot more people.

Udensiva-Brenner: How were the Armenians able to do this?

De Waal: There are three reasons why the Armenians won the conflict. First, they were better organized, and they organized earlier. Second, there was Russian help to both sides, but Russia ended up helping the



Facade with boy walking, Shusha, Nagorny-Karabakh. Photo by Adam Jones (2015).

Armenians more. They got more weapons and fuel and things like that. Third—and I think this was the major reason—Azerbaijan was in complete political turmoil; there was political infighting and massive instability, after which eventually Heidar Aliev, the old Communist leader, came back to power. A lot of people in Baku were more interested in capturing power than they were in defending Karabakh or the regions around it; so many of them fell without a fight.

Udensiva-Brenner: Can you discuss Russia's role?

De Waal: This is probably the most confusing question of all in what is already a confusing conflict. When we look at other conflicts in the region—in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transdniestria, Ukraine—we see a definite Russian role, a definite Russian strategy. In this case, the Kremlin has multiple agendas, probably more so on the Armenian side if we consider the larger picture, but, at certain significant moments, on the Azerbaijani side as well. Certainly, at the beginning, when Moscow rejected the central Armenian demand for Karabakh Armenians to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia.

When the war started things became even more complicated because the Russian military got involved. And we have evidence of Russian tank drivers and Russian air



Soldiers of the Army of Azerbaijan during Karabakh War (1992–93). Photo by Ilgar Jafarov.

pilots participating in some of the '92 battles in Karabakh on both sides. But it's difficult to tell how many of them were actually sent there by the Russian army—some of them were Russian officers left behind in the Caucasus after the Soviet collapse, who signed up for the states of Armenia and Azerbaijan as freelance fighters in order to earn some income.

Udensiva-Brenner: But there is clear evidence that Russia sold weapons to the Armenians . . .

De Waal: Yes, that is another factor. In 2000, I interviewed Levon Ter-Petrosian, who was a leading politician in Armenia and then its president from 1991 until he was

forced to resign in '98 in a kind of palace coup. Ter-Petrosian said a number of interesting things, including confirming something that many had already suspected-that Russians had sold a lot of weapons to the Armenians. He told me that they had done this in order to preserve a military balance, because the Azerbaijanis had a stronger army. "Yeltsin would be pretty tough about not selling me more than he thought I was due," he told me. There was one famous incident where Ter-Petrosian actually flew to St. Petersburg to plead with Yeltsin. So, this tells us that Russia's strategic interest was not so much about the Armenians winning the conflict as the Armenians not losing the conflict.

This was a conflict between neighbors who didn't really want to fight but were forced into it.

Udensiva-Brenner: And how did the two sides come to a ceasefire agreement in '94?

De Waal: By that point, the Armenians had captured enough territory to secure what they would regard as a buffer zone around Karabakh. Some wanted to carry on fighting, but I think, in general, they had tired themselves out. The



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry shakes hands with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan before a meeting on the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict, in Vienna (May 16, 2016).

fighting was getting more intense, the weapons were getting stronger, more people were dying, and the war was becoming less popular. And the Azerbaijani side was exhausted. Heidar Aliev wanted to consolidate power in Baku, and he agreed to a ceasefire in order to consolidate his own power.

And the Russians mediated the ceasefire. Their goal was to get a Russian peacekeeping force on the ground, as they had done in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. That would have given the Russians leverage. But neither side wanted the Russians there, because it would give them too much power, so you had a ceasefire without any peacekeepers.

Udensiva-Brenner: You've called the resulting situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan one of the worst "peace" periods in history. What did you mean?

De Waal: I've described it as a "Karabakh trap," in which the leaders decide not to have a proper dialogue with society about how they can get out of this situation; how they can make compromises, make peace. They prefer to pursue the nationalist narrative of the conflict, which helps them politically at home. But that means that when they do talk to the other side about peace, they've suddenly got problems at home; because of this nationalist narrative, 99 percent of the population isn't interested in peace. Leaders have created a context in which there's no support for peace, even though they know deep down that this is in the long-term interest of their countries. For that reason, the whole thing is stuck in a vicious cycle that doesn't have any way forward.

Udensiva-Brenner: At the same time, there's an anecdote in your book

describing Azerbaijani and Armenian soldiers on the border swapping cigarettes and stories. They don't actually want to be fighting . . .

