THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

-

SUMMER 2021

On Forms of Inclusivity in Russia

SUBTLE SUPPRESSION The Daughter of a Photographer

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

Harriman Magazine is published biannually by the Harriman Institute.

Managing Editor: Ronald Meyer Editor: Masha Udensiva-Brenner

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Opposite page: Alexander Cooley (Photo by Jeffrey Schifman)



We decided in Fall 2020, after thinking deeply about racism and discrimination in our own country, to examine these issues as they relate to our region of interest. The experiences of minorities and vulnerable communities living in Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe are often overlooked; in response, we launched the speaker series Minority Inclusion and Exclusion in Soviet and Post-Soviet Societies, organized by our postdoctoral research scholar Svetlana Borodina, which examines some of the latest academic research on issues of discrimination, representation, identity, and inequality in the USSR and postsocialist societies.

We are excited to feature as our cover story an essay by Borodina that examines how the principle of inclusion has evolved in Russia—from when it entered the public space in the 2010s to where it is today.

I am also thrilled to include a profile of our recent alumna Tinatin Japaridze, whose forthcoming book, *The Tale of Three Stalins*, emerged from a paper she wrote in my Legacies of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union course a few years ago.

We also have an article about kleptocracy and its corrosive effects on Western democracies coauthored by Tom Mayne, who has been investigating the topic since the mid-aughts, and alumnus Peter Zalmayev. The Harriman Institute has been a leader in kleptocracy-related research for some years, and I am glad to be covering this important issue in the magazine.

My colleague Padma Desai contributed a memoir essay about her trip to the USSR in 1964; the internationally acclaimed Russian writer Maria Stepanova, who will be in residence at Columbia's Department of Slavic Languages this fall, contributed an excerpt from her book *In Memory of Memory (A Romance)*. In addition, we have a profile of our alumnus Sanjay Sethi, who put together the first-ever human rights report on artistic repression in Central and Eastern Europe; an article on the legacy of Alexei Navalny by former postdoctoral research fellow Yana Gorokhovskaia; and a spotlight on the Harriman Institute's mentorship program.

Last year we were deeply saddened by the loss of two very important friends and colleagues: Stephen Cohen, scholar of Russian politics, Russian Institute alumnus, and longtime friend; and Jamey Gambrell, prize-winning translator, alumna, and former visiting scholar. Both made remarkable contributions to their fields and to our community and are sorely missed. You can read about them in the In Memoriam section.

As always, enjoy the issue, and please be in touch with any comments or ideas. We love to hear from you!

All the best,

Alexander Cooley Director, Harriman Institute





COVER STORY

On Changing Forms of Inclusivity in Russia By Svetlana Borodina

Inklyuziya (inclusion) in Russia used to refer mainly to the domain of disability inclusion programs. If in the anglophone world, the term inclusion hasn't been monopolized by any specific group and means instead a principle that ensures the equal participation of everyone in society, then its Russian cognate, *inklyuziya*, was previously used predominantly in the sense of "disability inclusion."

The major drivers of the discursive change have been large museums and cultural centers, including the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow, Moscow's Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, and Yekaterinburg's Yeltsin Center, to name a few. Since 2019, at various times, they have been pushing forward *inklyuzivnye* programs—events, seminars, instructional materials, exhibits— "for all": people with migration experience, adolescents, children from group homes, burned-out workers of the cultural sector, and people with disabilities, among others.

Subtle Suppression: Artistic Censorship in the Post-Soviet Region Sanjay Sethi in Profile By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

On putting together the firstever human rights report about artistic repression in Eastern and Central Europe.

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The Legacy of Alexei Navalny By Yana Gorokhovskaia

How the opposition leader and anti-corruption activist revolutionized Russian politics.



Biden vs. the Kleptocrats? By Tom Mayne and Peter Zalmayev

On the corrosive effects of kleptocracy and the potential ways to fight them.







Building Community in 2020: The Harriman Institute's Student Mentorship Program By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

Ben Cohen (MARS-REERS, 2022) and Dora Chomiak (Razom) met in a Zoom breakout room and bonded over their love for Ukraine. Now Chomiak is Cohen's mentor.



The Tale of Three Stalins: Tinatin Japaridze in Profile By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

On examining Stalin's political legacy from a personal perspective.

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Discovering the USSR: Odesa, Moscow, Leningrad By Padma Desai

In 1964, after graduating from Harvard with her Ph.D. in economics, Desai journeys to Odesa, where she joins her sister and brother-in-law, who is consul at the Consulate of India. Trips to the Black Sea, Kyiv, Moscow, and Leningrad—at a time when there were few private cars on the road—enable her to witness firsthand life in the USSR.



The Daughter of a Photographer From *In Memory of Memory* By Maria Stepanova Translated by Sasha Dugdale

One of the most important poets writing in Russian today, Stepanova turns her hand to a large prose work, a family history, set in motion by photographs and diaries of an aunt who has died. Shortlisted for the International Booker Prize.





