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VINTAGE: EASTERN Bloc 1964

UKRAINE'S "HYBRID WAR" Longing for Future

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Cover photo by Hope Herman Wurmfeld, from the exhibit "Vintage: Eastern Bloc 1964." Poland, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 16 x 10 in.

Inside cover: USSR, 1964. Photo by Hope Herman Wurmfeld. Archival inkjet print, 10 x 16 in.



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Opposite page: Alexander Cooley (Photo by Jeffrey Schifman)



n May 2018, the Harriman Institute held a Carnegie Corporation–sponsored workshop bringing together scholars, journalists, and human rights activists to discuss how authoritarian governments in Eurasia and beyond have monitored, threatened, kidnapped, and assassinated political exiles abroad. A U.S. Helsinki Commission staffer was in attendance, and I later learned that the commission planned to propose the Transnational Repression Accountability and Prevention Act. On September 12, 2019, along with workshop participant and Harriman alumnus Nate Schenkkan (MARS-REERS, 2011) of Freedom House, I was invited to testify before Congress about the tools of international repression. The bill was proposed the next day.

This is not the first time a Harriman Institute workshop has contributed to conversations in the policy making community, and I continue to be amazed, not only by the Institute's convening power, but also by the incredible success of our alumni. Nate is a great example of someone who has used his Harriman analytical training in his advocacy work. The September Helsinki hearing marked his fourth congressional testimony about international human rights abuses, and I am delighted to include a profile of him in this issue of *Harriman Magazine*.

Every year, the Harriman Institute hosts the convention for the Association for the Study of Nationalities, which will celebrate its 25th anniversary in May. I am excited to share with you an essay by Ukrainian journalist, public intellectual, and former visiting professor in Ukrainian studies at the Harriman, Mykola Riabchuk, which grew out of a paper he presented at ASN. Mykola discusses the Ukrainian government's blacklist and how it is different from censorship in countries like Russia and Saudi Arabia.

As our cover story, we have a beautiful photo essay by the photographer Hope Wurmfeld, whose exhibit depicting her 1964 road trip around the Eastern Bloc with her husband was mounted at the Harriman Institute this winter. This is a thick issue with a lot of exciting content—an essay by our postdoctoral fellow Daria Ezerova on the reasons behind Russia's cultural nostalgia for the '90s; an article by our student Daniel Petrick on the erosion of Islamic tradition during Kurban Bajram in Prizren, Kosovo; an excerpt from a novel by Ukrainian writer Oksana Lutsyshyna; and an interview with two Ukrainian LGBTQ activists on Russian anti-LGBTQ propaganda.

In January we celebrated the life and career of our dear friend and colleague Mark von Hagen. Mark was a bright spirit who made an invaluable contribution to regional studies and the development of the Institute. You will find an appreciation of Mark's life and career in the in memoriam section.

As always, we love to hear your feedback and ideas for future stories.

All the best,

Alexander Cooley Director, Harriman Institute





طِلِن) COVER STORY

Vintage: Eastern Bloc 1964 By Hope Herman Wurmfeld

In the summer of 1964 the author and her husband set out from Rome in their Alfa Romeo on a journey through Eastern Europe and the USSR, to their final destination in Finland.

"It was an epic journey, and as uncomfortable and downright frightening as it sometimes was, I will always remember the beautiful young people who gathered around us at the campgrounds, the miraculous Matisse 'Dancers,' and the old farmer at the Polish border." <u>Л</u>

Testifying about Human Rights Abuses: An Actor's Path to Congress By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

Harriman alumnus Nate Schenkkan has given four congressional testimonies. He describes the experience as a rollercoaster, but his acting background helps.

Letter from Prizren, Kosovo: Tradition Gives Way to Modernity on Kurban Bajram By Daniel Petrick

A Harriman M.A. student reports on how the erosion of Islamic tradition on Kurban Bajram affects local shepherds.







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A Difficult Trade-Off: Freedom of Speech and Public Security during the "Hybrid War" By Mykola Riabchuk

What does censorship and the blacklist mean in Ukraine and how does it differ—in scope and implementation from what it means in Russia, China, or Saudi Arabia?



Longing for Future: Understanding '90s Nostalgia By Daria V. Ezerova

The '90s are often portrayed as a chaotic and turbulent period in Russian history. What accounts for the decade's rising popularity in the country's popular culture?



"Internal Enemies": The Politics of Anti-LGBTQ Propaganda in Russia and Ukraine By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

Why did the Russian government adopt anti-LGBTQ messaging, and how is it used beyond Russia's borders? Activists Bogdan Globa and Yelena Goltsman discuss.



Ivan and Phoebe (An Excerpt from the Novel) By Oksana Lutsyshyna Translated by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler

The personal stories of Ivan and Phoebe are set against the background of the fall of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet reality in newly independent Ukraine.



In Memoriam

George Feifer Mark L. von Hagen



Alumni & Postdoc Notes



Giving to Harriman

TESTIFYING ABOUT HUMAN
RIGHTS ABUSESAn Actor's Path
to Congress

Nate Schenkkan in Profile

By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

ate Schenkkan (MARS-REERS, 2011) compares the feeling of testifying before Congress to the feeling you get when you board a roller coasteryou get in, the restraints click shut, "and things just start going." Schenkkan, who directs special research at Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization focusing on democratization and human rights, has given four congressional testimonies, all at the U.S. Helsinki Commission. He likes doing it. "You're a little scared, a little anxious, but, like on a roller coaster, you're enjoying the movements," he says.

Schenkkan's most recent testimony, on how Turkey uses international tools to repress political exiles, took place last September. He appeared before the commission

alongside Harriman director Alexander Cooley a year after participating in a Harriman Institute-organized workshop on political exiles, transnational repression, and global authoritarianism. A Helsinki Commission staffer had attended the workshop, and Cooley says the event may have played a role in Congress's decision to introduce the Transnational Repression Accountability and Prevention Act-the reason behind the Helsinki hearing. "It's an example of how Harriman's crossprofessional convening power and selection of topics help propel these issues," says Cooley.

Schenkkan, who studied at Yale, majored in political science with a focus on the Middle East. But, when he graduated in 2002, he did not envision that his career would involve testifying before Congress—for years after finishing his undergraduate degree he worked as a stage actor. He appeared in Rachel Dickstein's *Betrothed*, a production of *Death in Vacant Lot!*, and a staging of Allen Ginsburg's "*Howl*," among other plays. "I was living in New York, I was acting, and, honestly, I was kind of floundering around in life," he says.

To support himself, Schenkkan worked as a property manager in the West Village. The job—building maintenance, trash disposal, accounting, tenant relations—may sound mundane, but the experience gradually transformed Schenkkan's life. The landlord who hired him was Andrew Blane, a prominent human rights activist and professor of Russian religious history. Blane, a longtime Amnesty International member and the first North

Nate Schenkkan testifying at the U.S. Helsinki Commission hearing, "Prisoners of the Purge: The Victims of Turkey's Failing Rule of Law," on November 15, 2017. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Helsinki Commission. "You have an individual in prison whose case could go in different ways. Relations with Turkey are deteriorating badly. You wouldn't want to make things worse."

American to serve on its executive board, had participated in the Helsinki Accords process and was one of nine delegates sent to Oslo to receive Amnesty's Nobel Peace Prize in 1977. Because of this, he had established strong ties within the Soviet dissident movement, and the tenants he rented to included prominent Russian literary figures and activists (he had even housed the Nobel Prize–winning poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky).

Schenkkan quickly became immersed in Blane's world. "Andrew was the kind of person who would take someone under their wing," he says. He met figures like Jan Egeland, a prominent UN diplomat handling refugee affairs, and Russian human rights icon Lyudmila Alekseeva. When Blane worked on an antitorture campaign during the second Bush administration,

Left to right: CeCe Heil, Jacqueline Furnari, and Nate Schenkkan at the U.S. Helsinki Commission hearing, "Prisoners of the Purge: The Victims of Turkey's Failing Rule of Law," on November 15, 2017. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Helsinki Commission. Schenkkan helped him. In the four years he worked with Blane, Schenkkan learned a lot. He was able to see up close the people who had shaped the field of human rights since its inception.

In 2007, Schenkkan traveled to Moscow on a theater fellowship with a Russian theater troop. He had a feeling that it would be his last stint in theater—the career would never sustain him financially in New York—but the trip reinforced an already developing interest in Russia. When he returned, Schenkkan took Russian classes and thought about applying to graduate school. "I didn't really know what I was going to do, but I did feel that human rights was going to be a part of it," he says.

In 2009, Schenkkan enrolled in the Harriman Institute's MARS-REERS program. He knew little Soviet history and used the interdisciplinary curriculum to fill the gaps in his knowledge. "I was skipping around trying to put together an understanding of the region," he says. He took several classes on Central Asia and studied Uzbek; he learned about Soviet interventions in Eastern Europe and focused his thesis on the détente and the creation of the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe. He also received a Critical Language Scholarship from the U.S. Department of State to study Turkish in Ankara and interned for the Open Society



Foundations' Central Asia program. "I really just followed my interests," he says.

After graduation, Schenkkan moved to Kyrgyzstan and worked as a freelance reporter for Eurasianet and other media outlets. It was a difficult experience, but it helped him understand the region better. "Journalism is a really good way to teach you how little you actually know," he says.

His work paid off. In 2012, he got a job as a program officer for Freedom House's Eurasia program, where he managed grants and made sure programs ran smoothly, efficiently, and with accountability. When a project director position opened at Nations in Transit, the organization's annual survey of democratic governance, Schenkkan welcomed the opportunity of a research-oriented position. He would be in charge of editing, fact-checking, and scoring detailed reports about the 29 post-Communist countries. It was 2015, two years after a wave of prodemocracy protests had broken out in Turkey's Gezi Park. By that point, Schenkkan, with his knowledge of the Turkish language and his undergraduate background in Middle Eastern studies, was also working on programs covering Turkey.

It was Schenkkan's Turkish expertise that led him to testify before Congress for the first time in 2014. Schenkkan had no idea what to expect, but Freedom House coached him on all aspects of the process. He felt prepared, but it was stressful nonetheless—"It's a public performance, and it's on the record." Schenkkan's 2017 testimony, at a hearing about the imprisonment of U.S. pastor Andrew Brunson in Turkey, was the most challenging. His role was to discuss Turkey's human rights conditions, and the stakes were high. "You have an individual in prison whose case could go in different ways. Relations with Turkey are deteriorating badly. You wouldn't want to make things worse," he says.

All things considered, Schenkkan says he finds acting more difficult than being a congressional witness. "You have to know your lines; speak them correctly, with the right feelings; hit your cues. When you testify, you're sitting in a chair with your lines in front of you, reading."

"It's a public performance, and it's on the record."



Letter from Prizren, Kosovo

Tradition Gives Way to Modernity on Kurban Bajram

By Daniel Petrick



very summer tourists and émigrés fill the streets of Prizren, a city of 180,000 people located at the foot of the Sharr Mountains in southern Kosovo. Pedestrian traffic in the Ottoman-style old town stands shoulder to shoulder, and clubs pulse with bass until the early morning. But on a Sunday morning last August, the city was silent, the streets empty. The typical soundscar horns, café music, garbage trucks-had disappeared. Only the bleating of sheep emanating from garages, alleyways, backyards, and car trunks broke the silence. Slowly, the bleating too fell away, replaced by axes hacking at ribs and limbs, air pumps used to help peel off the pelt, and wire brushes and water hoses cleaning blood off driveway cement.

It was Kurban Bajram, or Eid Al-Adha in Arabic, the biggest Muslim holiday of the year. Honoring the story of Abraham, the Ouran dictates that households with sufficient means have to sacrifice an animal, typically a sheep, and distribute the meat to the poor. According to Elmir Karadži, a Prizren-based researcher of Islamic social sciences and employee of the Islamic Community of Kosovo, the animal one sacrifices must be healthy, well-fed, and uninjured, and slaughtered humanelywith a cloth over its eyes to conceal the approaching knife-in order to minimize suffering.

Though many Prizren residents continue to sacrifice sheep at home and distribute the meat to the poor and elderly in their own neighborhoods, urbanization has made the practice increasingly difficult. Not only is it harder to find a place to butcher the animals, but also, fewer people in the younger generation know how to properly perform the sacrifice. Increasingly, people in urban spaces like Prizren have started to outsource the duty, paying a 120-euro contribution to the Islamic Community of Kosovo to sacrifice an animal and distribute the meat on their behalf.

For shepherds and farmers who work in the mountains around Prizren this trend is an unwelcome development. For instance, the family livestock businesses of Besim Hoxha and Avdulla "Dulli" Ademaj, who respectively own about 600 and 800 sheep, rely on the annual Kurban Bajram sales. The two men, neighbors from Zhur, a small town between Prizren and the Albanian border, sell their sheep for Kurban for anywhere from 110 to 170 euros and aimed to sell upward of 100 sheep this holiday.

Every summer Dulli herds his sheep into the high pastures of the Sharr Mountains, in the southern tip of Kosovo near the Albanian and Macedonian borders, taking about 1,200 additional sheep with him from other farmers who pay him to fatten their flocks. Once a week he loads hundreds of kilos of cheese onto a horse train and takes it down to the nearest road, with the cheese eventually ending up in outdoor markets around Prizren. Most of Dulli's annual profit, however, comes from two short spells-the spring sales of young lamb meat and

In the summer Dulli's sheep graze in the Sharr Mountain pastures in the southern tip of Kosovo. All photos by Daniel Petrick. the Kurban Bajram sales of fullgrown sheep. A reduction in Kurban sales would seriously threaten his business.

Hoxha is in a similar position, but he said that the financial effects of the new trend have not yet hit him. He has noticed that the same break with tradition that has caused fewer people to sacrifice sheep in their own homes has also resulted in fewer people owning sheep. As a result, those who still tperform home sacrifices are more likely to buy sheep from a farmer. So far, the shift has kept his earnings stable.