De Waal: I think people who actually fight the wars and deal with the other side are often the most peace-loving because they understand the cost of violence, they understand what it's about. Who actually wants to go kill in the name of a political slogan?

And you still see a basis of pragmatism in ordinary people. In Georgia, for instance, outside the conflict zones, there are Armenian villages with mixed Armenian and Azerbaijani populations. They happen to live in areas outside the political context of the conflict, and they find ways of getting along. So, I believe that if a decision was made to pursue peace, the population could go along with it. Unfortunately, I just don't see how to get from here to there.

Udensiva-Brenner: The construction of the BTC [Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan] pipeline has had quite an impact on the conflict's status quo. Can you discuss that?

De Waal: This is a major new factor since the ceasefire in the region. The new Azerbaijani oil boom in the Caspian Sea, led by a number of Western oil companies, BP in particular, resulted in a new major Western oil export route from the Caspian to the Mediterranean. That was opened in 2006, and it did a few things. It gave Western oil companies a strategic role in the region; it anchored Azerbaijan and Georgia as a transit route to Europe and the West; and it also made Azerbaijan incredibly wealthy for ten years. There was an enormous influx of wealth, some

of which was spent on useful things such as rehousing refugees, and infrastructure, and so on, and a lot of which has been, unfortunately, wasted or stolen. And also spent on weapons. This is the other major significance of the BTC pipeline: Azerbaijan massively boosted its defense budget after having had this very weak army in the '90s. Now it has some very formidable weapons aviation, drones, heavy artillery, and long-range missiles—which it uses to intimidate the Armenian side.

Udensiva-Brenner: So the weaker military side remains the winner of the conflict, but the military balance has shifted.

De Waal: That's right. The Armenians still have the advantage of having won the conflict and captured the territory. They are holding the high ground. And, obviously, it's easier to defend that than to fight if there were to be a new conflict. Ne dai bog [God forbid], as the Russians say. Let's hope that doesn't happen. So this is where we are at the moment. We had a kind of low-tech conflict that ended in the 1990s and a rather low-tech ceasefire with no peacekeepers and militaries on either side of these trenches, and now, suddenly, you have this incredibly militarized zone with two very well-equipped armies on either side of the trenches. Rationally, neither side really wants to fight a war. They both have much to lose. Yet the risks of a miscalculation or a misjudgment are huge, and we saw in April of 2016 this so-called fourday war in which about 200 people died, which I think is a dangerous portent to what could happen again, unfortunately.

Udensiva-Brenner: And how likely do you think it is that something will happen again?

De Waal: I'm quite worried, to be honest. I think there's a danger of misjudgment, miscalculation of some kind of small operation getting bigger; and if that happens ... A few years ago that would just have been a very low intensity thing, but now, given the scale of the weaponry they have, it could blow out of control, and at that

(*Top*) U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry shakes hands with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev before a meeting on the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict, in Vienna (May 16, 2016). (*Bottom*) Homemade rifle with photo of mourning at the Museum of Fallen Soldiers in Stepanakert, Nagorny-Karabakh; photo by Adam Jones (2015).



point you factor in all the political calculations. Once you've started something there's a lot of pressure not to stop and not to back down. So I think there's a real danger that we could see another flare-up.

Udensiva-Brenner: And what can we learn from this conflict about conflicts in general and how they start and evolve?

De Waal: I'm glad you asked that question, because it's certainly something that is very much on

my mind. One thing that interests me is the issue of identity, of how we all have not just one identity but multiple identities-within our family, our work, our region; but obviously there's national identity as well. What a political conflict situation does is it starts to put you into categories, and that results in having to make choices. And that includes people in mixed marriages and someone who's got an Armenian mother and an Azerbaijani father. They're suddenly told, "OK, there's this argument, this dispute, and you have to choose: which side are you on?" That, in turn, leads you to regard the other side as the "other," to demonize them, to cease contact with them. I guess what I'm saying is that conflicts start when people start to see another category of people as "other," when identity boundaries harden. Only when that happens is it possible to start fighting. You can't fight someone that you're in daily contact with, that you have good relations with. You have to start to draw lines with them, and I think that has a lot of lessons for the world

in general. That's certainly how this conflict started.