In Memoriam

Stephen F. Cohen Jamey Gambrell



Giving to Harriman

n 2019, Hungary's biggest contemporary art museum removed an art installation because it portrayed Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in an unflattering light. In 2017, the

director of a Polish historical museum was dismissed and replaced by someone who would rewrite history in accordance with the ruling party line. That same year, a famous Russian theater and film director who had criticized the government was accused of embezzling funds and placed under house arrest. These are three public examples of how rightwing governments in some former Communist countries repress cultural activity, but the trend is pervasive and the repression tends to be subtle reallocated funding; external pressure that leads to self-censorship; legal challenges.

During the Communist period, governments used to publicly denounce artists and cultural figures who criticized them, sending them away to work camps or worse. Now, more than three decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain, authoritarian regimes have shifted tactics. "A lot of what's happening is behind the scenes," says Sanjay Sethi (SIPA, 2002; Harriman Institute Certificate, 2007). "Today's dictators are getting smarter."

The repressive landscape in some parts of the former Communist region has led increasingly to artists leaving their home countries. Sethi, who has been an immigration lawyer for more than a decade and who cofounded the Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI) in 2017—an organization that provides pro bono legal services and housing for artists fleeing censorship or persecution, started noticing an influx of artists from Central and Eastern Europe a couple of years ago. He also noticed that, while human rights and illiberal trends in the region were well-documented, trends in the art world were being underreported. "The situation for artists in the region is getting more and more precarious," he says, "but the public isn't really aware of the scale."

Sethi, who has a background in human rights and in East European and Eurasian studies, decided to change this. Last year, he and his team at AFI began conducting research for a human rights report to document repression in the art world. Shortly after they started, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States. This meant they could no longer do any of their reporting in person, but the pandemic also opened up opportunities. With other AFI projects on hold, there was more time for research. And, now that all interviews had to take place using Zoom, they could fit more of them into

SUBTLE Suppression

ARTISTIC CENSORSHIP IN THE POST-Soviet Region Sanjay Sethi

By Masha Udensiva-Brenner

IN PROFILE

"THE SITUATION FOR ARTISTS IN THE REGION IS GETTING MORE AND MORE PRECARIOUS, BUT THE PUBLIC ISN'T REALLY AWARE OF THE SCALE."

a shorter period of time. The more they worked on the report, the longer it became. "We started out thinking we'd produce a 50- to 60-page report, and now it's pushing 100 pages, which speaks to the scale of the problem in the region," Sethi says.

He is enjoying the work—so much so that he has decided to come back to Columbia for another master's, this time in Slavic cultures. He enrolled in January 2021 with a focus on the intersectionality of law and culture in Eastern Europe, and he's taking courses on topics ranging from Ukrainian avant-garde art to litigating free expression cases in international courts. "It's a personal interest," Sethi says. "But, in many ways, it has already had a practical impact on my career."

Meanwhile, the human rights report, titled "Subtle Suppression," is in the final stages of completion. It is scheduled for release this summer and will be the firstever human rights report focused on artistic repression in Central and Eastern Europe. Sethi is planning a virtual launch event with the Harriman Institute, and, after the pandemic ends, an on-campus conference and artistic exhibition.

Recently AFI started a fellowship program, enlisting Columbia students, including some from the Harriman Institute, to help with the report. Sethi recalls the fellowship he received from Columbia Law School's Public Interest Law Initiative, back when he finished graduate school. "In large part, I got it because of my work at the Harriman Institute," he says. "I'm thrilled to be in a position where I can give back to Harriman and provide students with an opportunity to develop their professional and regional expertise."

Opposite page: Sanjay Sethi at an Artist Freedom Initiative event on exiled artists. Photo courtesy of Sanjay Sethi.

On Changing Forms of Inclusivity in Russia

By Svetlana Borodina Members of the Inspiration inclusive dance studio from Saratov, Russia. Photo by Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS; ITAR/TASS News Agency/Alamy.



hat's new?" I asked Olya during one of our

regular calls over WhatsApp in early February 2021. (Olya is a composite character, based on three real people.) Olya is a good friend of mine who has been working with various disabilityfocused NGOs in Russia for about seven years now. Since 2016, she has been keeping me up to date about the programs and initiatives that are developed and managed by Russian activists and NGOs that we both know and that are guided by the pursuit of disability inclusion. As usual, Olya delivered: "Have you heard about this new fad? Turns out that inklyuzivnye (inclusive)¹ programs are not really just for people with disabilities anymore. [They are] for migrants, too. And for adolescents! I don't even know what inklyuziya means anymore."