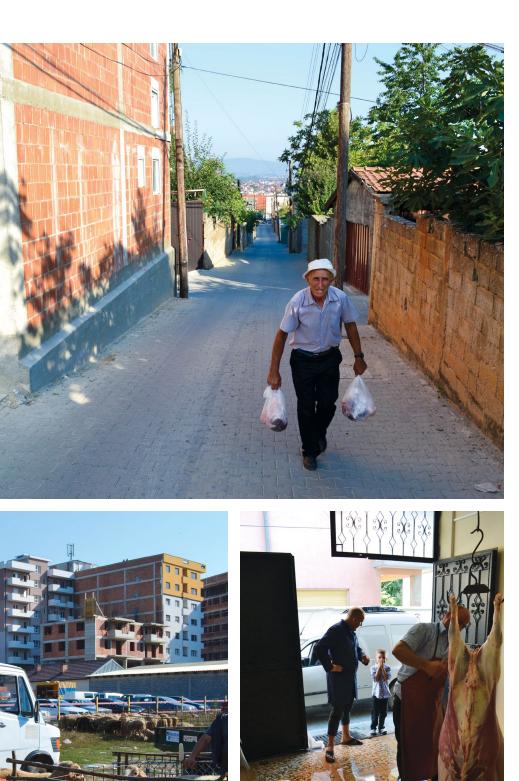
But Hoxha had other reasons for opposing the new practice: he likes the bonds created when people distribute their own meat within their neighborhoods and families. He finds contributions to the Islamic Community to be sterile and perhaps even suspect. "When you pay someone else to do it, the money goes from hand to hand to hand; who knows where it ends up?" he said.

Since the Islamic Community buys meat en masse, it can purchase larger amounts at a discount and therefore distribute more, according to Karadži, who added that the Islamic Community distributes Kurban meat to *medresas* (Islamic boarding high schools) as well as to some soup kitchens and impoverished people. Poor families can also sign up at the local Islamic Community offices to receive a donation of meat.

But, to the chagrin of Kosovar livestock farmers and butchers, in 2018 the Islamic Community purchased imported meat from Hungary, cutting in on local shepherds' business. Hoxha is proud of the quality of his livestock and skeptical of the animals the Islamic Community acquires. "Maybe it is from Romania or







Brazil. Maybe you don't know how they treat the animals," he said.

Leading up to the holiday, shepherds bring a part of their flock to two markets on either side of the city. Berat, a shepherd from Zhur, was selling some of his 1,200 sheep on the day before Kurban Bajram. Berat's skin is creased and bronze from spending summers in the mountain pastures. His sweat-drenched knockoff Gucci cap shielded him from the worst of the sun that day; it seemed Prizren's citizens were not willing to come out to the market in the heat. "We all complain," Berat said, "but by the end of the day there won't be any sheep left." Berat sells upward of 120 sheep and, even after subtracting expenses, this amounts to a €5,000-6,000 profit-a significant portion of his yearly income. "Without Kurban Bajram, none of us would be doing this," Berat said. "There wouldn't be enough profit."

Top left: A hired butcher works on Kurban Bajram.

Bottom left: Shepherds from all over the area bring their sheep into the city in the days before the holiday.

Top right: After sacrificing a sheep at home, Hysni Berisha takes two bags of meat to friends in need.

Bottom right: Mahir Colpan explains the butchering process to a younger family member.

On the other side of town, a man named Nehiri was trying to sell off his father's two dozen remaining sheep. According to Nehiri, the prospects in the sheep business are grim, so when his father died a few years ago he decided to wind down the large family sheep operation and start a milking plant. "Every year there are more and more sheep left over at the end of the day, more and more people who don't know how to butcher," Nehiri said. "You'll see-in five years, none of us will be here selling sheep for Bajram." He attributes the decline in sheep sales to the increasing number of people outsourcing their Kurban Bajram duties. The bleak future of the sheep business didn't stop Nehiri from sharing his advice on how to raise sheep with high-quality meat. He suggested a special 45-day diet. "My secret is sprinkling Vegeta [a Croatian spice mix adored across former Yugoslavia] into their feed," he said.

Muhamet, who runs a small dried-fruit factory, and his nephew were hanging around near Nehiri's stall and invited me to their home during the sacrifice. Because their family finances were good this year, Muhamet and his brother Erhan decided to sacrifice two sheep. They donated one to a local soup kitchen and would share the other with less fortunate friends and neighbors.

Though tradition dictates that sacrifices be performed right after dawn prayer, some families who don't know how to butcher, or prefer not to, must wait until the late morning or afternoon for a hired butcher. At Muhamet's house, a hired butcher worked swiftly. How many sheep would he sacrifice and butcher during the holiday? "I'll be going all day and all night, all day and all night," he said. *Top left:* The butcher ties a cloth around the eyes of a sheep to shield the view of the approaching knife as Erhan reads a prayer.

Bottom left: The overflow crowd for the dawn prayer at the Sinan Pasha Mosque spills out into the front courtyard.

Top right: Muteza Xhemal cuts the throat of one of the approximately 50 sheep he expects to butcher by the end of the day.

Bottom right: A butcher peels the sheep skin off carefully so that it can be donated to the Islamic Community, which then sells the skins to leather goods producers. Sheep skins pile up outside of mosques all over the city throughout the day before they are collected.







Hiring butchers to perform home sacrifices is a way for families to respect tradition even if they have forgotten the prayers and procedures for a proper ritual. The fact that there aren't enough butchers to go around is an opportunity for some shepherds with smaller flocks to supplement their income. Muteza Xhemal sold a few of his 250 sheep in the days before Kurban Bajram and then tore around the city on the day of the holiday, his phone ringing constantly, butchering sheep for people in garages, in backyards, and on porches. Making 10 to 15 euros per house, he expected to sacrifice almost 50 sheep by the end of the day, a nice day's wage in a country where the average monthly income is less than 500 euros.

Dudak Colpan, who was sacrificing a sheep in the family garage with his son and cousin, spoke diplomatically about the superiority of the old tradition. He said that it is "okay" to donate, but that sacrificing at home really is better, if you can.

Bertan, a shepherd with 1,000 sheep that he grazes just down the mountain from Dulli's pastures, used stronger language. For him, the tradition is more than a Quranic dictate; it builds community and "the well-being of the house." It is necessary for a man of the house to spill blood. Bertan sent a warning to the people of Prizren: "if you don't sacrifice at home; if you contribute to the Islamic Community instead, maybe it won't take, it won't count."

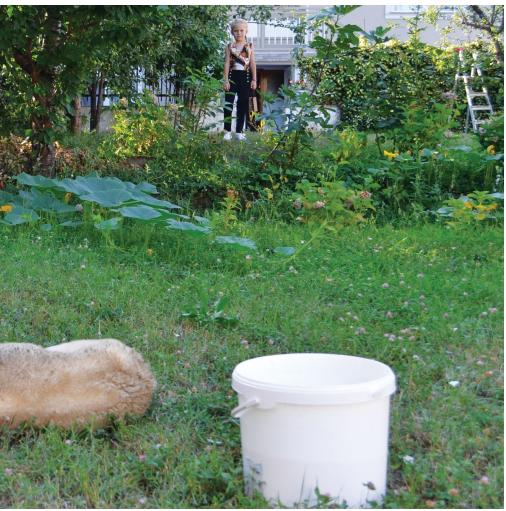
Daniel Petrick is a graduate student in the Harriman Institute's MARS-REERS program. He reported this story while on a Harriman Institute–administered PepsiCo Fellowship.











Top left: Erhan washes away the pools of blood into a drain as his son and neighborhood children watch on.

Top right: Enver Ademaj worked as a shepherd for 40 years on Koritnik, the mountain in the background.

Bottom: A young girl leaves a family party to watch the butchering.

A DIFFICULT TRADE-OFF FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND PUBLIC SECURITY DURING THE "HYBRID WAR"

By Mykola Riabchuk

Soldier standing atop the ruins of a building surveys the war-wracked landscape in Donbass.

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he reputable Denmark-based international watchdog Freemuse, which monitors the freedom of artistic expression around the globe, published its 2016 annual report under the title "Art under Threat." One of the highlighted sentences in the report states, "Ukraine in 2016 topped the list as the worst country to practice censorship, with 557 registered acts of censorship." ¹

For the average global reader who barely knows where Ukraine is on the map, much less understands how its culture and media sphere function, the news might look quite scary. Especially if they happen to read elsewhere that Ukraine is run by a fascist junta that usurped power after a coup d'état and the removal of a "democratically elected president" and that, moreover, this junta has banned the Russian language; oppressed ethnic minorities; and killed, exiled, or completely silenced disobedient journalists.

Facts and figures make sense inasmuch as they help us understand something—the broader picture, a context, or a trend. Yet, what can the figure "557 registered acts of censorship" tell us about the country other than the indisputable fact that its artistic environment is far more restrictive that anybody else's in the world? The second country on the list is Kuwait with a modest 61 cases, and China comes next with 20. In contrast, Russia appears to be a true beacon of freedom—just 16 "registered acts of censorship," even though it still loses to Iran (nine cases) and Saudi Arabia (a mere two).

So, what does "blacklist" mean in Ukraine and how does it differ-in scope and implementation-from what it means in Russia, China, or Saudi Arabia? In Ukraine the blacklist targets selected Russian books, newspapers, and magazines, along with some films, television programs, and internet resources. What happens to the culprits who violate the ban? Are they simply fined, imprisoned, or shot? Does the ban only apply to commercial distribution or to personal consumption as well? These questions are of no little importance if we are to understand the situation on the ground and not merely perform sheer numerical exercises. In repressive countries, true censorship is supported by the secret police and prison sentences. In Ukraine, so far, all that the spillover from the notorious ban of the 544 Russian films has amounted to is a couple of official warnings to



film distributors. It does not address consumers; the law restricts only the commercial import of blacklisted items (not only films, by the way, but also some books and music). Nowhere is there any restriction on their import for personal use. On the contrary, the law stipulates that anyone may bring up to 10 copies of any book, CD, or DVD from Russia as a personal belonging.

This makes the notion of censorship rather questionable, since the restrictive measures more resemble trade sanctions against an enemy state than a decisive attempt to curb forever the influx of the "subversive" items or to effectively ban a citizen's access to any particular information. The same ambiguity can be observed in adjacent areas: even though the Ukrainian law bans a number of Russian media and excludes them from commercial distribution (in newsstands, cable networks, etc.), it does not ban their private consumption-either via satellite antennas or VPN services, which provide access to officially blocked media outlets and social networks. The major irony of all these measures is that virtually any "subversive" idea or statement from the embargoed products can easily be found in domestic mass media, except perhaps direct calls for secession and undisguised support for separatists.

The Ukrainian authorities seem to be fully aware that restrictions cannot preclude the information flow in today's world and, moreover, are not suitable for the democracy that Ukraine aspires to be. The government, therefore, adopted a two-pronged approach: complete lenience for consumers but increasingly tough restrictions on importers and distributors inasmuch as they try to profit from anti-Ukrainian products. The primary goal of the government measures seems to be not to completely block any access to "enemy propaganda," which is actually impossible, but rather to make it complex, cumbersome, and requiring special, extraordinary effort. In a sense, it resembles the official treatment of pornography in many countries: it is not banned altogether but removed to sex shops and other specific sites, so as not to be visible and accessible by default in any show window.

The ambivalent policy, however, makes the government a convenient object of criticism from opposing quarters. On the one hand, human rights watchdogs criticize the government measures, with no caveats, even though Ukraine is in a de facto state of war with Russia. They raise maximalist demands—fully in line with the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution—that

AN INTERRELATED ISSUE IS THE DIFFICULT TRADE-OFF BETWEEN THE DEMANDS FOR FREEDOM AND THE DEMANDS FOR SECURITY

are hardly suitable for the war-torn country. On the other hand, there are national radicals who chastise the government for not undertaking sufficient measures against the enemy's propaganda—both imported and domestically produced.

The problem, then, boils down to a number of interrelated issues. First, it runs into the old, essentially philosophical, question about the limits of freedom in a liberal democracy and the complex dialectic of freedom and responsibility. It entails, secondly, the issue of a difficult trade-off between the demands for freedom and demands for security, which becomes particularly relevant during the war and evokes a broad range of historical precedents as well as today's terrorism-related controversies. Thirdly, the question emerges whether the ongoing war is really a war rather than a "conflict"-as most international diplomats euphemistically define it-and whether it is a Russo-Ukrainian rather than a "civil" war, as the Kremlin-friendly experts insist. And finally, if it is a war, however "hybrid," and if some restrictions on enemy propaganda and subversive activities are necessary, how far should they go, how do we determine their reasonable scale and scope, and how can we keep them within the legitimate framework and prevent highly probable excesses that would encroach on citizens' rights far beyond the security needs?

I will touch on the first two issues only in the most general way, while addressing primarily the third and the fourth, with the basic assumption that (a) unrestricted freedom of speech is highly desirable and represents, at the normative level, an absolute value; (b) no country in war or a warlike situation has ever avoided some form of restriction on freedom of speech and curtailing some civic liberties; and (c) new information technologies in the globalized world usher in new opportunities for information warfare, heavily tipping the trade-off between the demands for freedom and the need for security to the latter side.

THE WAR THAT NEVER WAS

The Russo-Ukrainian war that began in 2014 with the Russian military invasion of Crimea and eventually of Donbas is still taking its toll, amounting to 13,000 civilian deaths, 1.5 million refugees, huge economic losses, and vast material destruction. Thus, on the ground, in view of this devastation and the casualties, it may be of little importance whether we call it a "war" or a "conflict," or deem it "Russo-Ukrainian" or "Ukrainian-Ukrainian." Definitions, however, have strong political implications.

In Moscow's view, the war is indisputably "civil," provoked by Ukrainian nationalists who staged in Kyiv a coup d'état against the legitimate government, established the fascist regime, and threatened the Russian speakers in the southeast with forced "Ukrainization" and political persecution. Russia played, arguably, only a peacekeeping role in all these events by protecting inhabitants of Crimea from the rabid Ukrainian fascists and providing humanitarian aid to the inhabitants of Donbas terrorized by the junta's "punitive squads."

The Ukrainian view is the opposite: there was no coup d'état in Kyiv but rather a popular revolution, no junta but a democratically elected government, and no threat to the Russian speakers from the new Ukrainian government that itself was predominately Russian-speaking like virtually all the Ukrainian post-Soviet elites.

> *Left*: The aftermath of war in Ukraine: from a multiple rocket launch system, "Smerch."

Left: Ukrainian Army soldiers at the frontline, Donbass.

Right: Russian writer Zakhar Prilepin, here in his capacity as deputy commander of the reconnaissance and assault battalion of the Donetsk People's Republic, boasts of killing many people in Donetsk. The Ukrainian interpretation of the events is supported by the facts, so most international experts do not deny it. But most international politicians find the corresponding terminology unpalatable, as it challenges their comfortable position on the fence and forces them to make what and hardly compatible imperatives: on one hand, there is a need for security vis-à-vis a much stronger and extremely perfidious neighbor that looks determined either to subjugate Ukraine or destroy it. On the other, most Ukrainians hold freedom to be an indisputable value (as

is essentially a moral choice. It requires that sanctions be tightened against the aggressor state rather than lifted for the sake of "mutually beneficial co-operation." And it does not allow them to remove the annoying problem ("Ukraine crisis") from the international agenda and downgrade it to a domestic problem, in keeping with the Kremlin template, by granting "special status" for its Moscow-installed and fully dependent "government."