Udensiva-Brenner: What I found really striking in your book is the big role that academics played in shaping the conflict. Can you talk about that?

De Waal: This is a very interesting one. In Western countries, we tend to think of academics as the kind of *New York Review of Books*-reading class, the sort of people who want to seek compromise, and understand all points of view; who have a global vision. We assume that, in times of conflict, they would be a progressive, moderating force. But, in the Caucasus—and I think this was the case in the Balkans as well intellectuals can very much be the drivers of conflict.

In the Caucasus, this started during the Soviet era, with historians producing work that was not politically controversial on the surface, because it was ancient history. But, they were actually writing history that was very nationalist, that was denying the agency and historical participation of others. For instance, you could read ancient histories of



Above: Shusha, Nagorny-Karabakh, in February. Photo by Ilgar Jafarov (1992). *Opposite page*: Haghpat Monastery in Nagorny-Karabakh. Photo by Saro Hovhannisyan (2011).

Armenia and Karabakh, written by the Armenian side, that don't even mention the word "Azerbaijani." There are also whole histories written by Azerbaijanis that don't even mention Armenia. And the Azerbaijanis came up with this bizarre theory about how the Caucasian Albanians, this national group who most people think died out about a millennium ago, have mysteriously lived on and were inhabiting Karabakh; that the Karabakh Armenians were not proper Armenians but Caucasian Albanians. Intellectuals were very much the drivers of the nationalist narrative, which was used in reaction to the Soviet system. When conflict broke out, they were some of the most implacable people, wanting to see it continue.

Udensiva-Brenner: Do they continue to play a role today?

De Waal: They do. Maybe not as much. What we're seeing now is a kind of internet culture, where a lower level of intellectual discourse that relies on a few myths, a few conspiracy theories, drives the mentality. But it started from these intellectuals forty years ago.

Udensiva-Brenner: And what role has this internet culture played?

De Waal: Unfortunately, 90 percent of what's on the internet is mythmaking, it's hate speech, it's misrepresentation, it's conspiracy theories; and there's a lot of that in this conflict. And what this means is that the younger generations who have grown up with this conflict, but weren't alive when the Soviet Union existed—many of these young Armenians or Azerbaijanis have never met an Azerbaijani or an Armenian. They've grown up with a very simplistic, clichéd, black-andwhite view of this conflict, which is then unfortunately perpetuated by the internet.

Udensiva-Brenner: The book came out in 2003, and you published a second edition ten years later, in 2013. Why did you decide to do this?

De Waal: The book obviously found a niche on the market. It was the first book on the conflict that tried to deal with how it started and what happened from both sides. It was translated into Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani; into Turkish as well so it was a resource for people. A few years after it was published, I looked around and saw that there was still no new major text on this conflict, but quite a lot of things had happened since. So, I talked to my publisher, and we decided I would work on a new edition. The text did not change; I corrected a few small things, added a new chapter, and that's what happened.

But, that's it; I'm not going to do another edition. It can be quite difficult dealing with this conflict. Anything you write attracts angry comments from Armenians or Azerbaijanis. I wrote something warning of the dangers of war in 2017, and then on Twitter someone accused me of being pro-Armenian. Fortunately, someone else wrote, "it's well-known that you take Azerbaijani oil money." So I was able to connect those two people and say, "You better talk to each other and sort it out among yourselves." I'm glad I wrote this book, but I don't want to be living with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict until the end of time! So I think that having done the update, and now giving you this archive, is a way to draw a line on my main contribution to this field.

Oleg Vassiliev, *Anniversary Composition*, 1983. Collage, black and white paper, 21¹/₄ x 20¹/₂ in.

The Journey of Oleg Vassiliev

BY NATALIA KOLODZEI

Biographical Note

Oleg Vassiliev was born in Moscow in 1931: relocated to New York in 1990; and moved to Minneapolis. Minnesota, in 2006, where he passed away in 2013. Vassiliev studied at the Moscow Art School and graduated from the V. I. Surikov State Art Institute in Moscow, specializing in graphics and printmaking. From the 1950s to the mid-1980s, he earned a living as a book illustrator, as was common for a number of Muscovite nonconformist artists, including Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov, and Victor

Pivovarov. This occupation allowed them to experiment with formal techniques, as well as to work on their own art. In the late 1950s Vassiliev and some of his friends discovered and were inspired by works of the generation of avant-garde



NACHALES NOT MELES

artists such as Vladimir Favorsky (1886–1964), Robert Falk (1886–1958), and Arthur Fonvizin (1882–1973)– known as the "three F's–Formalists."

Today, Vassiliev is a widely recognized artist; he was the recipient of numerous artistic awards, including two grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation (in 1994 and 2002). His works have been displayed in museum exhibitions across the globe, including Russia! at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2005. In 2004–5, the Kolodzei Art Foundation organized two large solo exhibitions of Vassiliev's works, in the Tretvakov Gallery in Moscow and the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, and edited the monograph Oleg Vassiliev: Memory Speaks (Themes and Variations). Vassiliev's prominent solo

exhibitions at U.S. museums include *The Art of Oleg Vassiliev* at The Museum of Russian Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2011, and *Oleg Vassiliev: Space and Light* at the Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 2014–15.



Above: Oleg Vassiliev, 4, 6, 8, from the *Metro Series*, 1961–62. Linocut, edition 15. All images in this essay courtesy of the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation, www.KolodzeiArt.org.

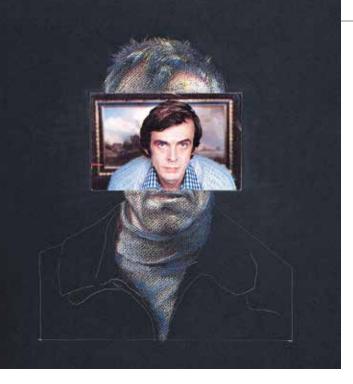
n important and fascinating feature in Oleg Vassiliev's art is the profound intimacy in his work, where personal memories have universal appeal. The division between personal and political, between private and public, had been ideologized in Soviet Russia. Vassiliev eschews ideology to capture very personal memories of art and life. As is the case with many artists who had left their homeland for the West, Vassiliev had to confront questions of identity and authenticity. Despite Vassiliev's move to New York in 1990, his art never lost its connection to Russia. As his fellow artist Erik Bulatov writes in the book Oleg Vassiliev: Memory Speaks (Themes and Variations), "Oleg Vassiliev is the most Russian of the Russian artists living today, because he expresses not just one particular quality of Russian art, but its essence, its very core from which the various qualities of Russian art spring forth."1

The notion of the Russian-American or American-Russian artist has been problematic for both cultures. Vassiliev enjoyed living in two major metropolises-the cultural capitals of Moscow and New York. In New York, he did not make any noticeable attempts to assimilate into his American environment. He was comfortable, however, in the company of artists like his old friend Ilya Kabakov, as well as Grisha Bruskin, Leonid Sokov, Vitaly Komar, and Alexander Melamid; and he found a new audience of collectors for his work. In the 1990s, politics and history reentered some of his paintings as he began to rethink Russian history in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse and his own departure. It is as if Vassiliev needed the distance of exile to contemplate his history and memories. In some of the works created in America, Vassiliev used English-the most global of languages-to indicate a bridge between the cultures.

Vassiliev's principal themes, which emerged while he was in Russia and engaged him throughout his life, are his memories of home and houses, roads, forests, fields, friends, and family. Vassiliev always starts his creative process from a very personal memory, from his sacred space-the safeguarded inner center-and connects it to the visual image. He masterfully incorporates elements from different times and spaces and arranges them throughout his paintings according to the logic and "energetic" space of the painting. On a formal level, Vassiliev combines the tradition of Russian realist and landscape painting-exemplified by such artists as Isaac Levitan (1860–1940)—and the traditions of the Russian avant-garde of the 1910s and 1920s, as he creates on canvas and paper visual images and impressions, memories and recollections. Capturing the intangible memory with a realistic depiction of the subjective world is one of the goals of Vassiliev's work.

One of Vassiliev's first mature paintings, *House on the Island Anzer*, dates from 1965. In 1968, he had his first solo exhibition at Café Bluebird in Moscow, where a number of Russian nonconformist artists, including Komar and Melamid, Kabakov, Bulatov, and Pyotr Belenok also had their first semiofficial shows. Vassiliev was in constant dialogue with his close friends Kabakov and Bulatov, each of whom plays an important role in Russian culture. All three spent most of their artistic career in Moscow before moving abroad and were later welcomed back in Russia with accolades and major retrospectives.