Ukraine, like most post-Soviet states, had experienced Russia's sharp power for years, but in 2014, the poorly disguised military aggression apparently turned this power from sharp to hard, prompting experts to employ the term "hybrid war," meaning a peculiar combination of both military and nonmilitary tools



two recent revolutions have shown) and, at least normatively, support the Ukrainian government's stated goal "to join Europe." The difficult trade-off between the two demands is further complicated by the legal ambiguity of the "hybrid war" that does exist de facto but not de jure.

As a result, there are many situations when the letter of the law and the spirit of war clash dramatically on the ground. Besides the official ban on commercial distribution of some Russian books and films, newspapers and journals, TV programs and web resources, the Ukrainian authorities have also blacklisted some Russian writers, pop stars, and various kinds of "journalists" from entering the country for a few years. The reason is either their "anti-Ukrainian activity," which usually amounts to some explicit support for the annexation of Crimea and rebellion in Donbas, or their illegal trips to Crimea or Donbas from the Russian territory, without Ukraine's

was in use. The term appeared to be suitable for both those who insisted that there was a "war" and for those who preferred to speak about the "conflict" but who were ready to compromise on the term inasmuch as the adjective "hybrid" seemed to make the war less real.

Experts agree today that information warfare is a major part of the "special war" and that Ukraine presently is at the forefront of such a war—as "the proving ground where Russia tests the weapons and tactics of hybrid aggression which it then applies to the destabilization of the situation in the U.S. and EU countries."²

A DIFFICULT TRADE-OFF

The unconventional character of the war poses additional challenges to both the Ukrainian government and civil society. They are squeezed between two very different consent. The latter reason is irreproachable in juridical terms, since no country tolerates illegal entry into its territory by foreigners. But the notion of "anti-Ukrainian activity" predictably raises concerns and subjects Ukraine to harsh international criticism from various quarters.

Ukrainians counter that the Russian media systemically spread toxic lies and warmongering, that most people with press cards from the Russian side are journalists only in name, and that their activity is much more indicative of special operations than journalism. Halya Coynash, an expert from the Kharkiv Human Rights Group, acknowledges that during the war many self-regulatory mechanisms, so dear to liberal thought, fail to deliver. In particular, she contends that "the argument that deliberate propaganda can be combatted by pluralism of views ignores the fact that in all areas under militant or direct Russian control, pluralism is banned. It also fails to recognise the undoubted impact of lies on the vast majority of people who listen to the 'news' and do not run to the internet or change channels in order to critically assess the information received." ³

The Ukrainian arguments make sense only if we recognize that there is war, that the enemy is a rogue state with enormous resources and no moral constraints, so that the very existence of the Ukrainian nation is at stake, and that information warfare is a major component of Russia's ongoing hybrid offense. There is no appetite in the West to acknowledge the conflict as war rather than the euphemistic "crisis," or to properly grasp it as part of a broader, systemic, and coordinated assault of a rogue regime on the entire liberal democratic world. Nonetheless, the Kremlin's reckless behavior brings back to reality even the most pacifist Westerners seduced prematurely by the sweet notion of the end of history.

The distinctive feature of the new type of Russian propaganda is not only its internet-empowered ability to spread rapidly and multiply exponentially via social networks and trolls of all stripes ("little cyber green men," as Clint Watts shrewdly defined them).⁴ It differs markedly from old-style propaganda also in its cynical and barefaced neglect of facts, evidence, and plausibility. It creates a completely new situation of "post-truth," when "Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible," to quote Peter Pomerantsev's book title.

This poses a real challenge to both democratic governments and liberal intellectuals committed to freedom of speech as one of the fundamental principles of their life and professional activity. The traditional Western belief that words should be fought with words is strongly questioned and seriously undermined. The proven meddling of Putin's regime in democratic elections and other procedures that distorts voting results and undermines the credibility of the process is only part of the story. Worse

LIES MOVE QUICKLY AND THE TRUTH MOVES SLOWLY

is a popular cynicism, evoked by the interference and fostered by "post-truth" propaganda. But perhaps the greatest danger is the inflammatory propaganda aimed to provoke an immediate subversive, often violent, reaction on the part of the recipients, as happened in Berlin with the "Lisa story," ⁵ or in Sloviansk with the fake news about the "crucified boy," ⁶ or throughout southeastern Ukraine with the calumnious narrative spread internationally about the "fascist junta" in Kyiv that allegedly persecutes Russians and Russophones.

It may sound like a nice idea—to fight words with words. But the problem is that lies move quickly and the truth moves slowly; lies appeal to emotions, and the truth appeals to reason; the lie provokes immediate action, and the truth evokes pondering and weighed judgement. Hundreds of Germans went on the streets after the "Lisa" fake, and thousands of volunteers took up arms in Donbas and elsewhere and rushed to fight the "junta" before any truth about the "crucified boy" or "Odessa massacre" reached them.

The recipe that experts suggest for countering information warfare looks reasonable but hardly sufficient. They advise, in good faith, "to present rational arguments supported by real evidence to overturn myths and beliefs that are introduced by destructive powers in order to create panic and manipulate populations." ⁷ But, as Keir Giles aptly remarks, "by applying Western notions of the nature and importance of truth, this approach measures these campaigns by entirely the wrong criteria, and fundamentally misunderstands their objectives." Their primary goal is not to promote any kind of "truth," but rather "to deepen partisan divisions, foster racial and religious animosities and discredit the mainstream media by planting disinformation." ⁸

One more factor is important in the case of Ukraine; namely, the dual, split, and fluid identity of many citizens, which makes it vulnerable vis-à-vis a toxic enemy's propaganda, especially if the enemy manages to skillfully weaponize the identity fractures and play them in multiple fields—history, culture, language, or religion. In this context, restrictions on the commercial distribution of some cultural and media products from the "aggressor state" and some sanctions on its most zealous propagandists seem reasonable and justifiable — insofar as they target only the specific state (Russia) and the specific time span (period of war). Civil society and international watchdogs need not be concerned about these measures, but rather they should focus on the limits that should not be overstepped or unduly extended. They should also be concerned about the proper procedure in the application of these restrictions and their temporary and exceptional character, so as to prevent their gradual routinization and normalization—both in people's minds and institutional practices.

The harsh and often incompetent criticism of the government-targeted sanctions looks to be unproductive—not only because it would have no impact on government policy,



inasmuch as security concerns usually prevail over others during war; but also because such criticism undermines the position of critics (and of civil society in general) when they pressure the government in regard to issues that are not directly related to the national security and that can and should be unequivocally resolved. I have in mind first and foremost government leniency vis-àvis far-right vigilantes who attack, often violently, racial minorities and LGBT groups, intimidate opponents, and disrupt public events, which they consider ideologically inappropriate. This is the field where the coordinated efforts of Ukrainian civil society and the international community are really much needed and where they can be accepted by the majority of Ukrainians as reasonable and legitimate.

Many more problems remain to be resolved, including the uncontested control of oligarchs over the mainstream media, the highly flawed court system, and the disheartening fecklessness of law enforcement agencies. But as long as the public space in the country remains open, the political process competitive, and media basically free and fairly pluralistic, the measured restrictions on the commercial distribution of certain Russian propaganda products for the period of the de facto war can probably be justified, given the condition that they are strictly regulated by law, monitored by civil society, and questioned by watchdogs—with the clearly recognized goal to prevent any excesses, arbitrariness, and expansion beyond the defined limits. Mykola Riabchuk, one of the founders of the journal Krytyka, is a journalist, political analyst and literary critic. He recently stepped down as president of PEN Ukraine. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 24th World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, on May 4, 2019, at Columbia University.

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Top: Tank belonging to Ukrainian armed forces destroyed in Donbass conflict.

"INTERNAL ENEMES"

The Politics of Anti-LGBTQ Propaganda in Russia and Ukraine

By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

n 2013, the Russian State Duma passed a law banning the "propaganda" of "nontraditional" sexual relations among minors. This created an atmosphere of impunity, with spikes in homophobic crimes and "huntings" of LGBTO people all over Russia. The following year, revolution broke out in Ukraine and Russian state-sponsored media portrayed it as a fascist, Western-sponsored conspiracy with a homosexual agenda. Throughout the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Russia's strategy has continued to include anti-LGBTQ messaging both at home and in Ukraine.

I interviewed LGBTQ activists Bogdan Globa and Yelena Goltsman about Russia's anti-LGBTQ messaging before and during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict at a panel discussion hosted by the Harriman Institute's Program on U.S.-Russia Relations and by the Ukrainian Studies Program, in October 2019. The event was supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The transcript below has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Masha Udensiva-Brenner:

Yelena, you immigrated here from Soviet Kyiv as a Jewish refugee in the early '90s. Can you talk about the Soviet criminalization of homosexuality and what it meant to be gay in that context?

Yelena Goltsman: I left Ukraine when it was the Soviet Union. I was 28 years old and I had a

In general people never talked about it. We didn't even have sex education in school.

family, kids, a husband. I did not live my life as a gay person, and the reason for that is that I didn't know any other gay people. I knew there were people who were homosexual, but I didn't know anybody personally. I always knew I was a lesbian. It's just that there was no way to express myself, especially in a public way. There was no literature to explain what gay even meant, so it was an extremely closeted society.

The Soviet way of dealing with homosexuality was very cruel, and there was actually a criminal law that punished male homosexuality with five years in prison. The law did not apply to women, who were sent to mental institutions instead. Believe me, that wasn't any better.

I believe that this is one of the reasons I left the Soviet Union. I say "believe," because I wasn't necessarily consciously understanding that, but I think that was one of the ways for me to become free.

Udensiva-Brenner: And Bogdan, you were born in '88, at the end of the Soviet Union. Can you talk about your background and what it was like growing up in the '90s and the aughts in Ukraine as a gay person?

Bogdan Globa: I lived the first of my 15 years in Poltava. It's very close to Kyiv, but it's a different region and a small town—about 200,000 people. When I was a child there was no internet, no literature about homosexuality, and in general people never talked about it. We didn't even have sex education in school. It was a post-Soviet society where you could not talk about sexuality in public spaces.

When I was in school my parents never talked about sexuality with me, but I started understanding that something was wrong with me; that I have feelings toward boys and not girls. It was very hard for me to understand.

In 2005, we got internet in Poltava. It was some public program in a library—you could go and have one hour of internet per week per person. I found some information about homosexuality, and I found another guy in my city and started kind of dating him. And then, of course, I got into trouble, because my mom found some movie on my computer at home, and asked me, "You're a faggot?"

It was unsurprising for me, and I said yes. . . . I had never read about what coming out is, how to do it. I said yes only because it was a surprise. After that my parents, both very highly educated teachers, were very pissed off and started fighting with me. They called a psychiatric clinic, but the psychiatric clinic said, "We cannot fix it; it's not how we do things anymore." And then I decided to leave home.

Udensiva-Brenner: How old were you?

Globa: I was 15. It was a huge drama. I started living with that boy in Poltava. I lived with him for a couple of years, and then I moved to Kyiv and became active in human rights.

Udensiva-Brenner: Was there any political messaging at the time about LGBTQ people from—?

Globa: Only negative—these people are sick, there's something wrong with these people. But at that time there were more Hollywood movies with homosexual actors and stories. So people started to have a clearer understanding. And at the same time, international LGBT movements started becoming more visible in Ukraine, so every year was better and better.

Udensiva-Brenner: Russia had its own trajectory. The '90s were freewheeling. There was still a lot of homophobia, but gay people could kind of exist, until after 2013, when the propaganda law was passed. What's your perception of the situation in Russia versus the situation in Ukraine during the '90s and the aughts?

Goltsman: There was a period of time when everything Western was new and good, and clubs were everywhere—maybe not in Poltava, but certainly in big cities. A lot of performers started coming out that they were gay. So although it was still taboo, it was an interesting taboo. Alla Pugachova performed a concert with gay men, the Christ Chorus in Moscow, and it was a great success. So that was a really mainstream performer associating herself with a gay chorus.

I was not in Russia or Ukraine at the time, but I know a lot of people from Russia and Ukraine, and I knew them then. Ukraine was much more advanced in LGBT activism than Russia, and probably still is, and that is because of the number of people involved, because of the organizations that are involved and helped, but not because of the government necessarily.

At that time, there was no difference in government support, but there were many more Ukrainian organizations. Not only LGBT, but also feminist. I would say there was more progressive work done in Ukraine in the LGBT arena.

Udensiva-Brenner: Bogdan, you mentioned that you started working in human rights. Can you tell us how you ended up becoming the





Top: LGBTQ column at a St. Petersburg protest against the Russian invasion of Crimea (May 1, 2014). Photo via Wikimedia Commons.

Bottom left: Police at Kyiv's LGBTQ "March of Equality" (March 8, 2019).

Bottom right: A fight between LGBTQ activists and supporters of "traditional values" in a St. Petersburg metro station (May 17, 2014). Photo by Andrey Pronin (ZUMAPRESS.com) via Alamy.





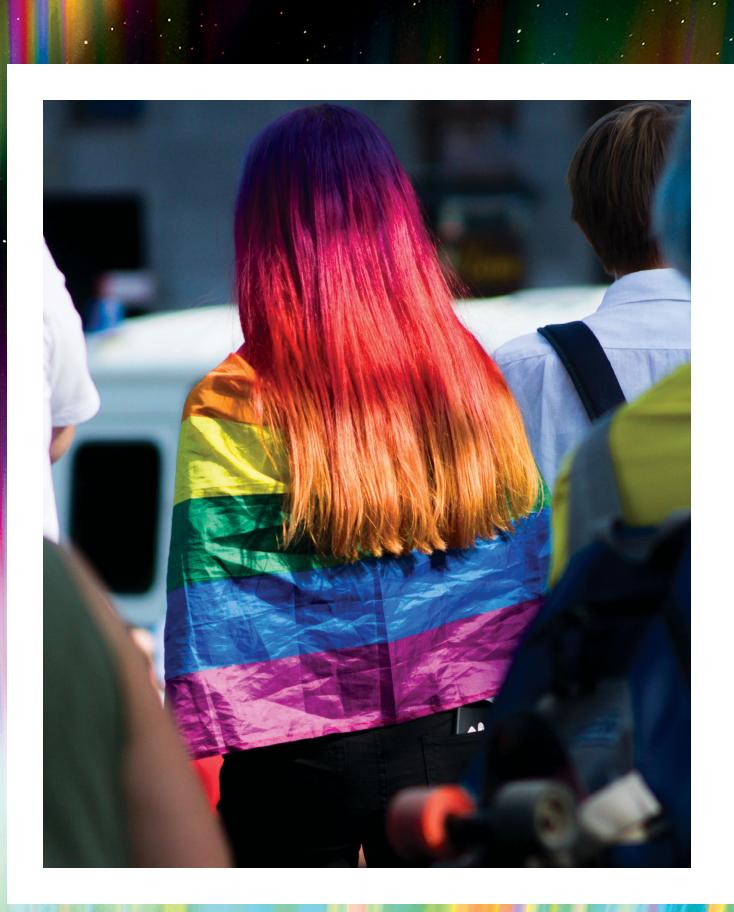
first openly gay person to speak before the Ukrainian Parliament?