Oleg Vassiliev belongs to the generation of Soviet nonconformist artists that emerged during the post-Stalin "Thaw" of the 1950s, championing an alternative to Socialist Realism. Nonconformist artists did not share a single aesthetic or unifying theme. In general, they tend to be unhappy with the terms "nonconformist" and "second



Oleg Vassiliev, Self-Portrait with Taratorkin, 1981. Wax pastel, collage on paper, $21\frac{1}{8} \times 20\frac{3}{16}$ in.

avant-garde" nowadays. In their view, a vast difference exists between the first, politically committed generation, and the second, apolitical one. Most seek simply to find their own individual place within the international art scene. Vassiliev always pursued his personal artistic vision. In the mid-1950s, an atmosphere of spiritual awakening and new hope for freedom in the arts appeared. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in his "secret speech" in 1956; the return of political prisoners, including such important artists as Boris Sveshnikov; and the easing of aesthetic restraints during the Thaw provided an environment that encouraged artistic creativity. In addition, major exhibitions of Western art (including works by Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, and Henri Matisse) came to Russia. In 1957, the Sixth World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow held an exhibition that incorporated many contemporary trends in Europe and the United States, while in 1959 the National American Exhibition introduced the Soviet public for the first time to works by such artists as Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock. These factors all contributed to a flourishing of abstract and nonfigurative works in nonconformist art.

The *Manezh* exhibition and the renewal of censorship in 1962 were followed by the overthrow of Khrushchev and his replacement by Leonid Brezhnev. In the following decade of the 1970s, Soviet nonconformist artists sought to make the world aware of Soviet censorship and harassment. The breakthrough *Bulldozer* show (1974), followed by a "The river of time carries me further and further, and vivid moments immersed in golden light remain on the banks. Moments experienced just now, in my youth, in my childhood . . ." —Oleg Vassiliev, "On Memory"

second open-air exhibition and many apartment exhibitions in Moscow and Leningrad, served to reignite hope. But a renewed ideological onslaught from the Brezhnev regime squelched that hope. The deportation of the writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the internal exile of physicist Andrei Sakharov were among the most infamous examples of the harassment to which creative people were subjected. This unexpected crackdown led not only to an incalculable loss of artistic talent but also to a stifling period of stagnation and conservatism in politics and society.

Like many other nonconformist artists, Vassiliev escaped the ideological confines of the Soviet system, not by confronting that system directly, but by exploring spiritual dimensions within the self. Vassiliev never considered himself a political artist; his main purpose in art was to capture his impression of the world, as well as to comment on the relationship linking the viewer, the artist, and the painting. In fact, he believed in the incompatibility of art and politics. But even his desire to eschew politics in his work did not stop him from being criticized by Soviet authorities. "Officially . . . I found myself in the circle of 'unofficial' artists, winding up in the pages of the magazine A-YA in Paris,² and afterwards being criticized at the MOSKh [the Moscow branch of the official Union of Artists] by 'The Troika' [composed of the director of the Surikov Art Institute, the Communist Party, and the Union of Artists' leaders]," he recalls in his piece, "How I Became an Artist."³

Vassiliev's landscape is a combination of the Russian landscape and contemporary means of expression. As Levitan became the major interpreter of the Russian landscape in art at the close of the nineteenth century, Vassiliev continued this tradition into the twenty-first century. Vassiliev explores and expands the concept of landscape as emotion, while reminding the viewer about the process and construction of painting.

Like Levitan, Vassiliev can render the true beauty of nature in all the diversity of its changing states, and at the







Oleg Vassiliev: Metro Series and Selected Works on Paper

n 2017, the exhibition Oleg Vassiliev: Metro Series and Selected Works on Paper from the Kolodzei Art Foundation was on display at the Harriman Institute, featuring linocuts from the late 1950s and early 1960s and selected drawings and collages. Most of the prints produced in the Soviet Union from the 1950s to the 1970s were created by the artists themselves in small editions due both to the absence of an art market and limited access to materials. For example, the Experimental Lithography Studio was accessible during Soviet times only to members of the official Union of Artists. Lithographic stones were numbered and inspected from time to time by state officials, making it very difficult for nonmembers of the Union to gain access to materials. Despite these difficulties artists persisted, however, creating prints and experimenting with varieties of styles and techniques. In his linocut series Metro (1961-62) one can trace the ideas of Vladimir Favorsky, whose studio Vassiliev visited in the late 1950s. Favorsky-an engraver, draughtsman, and theorist who reintroduced woodcuts into book printing—was a key figure in the history of Soviet xylography after the 1920s. He was a teacher to a whole constellation of fine masters and promoted innovations in graphic art. Favorsky taught drawing (1921–29) in the Graphics Faculty of Vkhutemas (Higher Artistic and Technical Workshops) in Moscow and was popular because of his commitment to technical skill, his lack of dogmatism, and his tolerance of experimentation of all kinds. Although he was sympathetic to avant-garde ideas, Favorsky's own work was firmly representational. His engravings, along with his theoretical analyses of the artistic and technical bases of wood engraving, had a great influence on the development of modern Russian graphics. Until his death Favorsky welcomed younger artists in his studio. Oleg Vassiliev fondly remembered visits to Favorsky's studio. In his Metro series, Vassiliev wanted to investigate and explore the space, its relationship to surface and border, the energy flow in the image, and the transformation of subject and space, using Favorsky's system as the basis.

Oleg Vassiliev, 7, 5, 3, from the *Metro Series*, 1961–62. Linocut, edition 15. same time present, through landscape, all the subtleties of the human soul and human memory. In Vassiliev's art, the viewer is often confronted with the painting's spatial-temporal layers of construction, its energetic space. In many works the viewer can trace the artist's hand, a gesture, as the artist purposely leaves out the grid to emphasize the painting's construction. Faulkner, and contemporaries like Vsevolod Nekrasov. For example, *Memory Speaks*, the title of the exhibition and the accompanying book, alludes to Vladimir Nabokov's S*peak*, *Memory*; Nabokov's moving account of a loving family, adolescent awakenings, flight from Bolshevik terror, education in England, and émigré life in Paris and Berlin vividly evokes a vanished past in Nabokov's inimitable prose,

Vassiliev's paintings are executed with considerable mastery, characterized by the complexity in composition of colors and the variable density of the paint, the combination and juxtaposition of thick and thin strokes, and the application of a light source. Due to his academic training, Vassiliev could, with virtuosity, create artwork in almost any style. But sometimes it could take him days to capture the once-seen and experienced moment of nature, until it was finally rendered with great finesse. It is the combination of the traditional landscape and

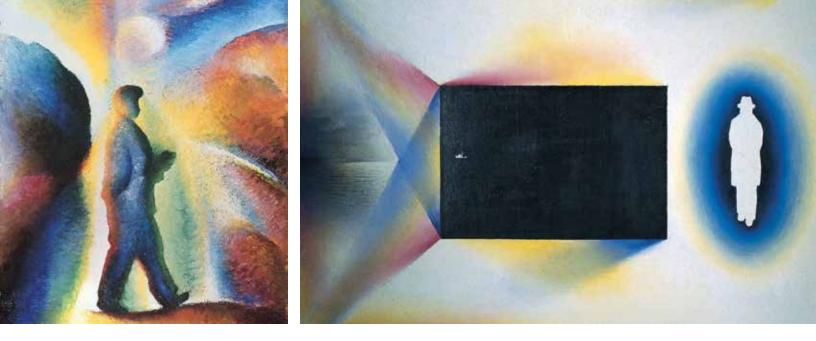


while Vassiliev's art represents a journey into the life of an artist in Soviet and contemporary Russia, presented through an often very personal selection of visual images from past and present. As Vassiliev writes in his essay, "On Memory":

Memory is capricious in its choice of subjects. Often, one recalls something quite unimportant; at first glance, it seems incomprehensible why memory retains some things and lets others go. . . . The river of time carries me further and further, and vivid moments immersed in golden light remain on the

the new treatment of space and light that makes Vassiliev's works unique.