Globa: It was after several years of getting more and more involved in LGBT movements. In 2012, the U.S. Embassy invited me to participate in a special advocacy program in the U.S., and they showed me how LGBT advocacy works here. It was during the Obama presidency, and it was a very progressive time, before gay marriage, but I saw a lot of progressive things here. All the activists were preparing for the Supreme Court issue, and there was a lot of advocacy in Congress, at the state level, so they showed me how human rights activists worked with Congress.

Then I went back to Ukraine, where we don't do too much to push our rights, and no one had worked with Parliament before on the advocacy level. After that program, the U.S. Embassy helped me get to the Parliament for a human rights committee event.

After all the MPs [members of Parliament] gave speeches on some political issue, participants had a chance to ask questions. I asked the human rights committee, "What about gay rights in Ukraine?" And everyone froze. It was such a surprising question there, and they tried to answer me, but they didn't mention the word "gay." They always try to say "this community" instead.

Goltsman: "These people."



Globa: "These people," yeah. They're afraid to use the word "gay," so for me it was frustrating. After that we started to work with Parliament more actively, and each meeting was friendlier. They understood we're not some sick people. We're absolutely normal people; citizens who pay taxes and who want equal rights. But still, there were a lot of things they didn't understand.

Udensiva-Brenner: In 2013, you lobbied Parliament for an antidiscrimination law in the workplace.

Globa: Yes. That was a requirement in order to join the European Union's visa-free regime, which helped me a lot.

Goltsman: That was an interesting time, because I don't think Parliament was really ready for it, but the European Union has certain requirements, and human rights and LGBT rights are part of those requirements. Grudgingly they were passed. And I think you were on the balcony, yeah?

Globa: Yes.

Goltsman: I actually remember watching him [Globa] on TV, saying, "Oh my God, we have that in Ukraine. Things are happening."

Udensiva-Brenner: Yeah, and that's amazing, because, meanwhile, in Russia things were really going downhill, and that's when



you, Yelena, started your political activism, in 2013.

Goltsman: Yeah, but I have a longer history. When I started RUSA in 2008 it was more a social organization for Russian-speakers than a political one. Our political activity was focused on the Russian-speaking community in New York, because a lot of people in the community are homophobic or unaware.

This was our concentration in 2008. The group grew quite a bit, and by 2013 we had hundreds of people associated with RUSA. Not only in the New York area, but also in Boston, Philadelphia, D.C., Miami, and San Francisco. And I just want to highlight that we invite anybody who speaks Russian to join. We have a lot of people We're absolutely normal people; citizens who pay taxes and who want equal rights.

Left: A young woman supporting LGBTQ during an antigovernment rally in Moscow (September 9, 2018). Photo by Roman Chukanov via Alamy.

Top: "IKEA Gets Queered with Russian Kiss-In." A campaign protesting the removal of a gay couple from Ikea's Russian catalogue, co-organized by Yelena Goltsman. Photo by Alexander Kargaltsev via Wikimedia Commons. from Ukraine, a lot of people from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan. We've even had people from the Philippines come to our meetings.

It's interesting that when you start an organization you think one thing, and then something else happens. I thought it would be more about people like me, who were closeted and needed help being out. But, no, these were mostly young people who wanted to be with people of the same cultural background, to have parties, and to enjoy each other's company. Then, in 2013, and even in 2012, we started to hear rumblings about antigay laws in St. Petersburg.

We didn't know about [the antigay laws in] Ryazan. Ryazan happened in 2006, but we did know about St. Petersburg. At the time we thought, how can it be? St. Petersburg is such a We decided to not just watch, but actually go to the Pride March with a very political statement: Do not support Russia.

progressive city. How can it be that they passed an ordinance that was basically the precursor to the federal law that we now all know about—what we call the antigay propaganda law? Basically, a prohibition of communication or any kind of positive messaging to children about homosexuality.

That's when it all came home for us. We had a meeting and we talked about how we could help.

The first thing that came to mind—we knew that the law

passed the Duma in June 2013, and later in June we had a gay Pride March, so we decided to not just watch, but actually go to the Pride March with a very political statement: Do not support Russia. Do not support the Russian Olympics. Do not buy Russian products. Don't buy vodka, don't buy caviar, don't buy anything Russian.

We were the first group that asked for the Sochi Olympics to be moved. Now, who are we to move





the Sochi Olympics? Obviously, we knew that it wasn't going to happen, but it doesn't matter, because all we were trying to do was to get the attention of the American media, and because the Sochi Olympics were the next year we had a really good chance. And guess what? It actually worked. We were noticed during the Pride March. Several people contacted us and started working with us, asking, how can they help Russians, how can they help us to help them.

This basically catapulted our organization into a completely different world, where we still are.

Udensiva-Brenner: And the law in St. Petersburg was passed the same year as there was a wave of mass anticorruption protests in Moscow... Goltsman: It is absolutely related, in my mind, okay? I don't think there is hard evidence of anything like that, but I think that the anticorruption protests, the anti-Putin protests—I think they did something to Putin and his clique, and they decided to choose a minority to go after.

We always look for internal enemies. Gay people were selected for that, and then later on it became Ukrainians.

Udensiva-Brenner: That brings us to my next question, which is about how and why Russia used anti-LGBTQ propaganda during Maidan...

Globa: There are a lot of theories about why Russia was doing this. I believe Russia is focusing a lot on the LGBT issue because it's a *Opposite page, left:* RUSA LGBT column at New York Pride March (June 28, 2015). Photo by Alexander Kargaltsev via Wikimedia Commons.

Bottom, left to right: Protesters in London calling for a boycott of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi in response to Russia's treatment of LGBTQ people (August 10, 2013). Photo by Mario Mitsis via Alamy; LGBTQ demonstrators at a St. Petersburg protest against the Russian invasion of Crimea (May 1, 2014). Photo via Wikimedia Commons.

very easy target. My understanding, and my personal opinion, is that Russia uses anti-LGBT propaganda in Ukraine because it is trying to stop Ukraine's integration into Europe, into the West.

Russia uses technology to split society and to show the West that









Ukraine has different values. What I see now is that Putin is trying to build his own ideology, and all of this ideology is in opposition to the West. So they say, "We have different family values, and our family values are traditional family values, which do not include gay couples."

Goltsman: So, "you have democracy and we have traditional values." That way people have something to believe in. It's also very important to remember that Putin is really, really upset that the Soviet Union is no more, so a lot of things that are being done are so he can have the superpower back.

Udensiva-Brenner: And can you discuss the specific tactics he uses? The methods of propaganda?

Globa: They have different methods. A very good example occurred during the year of Euromaidan, in January 2014. They tried to organize a fake gay Pride [March], where they invited some Russian people to Ukraine no one in Ukraine helped them organize it, so they announced it through Russian or pro-Russian organizations. If you remember, by that time some people had died on Maidan, and the situation was very, very sensitive. People were emotional and unstable, and they [the organizers] tried to hold a press conference with people who were dressed as drag queens. I think the idea was to make a mess in Euromaidan and show the West that Ukrainian society is homophobic; that they would fight with LGBTs, and kill LGBTs. And so why would you fight for Ukraine if Ukraine has different values from the West?

The idea was to break up the relationship with the European Union, because at that time the European Union tried to fight with [Viktor] Yanukovych, with Russia, and help Ukraine in some way. But we were doing work in Euromaidan at the time, and we put out information about this. We had a special plan for this event, and we told everyone that we should let this group do whatever they want; that people should not beat them. Not react to them. It was a group of 40 to 50 people, I think.

They came to Euromaidan, and they danced around Euromaidan—but not in the middle of it—and they went back, and nothing happened. Nobody beat them. So we neutralized that.

Goltsman: I just want to say that in Russia they did the same thing, when there were mass protests, anticorruption protests, anti-Putin protests. They hired people, and those people would come with gay flags, and they would have signs, and when you looked at those people you knew they found them somewhere on the street, and they just gave them \$10 or whatever the currency, to basically represent the LGBT people. But then what is this for? It's not real, but this is what they do. They implant this fake-ness everywhere, but sometimes it's very obvious. The one I'm describing, it was very obvious; and sometimes, unfortunately, it's very hard to understand if it's actually Russian work.

So they say, "We have different family values, and our family values are traditional family values, which do not include gay couples."

Udensiva-Brenner: What effect have these sorts of tactics had in Ukraine in general?

Globa: In general, they really work. So I believe they have several goals. One of these goals is to try to mobilize people. And one of these goals is to give people in the East some reason why they should not be with Ukraine.

Udensiva-Brenner: Is homophobia rising in Ukraine as a result of these tactics?

Globa: Yeah.

Goltsman: I think one of the things we see, even in this country, the way Putin operates, it's destabilization. He's always winning when people argue with each other, so LGBT issues for him are this very strong destabilizing factor. ■

Bogdan Globa relocated to New York in 2016. From 2015 until 2016, he worked as an assistant to the chairman of the Human Rights Committee of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Hryhoriy Nemyria. Globa is founder and leader of the New York-based ProudUkraine, an association of LGBTQ Ukrainians living in North America.

Yelena Goltsman founded RUSA LGBT, a social network for the Russianspeaking LGBTQ community in the New York area and beyond. RUSA LGBT organizes the annual Brighton Beach Pride March. Goltsman was awarded the 2014 Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn Award, the 2018 New York City Public Advocate Letitia James's LGBTQ Award, and the Queens Borough President Melinda Katz's LGBTQ Pride Award. She is a 2015 COJECO Keystone Fellow.

Left to right: Little boy taking part in the Kyiv Pride March waving a rainbow flag (June 18, 2017). Photo by Rostyslav Zabolotnyi via Alamy; LGBTQ activist at Kyiv Pride 2017. Photo by Kateryna Olexenko via Alamy.

Top: Subway, Moscow. Photo ©Lise Sarfati, 1994.

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Left: Kursky Vokzal, Moscow. Photo ©Lise Sarfati, 1993.

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LONGING FOR FUTURE Understanding '90s Nostalgia

By Daria V. Ezerova

ocated in the center of Moscow, Park Muzeon has long been a space for intersecting temporalities: a graveyard for Soviet monuments abuts the boxy edifice of the New Tretyakov Gallery: Zurab Tseretelli's statue of Peter the Great exchanges glances with a statue of Bolshevik revolutionary Felix Dzerzhinsky ("Iron Felix"), while newly paved bicycle lanes wrap around this palimpsest of Soviet and post-Soviet culture. In September 2015, Muzeon became a true time machine when it hosted The Island of the '90s (Ostrov *devianostykh*)—a daylong festival commemorating what's known as the most tumultuous decade in recent Russian history.

The Island of the '90s had a great many spectacles to offer: '90s paraphernalia, retro outfits, book readings, film screenings, concerts, and talks by cultural figures like music critic Artemy Troitsky, publisher and public intellectual Irina Prokhorova, and performance artist Oleg Kulik. For one day, Muzeon was transformed into an amusement park specializing in time travel, plausibly recreating everything associated with the immediate post-Soviet years. A distillation of nostalgia for the '90s: an era with its own heroes. music, narratives, language, and soundtrackpainfully recognizable yet already distant.

The Island of the '90s, now an annual event in a

number of Russian cities, became the first major acknowledgment of the popular '90s nostalgia that emerged in the 2010s, shortly after the Bolotnaya Square protests. This phenomenon has been expressed through festivals, fashion, food, and music that seek to engage with the legacy of the immediate postcollapse years and revive their grungy aesthetics with meticulous attention to detail. One can even purchase a "Back to the '90s" ("Nazad v 90e") kit, packed with popular '90s confectionaries and a handheld Tetris game. The kit promises "absolutely instant time travel" (sovershenno momental'noe peremeschenie vo vremeni), to quote the packaging. But why would anyone

want to relive, however briefly, any part of the decade consistently portrayed as "chaotic" and "turbulent" in Russia's popular imagination? In other words, what made '90s nostalgia possible?

Nostalgia is a difficult word to define. There is no uniform approach to studying it, nor does it reside in a particular academic discipline. As the late Svetlana Boym notes in the introduction to her book The Future of Nostalgia, nostalgia has long puzzled literary critics, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists, and even computer scientists. Experienced as a feeling-longing, sadness, ennui–nostalgia is not as innocent as it may seem,



Monument to Felix Dzerzhinsky, "Iron Felix," in Moscow's Park Muzeon. neither passively contemplative nor politically neutral. Its object is elusive, a desire sparked by a kind of voluntary forgetting: the past that never came to pass, a homecoming to a home that never existed, the good old days that were never really that good. Because of this slippery, subjective quality, professional historians, who tend to be skeptical about memory in general, have been hostile toward the concept of nostalgia: "Nostalgia is to longing as kitsch is to art," writes Charles Maier in his essay "The End of Longing?" "Nostalgia . . . is ... history without guilt," Michael Kammen notes in Mystic Chords of Memory. "Nostalgia [is] an ethical and aesthetic failure," writes Boym. Historians warn us that nostalgia can be a bad romance: its tendency to obscure the hard facts of history can make it a tool of ideological manipulation.

In contemporary Russia—that is, Russia after the Soviet collapse—nostalgia has been one of the most powerful forces both in cultural production and political discourse. But, before any semblance of '90s nostalgia surfaced, there was Soviet nostalgia. The phenomenon, interpreted as Russia's postimperial longing for the Soviet past, is unusual in two ways. First, it appeared very soon after the end of communism. Second, it has persisted uninterrupted throughout the entire post-Soviet period, surviving the seismic changes that have taken place since '91 and becoming one of the most enduring cultural phenomena in Russia's recent history. The early onset of this nostalgia is easier to explain: casting a longing, backward glance at the past can provide a sense of familiarity and comfort in times of radical realignment, a way to heal the wounds of history and reestablish some semblance of historical continuity. The persistence of this nostalgia, especially in the 21st century, however, is perplexing. Boym distinguishes between two types of nostalgia: restorative, focusing inward on "the longing itself"; and reflective, which attempts an outward "reconstruction of the lost home." But just because they are different does not mean they can't be found together. In order to understand enduring post-Soviet nostalgia and how it eventually sparked longing for the '90s, we need to look at how it shifted from the reflective to the restorative and back again, transforming

at times into something new only to be eventually recuperated by the dominant political culture.