Vassiliev very often uses literary references (ranging from antiquity to contemporary literary sources), referring, for example, to Anton Chekhov, Homer, William banks. Moments experienced just now, in my youth, in my childhood . . . I become, as it were, stretched in time, simultaneously moving in two opposite directions. The first movement takes me, in violation of the natural course of events, further and further back into



Above, from left: Oleg Vassiliev, Portrait of Ratgauz, 1964. Oil on canvas, 26³/₄ x 19³/₄ in.; Oleg Vassiliev, Near the Sea, 1966. Oil on canvas, 35¹/₂ x 47¹/₂ in. Opposite page: Oleg Vassiliev, Perspective, 1983. Black and white paper, collage on cardboard, 21¹/₄ x 20¹/₂ in.

the past, into "the glow of days gone by"; the second carries me, the way it's supposed to be, "ahead" into the silent abyss of the future of which I know nothing and which I experience as a black hole, as an emptiness devoid of matter; a hole that, for me, fills up with life to the extent that it turns into the past.⁴

By extracting and elevating a personal, almost intimate selection of visual images from the past and present and transformed into the future, some of them intensified, some dramatized, Vassiliev captures something more universal, something common to all human memory. In his art Vassiliev can take a small sketch or a drawing and bring it to the viewer's attention by monumentalizing it and pointing out details that you would not have noticed otherwise. He creates in pictorial form an analogy of the very process by which memories become incorporated into the mind's consciousness, inviting the viewer to explore the landscape of memory.

For further reading:

Natalia Kolodzei and Kira Vassiliev, eds. *Oleg Vassiliev: Memory Speaks (Themes and Variations)* (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2004); in Russian and English. Natalia Kolodzei is the executive director of the Kolodzei Art Foundation and an honorary member of the Russian Academy of Arts. Along with Tatiana Kolodzei, she owns the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, which contains more than 7,000 pieces including paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, and digital art and videos by more than 300 artists from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Active as a curator and art historian, Kolodzei has curated more than eighty shows in the United States, Europe, and Russia at such institutions as the State Treyakov Gallery in Moscow, the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, and the Chelsea Art Museum in New York City. She is coeditor of Oleg Vassiliev: Memory Speaks (Themes and Variations).

The Kolodzei Art Foundation, Inc., a US-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public foundation started in 1991, organizes exhibitions and cultural exchanges in museums and cultural centers in the United States, Russia, and other countries, often utilizing the considerable resources of the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, and publishes books on Russian art.

For additional information, visit http://www.KolodzeiArt.org or email Kolodzei@kolodzeiart.org.

¹Oleg Vassiliev: Memory Speaks (Themes and Variations), ed. Natalia Kolodzei and Kira Vassiliev (St. Petersburg, Palace Editions, 2004), 114.

 ²S.S., "Atelier: Oleg Vassiliev," *A-YA*, no. 2 (1980): 26–31.
³Oleg Vassiliev, "How I Became an Artist," *Pastor*, Cologne, Germany, 1997.

⁴Oleg Vassiliev, "On Memory" in Ilya Kabakov, "The Sixties and Seventies: Notes on Unofficial Life in Moscow," *Wiener Slawisticher Almanach*, vol. 47

⁽Wien, 1999), 253.

Alumni & Postdoc Notes



Maksim Hanukai



Filip Scherf (né Tucek)

I received my Ph.D. from Columbia in 2014 and was a Harriman Institute postdoctoral fellow in 2015–16. I have taught Russian language and literature at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where I will be starting a new position as assistant professor of Russian in the fall of 2018. My research falls into three main categories: Russian Romanticism in its European context, post-Soviet literature and culture, and Russian theater and performance. I am currently working on two book-length projects: a study of Alexander Pushkin's sense of the tragic, which is titled "Pushkin's Tragic Visions," and a second study that examines the proliferation of documentary practices in post-Soviet culture. In addition, I am coediting and translating a new anthology of plays from the New Russian Drama movement for Columbia University Press (forthcoming in 2019). My recent articles include "Tragedy in the Balkans: Pushkin's Critique of Romantic Ideology in *The Gypsies" (The Pushkin Review)* and "After the Riot: Teatr.doc and the Performance of Witness" (*TDR/The Drama Review*).