From *Old Songs* to an Old March

Early manifestations of Soviet nostalgia were in many ways a coping mechanism, a need to hold on to something familiar amid the tumult of the postcollapse years. The success of projects like Old Songs about the Most Important Things (Starye pesni o glavnom, 1995), which heralded Soviet nostalgia in popular culture, attests to this. A musical comedy produced by Channel One, Old Songs premiered on New Year's Eve to uproarious acclaim. The film-an assemblage of discrete scenes in which Russian celebrities perform popular songs from Stalinist-era musicals against a colorful

But just because they are different does not mean they can't be found together. background of a Soviet collective farm in the style of Ivan Pyr'ev's Cossacks of the Kuban (Kubanskie kazaki, 1950)-has no real plot. Its popularity was surely a sign of nostalgia, yet it was neither longingly reflective nor restorative. It was masscult in times of uncertainty-the film's burlesque register and camp aesthetics deideologized Soviet cultural artifacts, yet managed to create a familiar image, a safe mental space in a precarious political and economic situation.

The stabilization of the Russian economy changed the face of Soviet nostalgia by commercializing and commodifying it. In the late aughts, the high-end GUM department store in Moscow brought back the Soviet era as Disneyland kitsch in a 1950s-style supermarket and cafeteria, Gastronom №1, and Stolovaia 57, which marketed Soviet-style consumer products to Russia's emergent upper middle class. The entertainment industry quickly caught up. In 2013, Valery Todorovsky's popular miniseries The Thaw (Ottepel) offered a scintillating portrayal of Soviet filmmakers in the 1960s, replete with swing skirts, sleek updos, and vintage cars. In the wake of the global trend of retro chic made fashionable by

Monument to Peter the Great, in Park Muzeon. EATURED

Matthew Weiner's Mad Men (2007-15), the series's meticulous attempts to (re)create midcentury glamour with a Soviet twist still contain trace elements of nostalgia, but they are fully relegated to the realm of aesthetics and genre. By the mid-2010s, commercialized Soviet nostalgia lost any depth it may have had by quickly succumbing to the whims of state ideology.

In June 2015, a celebratory national concert, "From Rus' to Russia," was held on

Red Square. The program promised a variety of performances commemorating "important historical events and our most famous compatriots who made an integral contribution to the development of various areas of our country."* "The March of the Aviators," a Stalinist propaganda song later appropriated by the Nazi SA as an unofficial anthem, was the focal number. This kind of state-sponsored nostalgia masked an underlying condition: a radically conservative turn characterized by historical revision and apologia. The politics

of lossnamely, the loss of the Soviet empirebrought forth restorative nostalgia imposed from the top, often in ideologically suspect forms, after the 2011-13 Bolotnaya protests. It was then, in the moment of post-Bolotnaya frustration, that nostalgia for the '90s began to stir.

Back to the '90s?

In 2018, Russian performing artist Elizaveta Gyrdymova, known professionally as Monetochka, teamed up with film director Mikhail Idov to make a video for her song "90" (*Devianostye*). The clip was stylized as an homage to Aleksei Balabanov's *Brother* (1997) and reenacted the film's most recognizable scenes. Monetochka took on the role of Danila

Bagrov, Brother's lead character and the true cultural icon of the decade. For further verisimilitude, a number of Russian actors and singers from the '90s appeared in the video. Born in 1998, Monetochka belongs to a generation that has no personal memories of the '90s-something she confesses in her lyrics: "Only from songs / I found out, in horror / That they used to kill people in the '90s." And yet her video, charmingly whimsical and surprisingly nuanced, further attests to a renewed interest in the first post-Soviet decade, with nostalgic overtones.

Commodified nostalgia for the last decade of the 20th century is by no means specific to Russia and is often market-driven. After all, New York millennials dancing at a '90s party in Brooklyn are hardly different from their Russian peers at a *Diskoteka Devianostykh* ('90s disco) in

St. Petersburg. Gosha Rubchinsky borrows heavily from the street style of '90s working-class youths as boldly as Nicolas Ghesquière and Alessandro Michele do in designing their logo-stamped tracksuits and jogging pants. Even the sweets neatly packaged in "Back to the '90s" kits are as recognizable in Russia as they are in the West. But is there anything that makes Russia's new nostalgia for the '90s unique?

On the eve of 2020, the '90s are distant enough be looked at retrospectively. And yet, if in the U.S. and many European countries, the '90s were marked by economic growth, in Russia the decade started with political turmoil and ended with a devastating financial crash. In short, a time that would be difficult to idealize and romanticize. The fact that these sentiments emerged from the comfort of the economically stable 2010s—especially before the ruble dropped again in 2016—raises even more questions.

Considering that '90s nostalgia emerged around the time of Bolotnaya, one of the highest moments of discontent and political frustration, it is possible to say that the first post-Soviet decade is now viewed with a sense of loss not just for its vibrant colors but also for the future it promised. This nostalgia is not a longing for the past, but for the future that never came. Despite economic improvements, the 2010s were a turning point in Russian domestic policy, a new period of the long Putin era known for the suppression of domestic opposition and the deterioration of Russia's relationship with the West. In this atmosphere, the '90s, once portrayed as wild and dark, can be viewed as the halcyon days of nascent democratic

freedoms. As Svetlana Alexievich writes in *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets:* "In the nineties . . . yes, we were ecstatic; there is no way back to that naiveté. We thought that the choice had been made and that Communism had been defeated forever. But it was only the beginning." Or, as Monetochka sings, tongue in cheek, "Good thing, all is different now."

Coda: Co-opting '90s Nostalgia

The public may have come to romanticize the "wild '90s" as a period of boundless opportunity, but the state continues to push back. Boris Akopov's The Bull (Byk, 2019) premiered at the Winter Theater in Sochi for the Kinotavr Film Festival. A directorial debut for the 34-year-old Akopov, The Bull is a criminal drama set in the '90s. It attempts to recreate the decade in painstaking detail. Outfits, makeup, sets, and references to '90s cinema are elaborated with such care that it is almost surprising Akopov chose to shoot the film digitally rather than using 35-millimeter format. However, there are more jarring directorial choices. At the film's end, the protagonists-survivors of the carnage-are watching Yeltsin's famous New Year's Eve retirement address, where he appoints

Vladimir Putin as his successor. The film's message is clear—the "wild nineties" are over and Russia has entered an age of stability and prosperity. What began as a period drama ended with an ideological climax. And the message was heard. A week after the premiere, *The Bull* won the Festival's Grand Prix.

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*https://tv.yandex.ru/87/ program/1514538?event1d=70283081

Top left: "Island of the '90s" festival participant in Park Muzeon, September 20, 2015.

The first post-Soviet decade is now viewed with a sense of loss not just for its vibrant colors but also for the future it promised.



By Hope Herman Wurmfeld

"Curiosity is insubordination in its purest form." —Vladimir Nabokov

Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Kafka—I read these literary gems with Vladimir Nabokov, who was then teaching at Cornell. In another class, with a professor from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, we were reading the *Communist Manifesto*. The manifesto had been assigned with the caveat: report to class the following week, even if we had to be carried in on a stretcher. The instructor intended to dissect the arguments one by one to show us why the system wouldn't work. Such was my introduction to the depths of the Russian soul. The Soviet Union was a mystery and a fascination, so when the opportunity to visit presented itself, I was eager to travel.

At the time I was living in Rome, and as the Roman summer began to descend with hot winds blowing off the African continent, two young Americans decided to go as far north as they could. Thus our travels began.

Michael and I had just been married in Rome. He, an architect, and I, a photographer with an MA from Columbia in art history. So in the early summer of 1964, with visas in hand, we set off in a white Alfa Romeo convertible with a tiny USA sticker on the back fender, five 5-gallon tanks of high-octane fuel, a tent, sleeping

> The white Alfa Romeo that took the author and her husband on their 1964 journey from Rome, through Eastern Europe and the USSR, to their final destination in Finland. All photos courtesy of Hope Herman Wurmfeld.





bags, a small Coleman stove, and a 1914 Baedeker as there were no contemporary maps or guidebooks of the USSR.

Driving north through the Simplon Pass from Italy to Switzerland and on to Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, we entered the USSR at the Polish/Russian border, which at that time required a customs check. We arrived in the early evening, but as our visas didn't allow entry until the next morning, we were told to go back at least 10 kilometers from the border for the night.

There were no hotels or amenities of any kind—just rolling countryside with an occasional farmhouse. Somewhat nervous about finding ourselves in a remote and seemingly isolated place, we set up our tent in a fairly flat field with a line of oak trees offering some shelter. We were making sandwiches when we noticed two little heads peeping up from a small hillock about 50 feet in front of us. The next thing we knew, two young children came over with bowls of fresh strawberries and then dashed off.

After a while, we noticed a line of people walking toward us. Somehow the word was out that there were strangers in the field. The townspeople had come to see us; mostly to look at us, as we had no language in common. Thus, lots of smiles, small candies, and maps of Europe became the mediums of exchange.

First came the young girls, then the older women and teenage girls, and last, the men, who were particularly interested in the mechanics of the car. They stayed near the tent talking and laughing far into the night. Although we knew no Polish, I did know the word *schmata*, which my Polish grandmother used to describe her old dresses. I don't know if it was intuition or wishful thinking, but I gathered that the boys were interested in rags to clean the exterior of the car. I handed them a roll of paper towels, and it was exactly the right thing. They were gleeful as they sang and talked among themselves while they worked, and we were thrilled at this unexpected understanding.

Early the next morning, as we were packing up and getting ready to drive the 10 kilometers to the border, an old man came toward us in a horse-drawn wagon. He insisted that we take two bottles of milk fresh from his cows. He spoke a little English and said he had heard about the two young Americans, and he eagerly asked if

> *Top to bottom:* Workers in Red Square, Moscow, USSR, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 16 x 10 in.; Moscow, USSR, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 16 x 10 in.







we knew a cousin of his who had gone to the United States and whom he hadn't seen in many years. We regretted disappointing him but managed to communicate that the United States was a huge country and that we didn't know his cousin Szymon.

These many years later, the recollection of our impromptu exchange with the farm families at the Polish/ Russian border, one of our few interactions with local people, is with me still; a memory of people who embraced us with warmth and kindness, and whose passionate quest was to know more about the outside world.

When we finally arrived at the Moscow campground and began to set up our tent, we became aware of a similar phenomenon: young people slowly gathering around us. There wasn't the same sense of family and community that we'd experienced at the Polish border. Here, we were told, were workers who had earned a "little vacation" as a reward for excellence in the workplace.

Again, as we didn't have the language, but wanted to relate in some way, we took out maps of Europe and opened the hood of the car. The young men and boys hung around inspecting the engine until late into the night, exactly as they had in Poland. When Michael and I decided that we needed to get some rest, we weren't sure how best to communicate this. Finally, we decided to crawl into our tent and close the flaps. We managed to sleep despite loud voices, bright lights, and music blaring the entire night on loudspeakers.

We loved the campground and felt it was a wonderful opportunity to interact with the people, but early the next morning we were informed we had to leave. We could only surmise that interest in the car and in our maps presented too great a risk, and that the authorities wanted to have greater control over our activity.

We were given the names of several hotels in the city. When we explained that we hadn't much money, it was established that the hotel would charge the same amount we'd expected to pay at the campsite. And so two rubles it was. For the price of the campground we settled into a substantial hotel, either the National or the Metropol, I don't recall which.

An elevator brought us to our floor, where a stern-looking woman at a small desk further questioned us. When she appeared to be satisfied with our answers, she gave us the key. Our room was spacious with two twin beds, a full bathroom, and a large object that looked like a radio except there was no reception. We decided it was a listening device and, crazy Americans that we were, sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" before we went to sleep each night.

Our first day in Moscow we planned an early visit to the Grand Kremlin Palace to see the Celadon collection and whatever other objects were on display. There was a guided tour, which we joined, but basically we were on our own. Once inside the grounds, I was photographing as usual with my Leica and a light meter around my neck. As I worked, concentrating on light and angle, I became aware of a shrill whistle to which I paid no mind. Next thing I knew, someone was at my elbow letting me know through body language and stern sounds that I would have to leave. I wasn't told what I had done wrong but realized that the guard's whistle-blowing must have had something to do with me, as I had stepped briefly outside the painted white lines for a better vantage point of the domes. Michael was also led to the gate and pushed outside the Kremlin wall. We realized that we had to be more careful, as we hadn't come this far to be barred from the treasures of the city.

That afternoon we went to Intourist and asked for help touring the city. Intourist provided the perfect person: a lovely young woman whose English was excellent. With her guidance we were allowed to return to the Kremlin Palace. She was with us for several days, and in a discussion on art, we talked about modern painting and why much of contemporary Soviet art, though well executed, was propaganda.

In our room that night we were excited that she seemed to understand our perspective on art, but when she didn't appear the next day and another person came to take her place, we were heartbroken and realized the extent to which we were being monitored.

Of great interest to me was the role of women who worked alongside men on construction, in gas stations, and in the fields. In the United States this would certainly have been the exception.

Religion, considered the "opiate of the masses," was officially banned; however, there were priests in Red Square, and many older people, particularly women, seemed to have been permitted to attend church services.

We did foolish things never fully realizing the inherent danger of some of our escapades. For example, one day in Red Square at the Kremlin wall several young men drove by and asked if we had anything to sell. Their English was good, and we had brought some things in our backpacks—blue jeans and nylon clothing, that we were willing to part with—thinking that we'd buy caviar to take back to Rome. Michael went off with two of the boys and left me with the third to wander for a while in Red Square. When I asked what they planned to do with the things they were buying from us, he said that they were going to resell them to raise money to come to the West that they were writers who were not able to publish in the Soviet Union. We never did find out who these young men were; perhaps they were fronting for Solzhenitsyn, or maybe their work was found by one of the human rights organizations and was brought to the West. We never knew. We just knew they seemed like decent, intelligent guys, and we were gullible and eager to talk to young people.

On the highway from Moscow to Leningrad there was only an occasional bicycle or bus and almost no cars. We were the sole travelers. Every 40 or 50 kilometers, there would be a kiosk at the edge of the road. As we drove past, someone inside would follow us for a few seconds with a pair of what looked like industrial-strength binoculars and then pick up the phone. The first time this happened we didn't think much about it, but for the entire 400 kilometers to Leningrad, as we kept passing kiosks, the same thing would occur. We were being tracked.