-Maksim Hanukai (Ph.D., Slavic Languages, 2014; Harriman Postdoctoral Fellow, 2015-16)

I graduated from the School of International and Public Affairs in 1967 and have spent my entire career with a Swedish bank, working both in Mexico and in France and covering our relations with the Andean Pact countries and African countries. Before studying in New York I had spent approximately eight months working as a tour conductor in the former Soviet Union, and as a tour conductor for Scandinavian tourists in Romania and Bulgaria. It was a tremendous privilege to get the opportunity to study at the Russian Institute and Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. I served as secretary of the local Columbia University Alumni club here in Stockholm for a couple of years during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This association is still alive, arranging meetings from time to time.

-Björn Norrbom (M.I.A., SIPA, 1967)

The Harriman Institute (HI) was central to my life-changing time at SIPA. As a research assistant, I had the pleasure to learn from the most accomplished experts, to organize events with people of global repute, and—most importantly—to become a member of the HI family. Since I left the Institute in 2015, I have done my best to represent it through my work.

After graduation I moved to Brussels to join the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NPA) as a researcher. Having successfully concluded the Tirana, Albania, NPA Summit, I decided to expand my skill set into the world of business. But I could not completely abandon my passion for Russia and Eastern Europe, and I continued to do consulting projects for organizations such as the Eurasia Group and Kroll, and other transnational corporations and investment funds with activities in the region. This was a fantastic opportunity to apply my theoretical knowledge of the region!

In the fall of 2017, I was offered a St. Petersburg–based position at G-TEAM, a major engineering firm, to develop the company's business interests in Russia and other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. The challenging role combines my desires to study Russia firsthand and to learn new skills through practical work. At the same time, I continue to publish articles popularizing the modern history of Eastern Europe and am working to launch a series of public seminars on the subject. I also recently became a correspondent for the *Economist's* Intelligence Unit. Often, I think back to where all of this began, and to the wonderful people who work on the twelfth floor of Columbia University's International Affairs Building. Thank you, Harriman Institute.

-Filip Scherf (né Tucek) (M.I.A., SIPA, 2015)

I received my B.A. in history and Russian language/area studies from Duke University in 2011 and my M.A. in Russian, Eastern European, Balkan, and Eurasian studies from Columbia University's Harriman Institute in 2013. Currently, I serve as a program manager and energy analyst for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Office of Energy Programs (TDEC OEP). In this role, I oversee various funding and financing programs, energy efficiency and sustainable transportation initiatives, and external communications efforts. I also assist with administration, research, and planning with regard to the State of Tennessee's allocation under the Volkswagen Diesel Settlement's Environmental Mitigation Trust. As a beneficiary of this Trust, the State of Tennessee is expected to receive an initial allocation of \$45.7 million, which will be used to fund environmental mitigation projects that reduce NOx emissions.

In addition to my work at TDEC OEP, I also serve as cochair on the National Association of State Energy Officials' Transportation Committee, coordinator for Middle and West Tennessee Clean Fuels (a U.S. Department of Energy Clean Cities Coalition), and Public Sector cochair for the Tennessee Chapter of the Energy Services Coalition. Prior to joining TDEC, I interned with the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development and the U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg, Russia. Most recently, I served as assistant account executive for the New York City–based public relations firm Ketchum, Inc., where I acted as a public relations and communications liaison for both the Federal Government of the Russian Federation and Gazprom Export.

-Alexa Voytek (MARS-REERS, 2013)

After graduating from Hamilton College in 2011, the romantic allure of Lermontov's Caucasus prompted me to move to Georgia. I spent a year working in a liberal arts school in Tbilisi, teaching literature and eating as much *khachapuri* as possible. Upon my return, I pursued my interest in Russian studies at Columbia University, earning my M.A. at the Harriman Institute in 2014. Looking to explore the professional sphere, I worked in various organizations throughout New York City, initially in advertising at Saatchi & Saatchi, where I specialized in campaigns for Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Having experienced the fast-paced world of international advertising, I decided to embrace a field closer to my heart: the performing arts. I worked at American Ballet Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera, where I gained vast experience and appreciation for an art form that I decided to pursue academically. Currently, I am a graduate student in the Slavic Studies department at Brown University, where my research focuses on the development of ballet from eighteenth-century Russia through the Soviet era.

-Tara Wheelwright (née Collins) (MARS-REERS, 2014)



Alexa Voytek



Tara Wheelwright (née Collins) Oleg Vassiliev, *Tarusa. Early Spring*, 1993. Pastel on black paper, 19% x 25½ in. Image courtesy of the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation, www.KolodzeiArt.org.

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