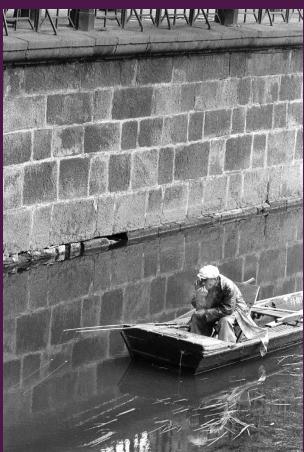
In Leningrad our goal was the Hermitage—but also Alexandre Leblond's Peterhof, the Admiralty, and other architectural wonders. At the Hermitage we discovered to our dismay that if you left the museum at lunchtime, you weren't allowed to reenter, and so we brought a few crusts of bread from our breakfast and ate them covertly, or so we thought, as we walked in the long gallery in the center of the building.

We had heard about the Shchukin collection of modern painting and were told, although it was considered decadent and therefore out-of-bounds, we should try to see it. As we wandered through the maze of dark corners and empty corridors, we discovered a remote part of the museum where we found a woman guard who spoke some English and a bit of Italian. We told her what we were looking for, and though, at first, she was extremely adamant, insisting that no one was allowed to enter that space, she finally relented and allowed us access to the sequestered paintings.

It's not possible to describe what we felt when we first saw the Matisse "Dancers." We were told it existed but nothing had prepared us for the intensity, the emotional

> *Clockwise from top:* Prague, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 16 x 10 in.; USSR, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 10 x 16 in.; Vlatva River, Prague, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 10 x 16 in.







magnitude of the work. There were other painters who were considered subversive, like Malevich and Picasso, whose work was known in the West, but the discovery of the "Dancers" was a surprise and a gift and one of the highlights of our journey.

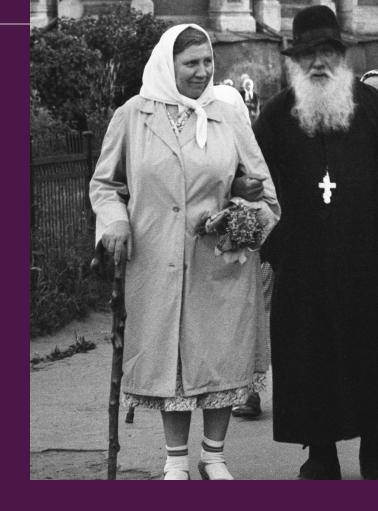
We drove from Leningrad to Vyborg, then part of Finland. As we arrived at the border crossing, I leaped out of the Alpha, hugged the embarrassed customs official, and actually kissed the ground—well, pretended to. I hadn't realized until it was over how stressed I had been.

Once in Finland, before heading to Turku and the ferry, we found the unmarked Viipuri library built by Alvar Aalto in the late '20s. As it was not open to the public and was in a state of disrepair, we were only able to look through the windows, but still it was a marvel to behold the freeflowing plan and pared-down modernist exterior.

It was an epic journey, and as uncomfortable and downright frightening as it sometimes was, I will always remember the beautiful young people who gathered around us at the campgrounds, the miraculous Matisse "Dancers," and the old farmer at the Polish border. As unlikely as it may seem, I'm still keeping an eye out for his cousin Szymon.

Hope Herman Wurmfeld is a photographer and author who lives and works in New York City. Throughout her career, she has exhibited her photographs internationally, published several books, and taught photography at Hunter College in NYC for over twenty years. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in NYC; the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; the Archives of the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.; the New York Public Library, the Osthaus Museum in Hagen, Germany; and the Princeton University Library Graphics Collection, among others. "Vintage: Eastern Bloc 1964" was on view at the Harriman Institute, January–March 2020. Visit Wurmfeld's website at hopewurmfeld.com.

> *Clockwise from top left*: Moscow, USSR, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 16 x 10 in.; Moscow, USSR, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 10 x 16 in.; Moscow, USSR, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 10 x 16 in.; Moscow, USSR, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 10 x 16 in.; Poland, 1964. Archival inkjet print, 10 x 16 in.







ОКСАНА ЛУЦИШИНА

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Cover of the Ukrainian edition of Lutsyshyna's novel, with the title characters' names written in chalk.



(An Excerpt)

By Oksana Lutsyshyna

Translated from the Ukrainian by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler

ot even the old-timers could remember an April that cold. Several deceptively warm days were just enough for the tree buds and cherry blossoms to bloom, but this renewal was promptly washed away by the rain and whisked away by the wind, and with the rain, pink torrents of rotting petals poured down the streets. At night, fog hovered over the river. They'd been cutting down the Carpathian forest. When it rained hard, the water that could no longer soak into the old, thick trunks didn't fit into the earth or clay. The rainswollen river would threaten to overflow its banks, and then right there on its banks, soldiers would toil away, laying out sandbags. They'd close off the pedestrian bridge. The water crept all the way up to the vulnerable belly of the bridge, snaking around its legs and shaking it so hard its very frame shifted. Life in the city slowed down. The soldiers brought

in floodlights and set them up on the banks so the white rays fell on the yellow water filled with old snow and floated freely somewhere into the unknown.

People stepped onto the banks and stood there in the gray gloom of the twilight, amid the heavy scents of an imposing watery expanse, under the bleak, frozen lindens, anticipating. Well, one of the bridges is going to crash into the water, right? The bridges stayed intact, though. What was holding them together-stone? Prayers? Some mysterious marvel of engineering? The bridges stayed intact until the end-those soaked strings running between the banks, those bandages restraining the river's wound. If the gods were to walk this city in disguise and gaze at its sinners, they might very well grant the city forgiveness solely on account of the bridges.

They kept turning the power off, so yellow water filled the city with

cold and murk. Ivan was walking back through the city center; tired people holding umbrellas were rushing home. Darkness reigned everywhere except the blurry storefronts, which shone with color, silhouettes appearing behind the glass. Ivan got home (it was cold and dark there, like everywhere else in the city), picked up his little daughterhe and Phoebe had her the previous year-sat down on the couch, and shut his eyes for a second. Out of the darkness emerged Phoebe, or maybe Marhita, taut with grief, like an underground goddess, reached for the child, took her away from him, and broke into a song of lament, a song of dread, of hatred.

Ivan's father had been hitting the sauce even harder; he stayed in bed around the clock, coughing, and in each cough, you could hear just how drunk he was. Marhita would yell something or other to him; he'd reply with a hoarse, protracted moan, roll over in bed, and lie there unmoving for some time: face up, blanket cast aside, oblivious to the cold. Ivan knew that at those moments, his father's face was flushed, addressing the heavens, not like a plea for mercy, more like a slap in the face, a silent protest—not against the regime or parliament, but against existence itself, powerless to push it along anymore.

Ivan would put his hands on his head, because there was nothing to look at but the wall formed by his own palms. Gloom came at him, crawling out of every crack and crevice. Marhita didn't like to burn more than one candle, and she and Phoebe took that sole candle to the kitchen. At night, it poured. Come morning, everything froze, encased in hoarfrost. There was a particular tranquility about those mornings, as if time had stopped-and was just about to turn back, flow in the opposite direction, somewhere into the absence of memory, the purity of that absence, into the deep suspended animation of childhood. Up in the mountains, the snow was probably as deep as prison walls are tall.

... And when the lights came back on, a short-lived euphoria would set in. Everyone suddenly awakened. Marhita worked feverishly in the kitchen. On those evenings, Ivan realized, much to his surprise, that he preferred not to see that. That he preferred the gloom. In the light, it was easier to conceal the nature of things, yet every molecule exuded



it in the darkness. He wanted to go outside and roam into the night; he wanted to gaze at the partially melted snow, at the thin ice set in motion and rushing off somewhere like a river; he wanted to touch the winter water, commune with its secrets.

Where was it flowing? Was it really just going into the nearby Tysa? ...

... That spring Styopa would come by almost every day. He wanted something from Ivan, from all of them.

"You're still asleep," Styopa said, like their family's very own Dukhnovych.* "You're asleep! Wake up already! You aren't listening to the voice of the times!"

"If only he knew how many voices I had to listen to," Ivan thought, "he might show me some mercy and get off my back."

Once again, Styopa had some big plans, and he kept giving Ivan an earful about some restaurant he was just about to open, about the seating area, about the menu, about the tables and napkins. With the stubbornness of a man possessed, he described this not-yet-existing establishment that was meant to usher in a new era for Styopa himself, as well as the city. He spoke of Ivan's duty to his family, saying something about traditions, about bograc, about the gulyas leves he'd serve, about the kazan outside-the large soup pot in which it would be prepared—about the firewood that would fuel the flame, about baked potatoes, about delicious Transcarpathian pork fat: smoked, salted, sprinkled with paprika.

A truly innumerable multitude of restaurants had opened over the last three or four years—it was nothing like the old days, when all the patrons at such establishments were either police officers or speculators. The city had changed, though. Actually, it wasn't just the city. Within less than two years, the whole country had changed, nearly beyond recognition. Politicians were giving speeches on TV. The Kuchma epoch had begun. For some reason, Ivan had gotten the notion this was going to be nothing short of an

Within less than two years, the whole country had changed, nearly beyond recognition.

epoch. A new mayor was elected, some guy by the name of Semen Ulyhanets. He had been the president of some crappy trade school; however, his father was a big Party boss with access to Party money (quite possibly money stolen from the people, from Oschadbank, when the Soviet Union fell). Money disappeared from people's wretched bankbooks. For years, they'd deprived themselves of all kinds of things, even dental care, just so they could have some money tucked away in their savings accounts, just so they could have something to give their grandchildren when they came of age, even though they probably wouldn't use that money, like women in the village didn't use their dowry chests containing thin shirts lined with vellowed lace.

All of those people were forced to fend for themselves, and they panicked, like shipwreck victims panicking in the water. The ones in the boats rowed as far away as possible while all their hapless comrades drowned. All of them-terrifying, with eyes bulging and mouths wide open, like haunted caves, gaping and gaping into the void of the world's very structure. What had they seen in their lives? What did they have faith in? What would their reward be? What would it be? A car, a TV, a washer at the tail end of their lives once they'd waited their turn and the government had given them these scarce, simple comforts? Now they were left to eke out an existence, robbed of that faith, of that hope. Everything they'd done in their lives had proved to be the vainest of pursuits.

Ulyhanets, although born and raised in Transcarpathia, was a Russian-speaker, and everyone pronounced his nickname the Russian way, "Senya." He opened up a whole bunch of stores with brandname products that nobody actually bought, yet it was clear from the start that nobody had intended to sell anything there anyway. They were merely fronts for money laundering. Senya shook his battle-ready fists in front of the regional TV stations' cameras and yelled that no decent human being could be a communist because nobody was born looking for a handout. It was hard to argue with that. Trucks crossed over into Slovakia, smuggling and smugglingall sorts of goods-and then those very same trucks came back across the border. Business became politics and politics became business. There was no place for guys like Ivan (there

may never have been a place for him!); Zhenya, his mother's former colleague, a short, stout man, was suddenly representing some village in parliament. Just before that, he'd brought the locals some buckwheat and Chinese-made shoes.

The proponents of democracy-the former dissidents-were ousted by a different, previously unseen class of somewhat smooth, arrogant wheelers and dealers. People grew poor or rich abruptly, without any transition. They slaved away, yet yearned for a day's rest. What they really wanted was a nice place to hang out. Hawkers went back and forth across the border, moving their Chineseor Turkish-made products. They wouldn't sleep at night, just waiting at the border; they'd doze off atop their goods in the afternoon, roasting in the sun all day. They hauled just about everything: clothes, shoes, chocolate with peanuts, kitchenware, lingerie. You could buy nearly anything at stores or bazaars now. The epoch of scarcity gave way to an epoch cursed with commodities.

When Ivan wanted to get out of the house that spring, he didn't really have anywhere to escape to. Yura Popadynets's obsession with the Rusyns still hadn't run its course; he went on and on about some "Subcarpathian prime minister" who would head the new parliament, about ministers with briefcases ready to go, just waiting for their hour to come. Ivan had seen that "prime minister." He was a wacky college professor. Marhita knew him, too. Who knows if he actually believed in the Rusyn cause or if he had just lost his marbles and could no longer tell black from white, the real from the imagined.

"What are you gonna do when

your daughter starts growing up?" Styopa persisted. He was giving Ivan an earful, circling around him precisely like a bumblebee, though he didn't resemble a bumblebee in the slightest. "Let's go into business together. I mean, how are ya gonna make money? You know how much you gotta shell out for daycare these days? Aren't ya gonna finish your parents' place? You're not gonna just leave it like that, are you? Wanna hear a joke?" Without waiting for Ivan to reply, he promptly told a joke typical of that epoch-not good, not funny.

"Where do you keep your money? Which bank?" One Georgian, Gogi or something like that, asks another.

"The left bank." Then Styopa continued, still not letting Ivan reply.

"Those banks of yours are gonna go belly up. You know where things are going? Downhill, that's where!"

"The house, yeah, we'll finish the house in the summer, once it gets warm," Ivan thought defensively. "What about the bank?" "What about the bank?" he said aloud to Styopa. "Sure, Lisbank went belly up, but that was different." He didn't really believe what he was saying, though. After all, things were cut and dried with the bank-it wasn't going to be around forever. It was temporary, like everything else in those days.

It wasn't like he was going to talk to Styopa about being a father, though. After all, he didn't know what he could tell him. That he loved his little girl so much it hurt? He hadn't even hoped to love her that deeply. It was as if he had been

preparing for some event, but it still blindsided him. He really just couldn't put that kind of stuff into words. How could he say it, and who could he say it to? Say that Emilia had wound up being just as he'd imagined her the minute he got the call from the maternity hospital telling him she'd been born. Delicate. Tender. Even as an infant, she hardly ever cried, always woke up in a good mood, and quickly learned to smile. And now she'd become the center of Ivan's being, the core of his essence, for even when he wasn't thinking about her, all of his actions, all of his thoughts were still directed toward her.

There was something else that would've been much tougher to talk about, though—the fact that he shared parenthood with Phoebe. How should he talk about Phoebe, and more importantly, who should he talk to?

... Once they'd picked Phoebe up from the maternity hospital, the whole family came together. To celebrate. Khrystyna and Styopa came. Marhita made a nice meal.

"A new person has been born!" Myron Vasylovych said, proposing a toast, and everyone drank. Everyone except for him, because he had to drive, and Phoebe, because she had to breastfeed. Phoebe sat there somberly.

"What are we going to call her?" Marhita asked.

"Emilia," Phoebe replied. Everyone started talking at once. Is that name on the liturgical calendar? Has anyone else in the family had that name? They began making suggestions. Phoebe listened in silence and then said, "I'm calling her Emilia."

"But what does that name even mean?" Marhita asked.

Phoebe lifted her head (slowly, so slowly that it scared Ivan for a second—it was like she had snakes for eyes), looked at Marhita, then at everyone sitting at the table, and spoke.

"I'll tell you what it means. It means that I've chosen her name." The scary truth was that ever since

Phoebe had come back from the hospital, it'd seemed like she had a few

screws loose. She sat in her chair all day long, with the child in her arms when it came time to feed her. She only went downstairs when the lights were off. Other

than that, she sat there and cried—sometimes to herself, sometimes out loud—driving Marhita mad. Marhita yelled at her daughter-inlaw (it's a good thing the neighbors' houses were a ways off).

"Have your mom come and help out! Just loafing around all day ... aren't ya gonna do anything?! What'd ya think havin' a kid would be like? No gallivanting 'round town anymore!" As if Phoebe had been one to gallivant around town. "You have a kid now. If you wanna go somewhere, just slide 'er into your pocket, right?"

Kateryna Ivanivna was in no rush to help out. She'd come over, of course, and always bring something for the little one or her daughter. She gave them money, took care of them. Yet she wouldn't sit by Phoebe or stick around to play with the child. Marhita, who wouldn't leave her for even a second, unnerved her. Marhita eagerly took on all sorts of tasks, just picked up her grandchild whenever, seemingly showing everyone that she was the one in charge, the lady of the house. Kateryna Ivanivna furrowed her brow and left, repeatedly reassuring herself that everything was fine. She, like everyone else, decided to simply ignore the state Phoebe was in.

And Phoebe kept sitting in her chair. Planets revolved around her, as if around the black sun of despair: the child, Marhita, him—Ivan, sometimes—Kateryna Ivanivna, the local hospital's pediatricians—a truly rare combination of bitchiness and self-sacrifice, guests who came for all the major holidays and the occasional Sunday lunch—Khrystyna, Styopa, and their twin sons, nicknamed the "Falcons."

And she kept sitting there, only getting up when she absolutely had to. She'd walk around the house, her eyes seemingly unseeing, feed the child, change her cloth diapers (Marhita maliciously threw out the disposable ones Ivan had bought wouldn't want to expose the child to all those chemicals!), and iron what Marhita washed. Phoebe had to force herself to breastfeed. She instantly developed an aversion for the whole procedure, couldn't take the greedy smacking of lips.

Ivan grew angry with Phoebe. For some reason, he was convinced that once a child came into the picture, Phoebe, like all of his friends' wives, would become a happy homemaker who wouldn't have time for him (or poems for that matter!) and would only concern herself with vegetable puree, the color of her child's excrement, bifidumbacterin probiotics, measles vaccinations, and lullabies. He bragged to the guys at work



when they asked him why he hadn't brought Phoebe to the office party.

"She's sitting at home," he said, "she won't be coming." Well, there she sat. The space on the second floor allocated to him and Phoebe was in utter disarray: scattered stuff, toys, sheets the sleep-deprived Marhita hadn't gotten around to washing, and in the midst of all this was Phoebe, looking like a broken mast. In the nascent twilight, at the same time every evening, she began to cry,

He didn't dare touch her now. She tensed up, turned as hard as a rock, and broke into tears or started talking.

as if someone had wound a bizarre clock inside her body.

He didn't dare touch her now. She tensed up, turned as hard as a rock, and broke into tears or started talking. He couldn't figure out for the life of him what she was saying, but it seemed to be something about poems: that she wanted to write, that all of her words had transformed into a wrenched wound, that she was a poet, that life shouldn't treat poets like this, and that she didn't know how to convey her anguish. Ivan listened, but didn't hear her. What did she want from him? Why had she sicced her words on him like ferocious dogs? ...

Ivan could only play with Emilia in the evenings, after work, but the little time he did have was constantly getting compressed, since a surprise lay in wait for him. He'd thought that at least Marhita was on his side, that at least he could count on her. After all, what could be more natural than a grandmother who played with her granddaughter and wanted her dad to play with her, too? ... He wasn't allowed to give her baths, change her diapers, or even wash any of her things, and eventually he was rarely given the chance to hold her. Who knows, maybe Ivan had a knack for parenting. There was no way of finding that out, though. He realized, to his astonishment, that Marhita sought out her granddaughter's company, even though she griped about being exhausted. Maybe she sought out her company just so that she could gripe about being exhausted. These were some really tough equations-tangents and cotangents of flesh and blood. Phoebe, Marhita-now Emilia was growing up-and who knows, maybe the two of them, along with Kateryna Ivanivna, with her horses and goats, could teach his good little girl that language of theirs, the language of women, in which everything is said with a twitch of the shoulder, a quiet laugh, silence, or worst of alltears, constant, unrelenting tears.

... Styopa didn't know anything about all of that, and even if he did,

The Neptune Fountain, Market Square, Lviv.





Left: Market Square, Lviv, with Uspensky Sobor in the background.

he wouldn't have taken the slightest interest in the details, not in a hundred years. He was knowledgeable about rebar, understood the ins and outs of plumbing, had a good handle on things like hardwood floors and two-by-fours-that was the kind of man he was. He could draw up a budget, he could work hard enough to make his veins pop, and he'd strain the veins in his neck like ropes. What did the language of women have to do with him? That was their domain. Yet if he was doing some home improvement work and Marhita started butting in, as she was known to do, he'd just glare at her and mutter something under his breath. After all, he couldn't just brush Marhita off. They had to wait until summer before they could do any more work on the house, though. He was urging Ivan to go into business with him, open a restaurant, or buy an old house. It didn't have to be downtown or anything. All the bigwigs already had their own cars. Soon enough, the simple folk would too. They'd serve gangsters, police officers, and ...

"And who else, huh?" Ivan asked, which threw Styopa for a loop.

"How should I know? We'll find out once we start feedin' people!"

And Styopa kept talking and talking, saying that you couldn't give up everything in the city in exchange for some metal-filled construction plastic, that they had to preserve their traditions. Meanwhile, the new restaurants served all kinds of food, of the non-local variety: pizza, hot dogs, Italian-style meat, wilted salads. The waiters were young, inexperienced, not of the caliber they used to be. Ivan knew what Styopa was getting at; he knew that even in the Soviet days, waiters were middle-aged men, the knights of napkins and silver, with impeccable manners, obliging, yet proud. Scurrying serenely around restaurants steeped in the cigarette smoke forever trapped in the curtains suited these men with heavy eyelids.

These were the final outposts of the already-deceased Austro-Hungarian Empire. These restaurants with Romani music. These waiters of the highest caliber.



[...]

Then he got a call from Lviv. It was Andriy Hroma asking him if he wanted to visit. Ivan loaded up his backpack that very evening, told his family he was going, and then walked to the train station. He bought a ticket for the night train, arrived in Lviv the next morning too early, come to think of it, and traveling during the day would've been cheaper. But it was dark at night, so at least he wouldn't have to worry about his head—it didn't ache in the gloom.

The Lviv train station was bubbling with activity that morning. A mechanical voice announced the schedule. Ivan left the building and ventured over to the tram tracks. Here, in this city, he loved every single stone under his feet, the callous cobblestones, the stone slums.

The trams weren't running yet. Ivan sat on the bench at a stop, eventually grew weary of waiting, and started walking, even though he had no clue where he was going. After all, he hadn't talked to anyone about crashing at their place. He wandered down the streets he'd escaped in disgrace several years before that. Here, in this city, he loved every single stone under his feet, the callous cobblestones, the stone slums. He knew the route here by heart, he could do it with his eyes closed.

Once he got downtown, he called Andriy. He said he'd be by Neptune. People traditionally met their dates or just their friends by that fountain outside of City Hall. Tons of people always sat there, on the ledge. Oh Lord, he hadn't seen Lviv in ages, how had he lived without this city for so long?! The sun was shining, but it was still cool. That morning briskness still lingered. The trams were already running, their clattering carrying across Rynok Square, and the square trembled. Ivan knew that tremble could be felt in the nearby apartments, but he also knew that you got used to it.

Andriy ran over about twenty minutes later. Yes, really, ran over.



Crashed into Ivan, embraced him. First they went over to Andriy's, then later on they headed to a café everyone called the Mausoleum because the large countertops made of dark wood really did resemble coffins that had been covered with glass. Plants and piles of pebbles, and who knows what else, lay in the coffins. Thank God Lenin's relics weren't in there. Tymish Hamkalo joined Andriy and Ivan at the Mausoleum. Then they all went to Yarema's. They hung out at Virmenka, one of Lviv's most famous establishments, and drank coffee brewed in a pan filled with sand.

Top: Aerial photo of downtown Lviv by Alexander Lipko. Yarema had opened an arts center in an old stone building, the ones with extremely thick walls.

They could finally all hang out and catch up. Tymish was a programmer. He'd write in the evenings (essays, he said). He was looking to get them published. Andriy had gone into tourism. He showed tourist groups around, did some archival work. He was no longer interested in national politics. His politics were Lviv now. He put up resistance when the city government tried to tear down an important building or sanctioned façade repairs. When they wouldn't listen to people like him, Andriy would draft petitions, hold talks, make his case, present arguments. There hadn't been a gram of anger in him back then, during the Maidan protests, and there still wasn't.

As always, Yarema didn't talk much. He smoked a lot, though. He

spoke about the crushing defeats suffered by the national democratic parties, about the People's Movement that was, according to Yarema, already moving toward a split ("then what? who's going to follow them?"), about the fabricated scandals, about the contract killings, about the collapse of the student movement from within.

"You know," he told Ivan, "we all used to get along just fine. Some of us were nationalists or other kinds of 'ists'; some of us even read Castaneda, but we stuck together. Those things didn't get in the way. Now we got people snapping at each other, sinking their teeth in until they draw blood. Soon they'll rip each other to shreds." Ivan had heard a little about that, but it was particularly painful to hear it from Yarema himself. The nationalists were at odds with the liberals, the liberals were at odds with the democrats, and the democrats were at odds with the feminists.

Yarema spoke about the rise of the oligarch class. The oligarchs had lots of dirty money behind them, money made on the manufacture of arms, on death, money stolen from the people. What did the national democratic forces have? What did they have besides an idea, stubbornness, less-than-perfect health, and a couple clean shirts? ...

The oligarchs dined with crime lords, went clothes shopping in Paris. They could buy an apartment in Kyiv or several in any other city in the country with their pocket change, while the dissidents oftentimes didn't even have a little nook for themselves.

"So should I be afraid of those oligarch types?" Hamkalo asked, laughing, and they all enjoyed a laugh, except Yarema, who only smiled with the corners of his mouth.

"Do your thing," he said. "Hold the perimeter ..." That's just what Yarema did. He'd been holding the perimeter, and many people had finally felt a sense of security. He supported rock bands. Poets. Artists. In the early evening, they went to a cult establishment—Lyalka.

At Lyalka, people lined the walls because they couldn't find anywhere to sit. Ivan marveled at the masses, which didn't resemble "the masses" in the typical sense. Each person was distinct, not like anyone else. This was a completely different bunch of youngsters, a completely different life, even though not much time had passed since they—Yarema, Tymish, and Ivan himself—had considered themselves young. The girls were

clad in black and wore sophisticated jewelry, the kind nobody in the Soviet Union had. They listened to music you couldn't hear back then. Mertvy Piven was set to perform. It was as though these years had stripped Ivan's nerves absolutely bare; every sound, every movement, every pinch of the guitar echoed long inside him. Misko Barbara said something or other on stage between songs, but Ivan couldn't make anything out. It was all one constant stream: music, words, poetry, faces, the joy of renewed mutual understanding.

They announced the intermission. Ivan and Yarema went outside, lit up.

"It's just time," Ivan thought with sudden realization. "It's just that time has passed." It was because the steel hand that had Ivan by the throat all these years had loosened up. Time had done more to free him of the hobble than any drama could. He'd waited out the scariest part on the banks of his river, in the Malyi Halahov district, like a kid under the covers. He mustered up the courage to ask Yarema about Roza. Yarema glanced at Ivan, didn't say anything for a bit, and then spoke.

"She married Bodya. She's expecting. They live together in his

hometown." Ivan didn't pry anymore.

"Bodya! There you have it," he thought. He hadn't known who she married. Now he did. Well,

what was Roza supposed to do? He just up and left. They didn't even get to talk things through. She had no clue what was going on ... And now it was too late. "It's a good thing she's with Bodya. Bodya loves her." Bodya would never dump her, unlike him, Ivan. "Hope they're happy."

He closed his eyes, and his head started spinning. Roza. The red rose on the black earth. Pregnant Mother Earth who bears life, yet hides the dead inside her. He shuddered. Why was he thinking about the dead now?

"Have you thought about moving here?" Yarema asked. "I know someone who's hiring." He mentioned some mutual friends who had their own business. They always needed well-educated people, especially Polytech grads. Ivan inhaled—not too deeply, because he had a sudden chest pain.

He didn't know what to tell Yarema. Actually, he did. He could tell him that he wouldn't come here without Emilia, that Phoebe wouldn't come with him, and even if

His head didn't hurt from the trip, from the alcohol, from the noise, from his backpack pressing down on the muscles in his shoulders, but now, at home, in this city, he felt the pain.

she did, they'd have to bring Marhita along or start looking for a nanny, because a person who barely ever gets out of their chair can't be a mother, be a friend, and be supportive to a man who's seeking something he can put his efforts into-a major, robust endeavor. But actually, the truth was much more bitter. Phoebe would nag him, Ivan, to death. Or run out on him-no doubt about it she'd gain access to another social circle here! She'd start sporting black again, puckering those lips of hers, wearing coral necklaces ... She would frequent Lyalka, attend galas, start listening to poems and driving herself mad, because what can Phoebe do at home? There was Emilia-there were probably times when she went a while without seeing her-and him, Ivan, whom she hated (he didn't have the slightest doubt about that, for some reason). How could the three of them keep on living? How could they live together? What would happen to their little girl?

He sighed. "I'll think about it" was all he could say in reply. Stars had probably already spilled across the sky, but the streetlights were still on. Ivan couldn't see anything besides the illuminated square, just yellow flashes and the black cobblestones under his feet.

He returned home two days later, took the night train, and walked from the station. His head didn't hurt from the trip, from the alcohol, from the noise, from his backpack pressing down on the muscles in his shoulders, but now, at home, in this city, he felt the pain that had lain dormant for several days suddenly twitch in his head, awakened. Ivan quietly entered the house—he had his own set of keys—went up to the second floor, their floor, peeked into the bedroom, looked at little Emilia, went out to the balcony, and lit up. A wave of gratitude crashed over Ivan, gratitude for his house, for Lviv, for the trip, for the fact that the pain had so graciously gifted him those days of freedom. Lviv had poured energy into him. All he had to do was find where to put it. All he had to do something, just didn't know what yet.

Excerpted from chapter 3 of Ivan and Phoebe by Oksana Lutsyshyna. Translation © 2020 by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler. Printed by permission of the author.

Oksana Lutsyshyna is a Ukrainian writer and poet—author of three novels, a collection of short stories, and five books of poetry, the most recent published in English translation in 2019 (Persephone Blues, Arrowsmith). Her fiction and poetry have won a number of awards in Ukraine. She holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature from the University of Georgia and is currently a lecturer in Ukrainian studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where she teaches the Ukrainian language and various Eastern European literatures in translation. Her dissertation focused on the Polish writer Bruno Schulz; Oksana spent a year in Poland as a Fulbright scholar. She translates Ukrainian poetry into English in collaboration with the New York-based poet and writer Olena Jennings. The events described in the novel Ivan and Phoebe unfold between 1989 and 1997. The novel focuses on the life of Ivan Chepil, a student at Lviv Polytechnic University, who takes part



in the student protests of 1990. Known as the Revolution on Granite or the "first Maidan," these peaceful protests would set the paradigm for Ukraine's subsequent two Maidans.

Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler are a team of literary translators who work with Russian and Ukrainian. They are best known for their English renderings of prose by the great contemporary Ukrainian author Serhiy Zhadan, including Voroshilovgrad, published by Deep Vellum, and Mesopotamia, published by Yale University Press.

* Oleksandr Dukhnovych (1803-1865)—writer, Transcarpathian cultural figure, priest, and teacher. He penned the "Hymn of the Subcarpathian Rusyns," calling upon Subcarpathian Rusyns to "leave their deep sleep."



Above: Oksana Lutsyshyna (Photo by Valentyna Schneider)

In Memoriam





George Feifer (1934–2019)

George Feifer died on November 12, 2019, at his home in Los Angeles, of complications from diabetes. An author of more than a dozen books and hundreds of articles for major newspapers and magazines in the United States and Great Britain, he was one of the few American journalists to describe the ethos of ordinary life in the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Feifer was born in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1934. Educated at the Juilliard School of Music and Harvard College, he served as a naval officer before coming to Columbia University's Russian Institute, where he received his master's degree in 1960 and certificate the following year.

He witnessed the Nixon-Khrushchev kitchen debate in Moscow in 1959, when he served as a young guide for the American exhibition that summer and met his future wife, Tatyana Leimer. After becoming one of the first American exchange students to the USSR in 1961, attending Moscow State University, he published his groundbreaking first book, *Justice in Moscow* (1964), describing the proceedings of civil courtroom trials. Feifer worked for CBS News before settling in London and going on to write books including his bestselling novel *Moscow Farewell* (1976), about his time in Soviet bohemian circles. *The Girl from Petrovka* (1972) later became a movie starring Goldie Hawn and Hal Holbrook. His anonymously published *Message from Moscow* (1969) described the somber mood in the capital following the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

His other notable nonfiction books include *Our Motherland* (1974); *Solzhenitsyn* (1973); *To Dance* (1978); and *Tennozan* (1992), about the World War II battle of Okinawa.

After more than two decades living in London and Ibiza, Spain, Feifer settled in Connecticut. He is survived by his two children, Anastasia and Gregory Feifer; two grandchildren, Vanessa and Sebastian; his former wife Tatyana Stepanova Feifer; and longtime partner Barbara Ungeheuer. —Gregory Feifer



Mark L. von Hagen (1954–2019)



Mark L. von Hagen

(professor emeritus at Arizona State University and former director of the Harriman Institute, 1995–2001) died early in the morning of September 15, 2019, surrounded by friends and family. To the very end, Mark was convening seminars in his

hospital room, critiquing a dissertation, and enjoying discussions about history, philosophy, and friendship, three of his favorite topics.

Mark came to Columbia in 1985 to take up the position of assistant professor of history, his first job after defending his dissertation at Stanford University. Mark's legacy at the Harriman Institute includes fundraising for and the establishment of the Ukrainian Studies Program, and the development and establishment of the Harriman master's program in regional studies and its signature course, Legacies of the Soviet Union.

As Alexander Motyl recalls in his tribute to Mark, published on the website of the Shevchenko Scientific Society: "We became full-fledged colleagues when Mark became the Harriman's director and I continued to serve as its, and his, associate director. He bristled with new ideas for courses, conferences, and research; streamlined the staff; and focused the Institute's attention on the non-Russian nationalities in general and the Ukrainians in particular. It was then that the Institute developed a close relationship with the Association for the Study of Nationalities and agreed to host its annual conventions. It was then as well that Mark initiated a major project on the Ukrainian-Russian Encounter and placed Ukraine at the core of the Institute's mission. He jokingly referred to himself as 'Hetman Marko.'"

Mark began his Columbia teaching career in January 1985, two months before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. As he writes in the autobiographical essay, with the typically humble title, "Area Studies from Cold War to Civilizational Conflict: On Learning, Relearning, and Unlearning": "After the openings of 1989-91, Columbia was at the center of another arena of area studies that became possible like never before-namely, international conferences and collaborative research projects across former Cold War borders."* It's difficult to imagine anyone better suited than Mark-the quintessential people person-to be at the helm of the Harriman Institute during this tumultuous period, exploring the possibilities for joint projects.

Mark embodied the collaborative spirit as testified by the numerous volumes he coedited with scholars from the post-Soviet states, Europe, Canada, and the United States.[†] (In his narrative for the Harriman Oral History project, Mark goes into much more detail about his scholarly evolution and the opportunities that opened up with the fall of the USSR.)

The breadth of Mark's accomplishments and expertise is easily summed up by the fact that he served as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, president of the International Association for Ukrainian Studies, and dean of the Philosophy Faculty with the Ukrainian Free University in Munich, Germany.

Mark was an inspirational teacher and generous colleague, whose gift for friendship was unexcelled. With his innate charm, he genuinely delighted in introducing friends and colleagues to others. He was fundamentally egalitarian and democratic. He and his devoted partner and husband, Johnny Roldan-Chacon, loved to entertain groups of people—graduate students, colleagues, international visitors—at their home, first on 118th Street, right across from the School of International Affairs, and later on at their much larger apartment on Morningside Drive.

Mark remained at Columbia until 2007, when he left his position as the Boris Bakhmeteff Professor of Russian and East European Studies and chair of the History Department to take up his appointment at Arizona State University, where he was professor of history and global studies with joint appointments in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies and the School of International Letters and Cultures in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Mark was also the founding director of the Office for Veteran and Military Academic Engagement at Arizona State, a position of which he was particularly proud and which brought things full circle to the beginning of his career as a military historian with his first book, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship* (Cornell, 1990).

On January 31, 2020, the Harriman Institute held a tribute to Mark, with six speakers addressing different parts of his career: Michael David-Fox (Georgetown), Laurie Manchester (Arizona State University), Maria Sonevytsky (UC Berkeley), Frank Sysyn (University of Alberta), Richard Wortman (Columbia), and Elizabeth Valkenier (Columbia). Video of the event is available on the Harriman website.

* Published in the Spring 2017 issue of *Harriman Magazine*, this essay evolved from a talk that Mark gave on September 15, 2016, at the Harriman, as part of its 70th anniversary celebrations.

† Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg: Multiple Faces of the Russian Empire, coedited with Catherine Evtuhov, Boris Gasparov, and Alexander Ospovat (Moscow, 1997); After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires, coedited with Karen Barkey (Westview, 1997); Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter (1600–1945), coedited with Andreas Kappeler, Zenon Kohut, and Frank Sysyn (Toronto, 2003); Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700–1930, coedited with Jane Burbank (Indiana, 2007).

Alumni & Postdoc Notes



Jennifer Ginsburg



Gazmend Haxhia

Before graduate school, I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kosovo (2015–17) and taught English in a rural Serbian village. It was an incredible opportunity to be at the center of regional politics, and I became familiar with the difficult realities of life for minority communities in the region. The value of regional and linguistic knowledge, so important to my success in the Peace Corps, drew me to the Harriman Institute's master's program. At Columbia, I focused on nationalism and ethnic politics in the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia and took courses that provided an intellectual foundation to my time in the Peace Corps. My master's thesis examined how Russian and Serbian politicians strategically use nationalist rhetoric and evoke the myths surrounding Crimea and Kosovo. I received fellowships to conduct field research for my thesis and interviewed scholars, analysts, and ordinary people in Moscow, Banja Luka, Belgrade, and northern Kosovo.

After graduation, I began working with the National Endowment for Democracy as a program officer on the Russia and Eurasia team. The knowledge I gained from the Harriman comes into play every day as I work with grantees to develop their projects and monitor existing programs. I am so pleased to have the opportunity to work with the people on the ground in the region who continue to fight the good fight, and I will always be appreciative of the many opportunities Columbia gave me.

-Jennifer Ginsburg (MARS-REERS, 2019)

I graduated from Tirana University, Faculty of Foreign Languages, and earned my master's in international affairs at Columbia University. I further educated myself at INSEAD Fontainebleau and the Harvard Business School. My early career path included serving as an aide in the Albanian prime minister's office within the Department of Public Administration in Tirana. I also interned at the Currency Trade Department and Middle Markets at Merrill Lynch on Wall Street and have been an external adviser to the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania.

Currently I own and operate the Albanian franchises for AVIS and Budget Rent a Car leasing and associated services. I founded and operate the Albania Experience Travel Company, which is the leading event and travel company in Albania, and am cofounder and shareowner of the POLIS University in Tirana offering degrees in architecture, urban planning, and art and design. I used to be the license proprietor of the *In Your Pocket* guidebooks of Tirana, Skopje, Pristine, and Podgorica.

Most recently I became the land and port handling agent for MSC Cruises, which regularly dock at Sarande in Albania as part of their Mediterranean season. I have also established the Albanian Driver Trainer Centre, ensuring a higher class of safety awareness and driving skills for many major fleets traveling within Albania and internationally. I have been an associate faculty member (since 2006) for Entrepreneurship and Practicing Management at IEDC-Bled School of Management. In 2018 I was awarded the title Professor of Management Practice. I am a lecturer in Leadership, Marketing Services, and "The Responsible Administrator" (a course in ethics) at Tirana University and Nebraska University MBA/MPA Program. I was nominated to the Forum of Young Global Leaders at the DAVOS World Economic Forum in 2008.

I am married to Anila and we have two children, travel extensively, and work internationally, though Tirana, Albania, is home.

-Gazmend Haxhia (M.I.A., SIPA, 1994)

I arrived at the Harriman Institute in the fall of 2016, after spending a year teaching English in Vladimir and traveling around Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia. The time abroad coupled with my strong interest in economics drove me to focus my studies on energyrelated economic and political issues—specifically pipeline politics—in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Following graduation in 2018, I accepted a five-month research opportunity with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (PA) in Brussels. Among my responsibilities at the NATO PA, I researched and wrote reports on energy security and Eastern Deterrence against military threats toward Eastern NATO members. The highlight of my time at the NATO PA was attending the Plenary Session in Halifax, Canada, where I met parliamentarians from across the Alliance and listened to them debate the reports I had helped to write.

Since February of this year, I have been working as an analyst at the international management consulting firm Elixirr. Working there I have traveled across the United States and the United Kingdom. My degree from the Harriman Institute has sharpened my research skills and helped me tackle tough client challenges.

-William Persing (MARS-REERS, 2018)

In 2019, with support from a Council on Foreign Relations fellowship, I worked as a policy adviser for the Joint Staff (J-5) at the Department of Defense. Embedded in a team of extraordinary civilian and military specialists in the Directorate of Strategic Stability, Strategic Deterrence, and Nuclear Policy Division, our work involved strategy, plans, and policy, representing the Joint Staff in the interagency policy-making process, and supporting the chairman's "military advice" to senior leaders.

My commitments at J-5 included off-site activities, and I was invited to speak at the 2019 NATO nuclear symposium in Riga and give a briefing at NATO headquarters in Brussels. I also carved out time for academic work (on sabbatical as a professor at Hunter College, CUNY) to participate in Track 1.5 talks and a forum on European security in Moscow and



William Persing



Cynthia Roberts



Peter Zalmayev

follow-up research in Russian archives for a book on disconnects between Stalin and the military leadership before 1941.

The year 2019 also turned out to be a critical year to observe from inside the government how attitudes were hardening on China and to engage with officials focused on great power competition, while Russia and China found more opportunities to collaborate. This was the subject of the 2019 Annual Saltzman Forum at Columbia, where I was a panelist with Eugene Rumer and Peter Clement. A related offshoot of my book on *BRICS and Collective Financial Statecraft* (Oxford, 2018) led me to examine blowback and escalation risks from the U.S. weaponization of finance. I published two papers on how aggressive use of financial coercion and punishment is incentivizing opponents, such as China, Russia, and even U.S. allies, to create alternative instruments to the dollar and how the use of financial swords creates under-explored risks of escalation.

--Cynthia Roberts (Harriman Certificate and Ph.D., Political Science, 1992) Professor of Political Science, Hunter College, CUNY; and Senior Research Scholar and Adjunct Professor of International Affairs, Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University

I just celebrated the two-year anniversary of my international talk show, *The Week*, which I cohost on the Ukrainian TV channel Pryamy. The program covers important international developments while tackling issues of global import, such as global warming, racism, and realities of the emerging post-truth world. I regularly visit major international conferences, such as the World Economic Forum in Davos and the Munich Security Conference, from where I file special reports for the program.

In August, during a one-on-one interview, my partner and I were among the first Ukrainian journalists to ask U.S. Special Representative to Ukraine Kurt Volker about Rudy Giuliani's "shadow diplomacy" in Ukraine. The interview was shared widely locally, and an excerpt was shown on MSNBC's *Rachel Maddow Show*.

I continue to provide commentary on Ukraine's politics, both for local and international media. During both rounds of Ukraine's presidential elections, I gave interviews to BBC World News, Al Jazeera/English, EuroNews, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

In 2019, I published a dual-language (Ukrainian/English) book for both children and adults, *Manual of a Not-so-Young Father*, which I presented at several literary festivals in Ukraine. I continue to divide my time between New York and Kyiv, where I have two sons: Yakov (3 years old) and Peter Jr. (3 months old).

-Peter Zalmayev (M.I.A., SIPA, 2008)

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