Olya was referring to a new, discursive twist she had observed in the field of inklyuziya-what previously had been known to her as the domain of disability inclusion programs. If in the anglophone world, the term inclusion hasn't been monopolized by any specific group and means instead a principle that ensures the equal participation of everyone in society, then its Russian cognate, inklyuziya, was previously used predominantly in the sense of "disability inclusion." During the 2010s, the time when inklyuziya entered Russian NGO parlance and practice, the inklyuzivnye (inclusive) initiatives and projects on which Olya worked created more and more opportunities that strengthened the ability and the possibility of people with various forms of disabilities to access and participate in different social sectors: education, employment, leisure, etc. In inklyuzivnye festivals, people with and without disabilities performed alongside one another. In inklyuzivnye schools, they studied side by side. In inklyuzivnye athletic facilities, they trained and exercised together, sharing the same space. Such contexts and events would often aim at cultivating tolerance toward disabilities. Their goal would be to bring people with disabilities to the world of the nondisabled as well as to normalize disability. Recently, however, this has begun to change. The major drivers of the discursive change have been large museums and cultural centers, including the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow, Moscow's Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, and Yekaterinburg's Yeltsin Center, to name a few. Since 2019, at various times, they have been pushing forward inklyuzivnye programsevents, seminars, instructional materials, exhibits-"for all": people with migration experience, adolescents, children from group homes, burned-out workers of the cultural sector, and people with disabilities, among others. These museums and cultural institutions are aware that their intentions fundamentally change the discourse, as we can see from the programmatic texts that spell out the

new configuration of inklyuziya and

in February 2021:

how it differs from the one Olya had

followed. Consider, for example, a

call for participants for the Yeltsin

Center's Course in Cultural Inclusion

On closer examination, it often

turns out that practices that are

so: attempts to integrate Others

into broader society, assimilation and / or simply talking about "their" needs and rights. Meanwhile, inclusion is the most important element of the fundamental principles of DE&I ("diversity, equity and inclusion"), on the basis of which living spaces are built, free from infringement of rights, belittling of human dignity, offensive and dangerous exclusion. These are principles that work for everyone, since exclusion from the "normative" space is in fact a universal experience.²

> The text above introduces a new, flatter model of social life where differences do not need to be normalized or assimilated to obtain value. Instead, in this model, everybody is considered to be different in one way or another, and so appreciation of this universal difference-or raznoobrazie (diversity)-lies at the basis of the new ethics: the ethics of care, acknowledged vulnerability, and respect. A reader in the West will quickly recognize the echo of the familiar diversity, equity, and inclusion rhetoric here-a rhetoric common in corporate and institutional circles in the United States, for example.

The promotion of this new philosophy, and the new ethics on which it is based, is associated with a new population of inklyuziya workers: graduates with degrees in the humanities, who are well-read in anglophone critical disability studies and inclusion studies texts, fluent in English, working with the capital of authoritative cultural institutions, quite far from inclusion are called and adept in social media. This brand of inklyuziya looks and sounds



From top to bottom: Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, <u>CC BY-SA 4.0</u>/ Wikimedia Commons. Inspiration inclusive dance studio; photo by Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS; ITAR/TASS News Agency/Alamy. A blind woman on a touch tour in a museum; photo by the author.

hip, progressive, and appealing. The online presence of this type of inklyuziya--in the form of manifestos, peer-reviewed and public-facing texts, presentations, seminars, Zoom events, instructional videos-strikes with bright design, well-packaged and well-communicated philosophy, and aspirations to participate as equals in social life. It is aesthetically pleasing and well-organized, authorized by wellrespected cultural institutions. Unlike the previous inflection of inklyuziya that highlighted the negative aspects of disability exclusion (such as social isolation, stigmatization, poverty, and socially produced helplessness of people with disabilities) and often relied on sensationalized representation of exclusion, this other form of inklyuziya depicts the positive aspects of a future where everyone, regardless of their needs and experiences, is respected, supported, and socially valued. Diversity-based inklyuziya, thus, presents a fundamentally hopeful, if not utopian, project.

For someone who has worked over five years running one inklyuzivnaya program after another, all with participation of people with disabilities, some directly for people with disabilities, under increasingly precarious funding conditions, this transfiguration of the term was new and confusing. Olya's uncertainty about the development of the meaning of inklyuziya reflected the increasingly saturated field that produced more and more definitions and practical guidelines for inklyuziya but did not seem to actually address the problems people with disabilities identified: tremendous barriers to building a career and finding employment, widespread inaccessibility, insufficient welfare, low quality of public services,

and overwhelming red tape. To understand this shift and Olya's reticence to wholeheartedly embrace and celebrate a new, seemingly more progressive philosophy and ethics of *inklyuziya*, let's take a quick look at the history of the concept of inclusion and how it landed in Russia.

Inclusion's Trajectory

While the difference between the new, diversity-inspired *inklyuziya*, on the one hand, and the disability-specific *inklyuziya*, on the other, might appear stark, it is inclusion's flexible nature that allows for dramatic variation.

The concept of social exclusionthe problem, for which inclusion is a solution-emerged in the 1970s in France, when René Lenoir, then secretary of state for social action in the government, grouped people with mental and physical disabilities, senior citizens, children with histories of abuse, people living with addiction, single parents, and other marginalized groups under the label of les exclus (the excluded). Later the focus would shift onto unemployed youth and immigrants (Silver 1994). The support of people who didn't have access to similar social protections as other French residents with a more secure network became part of the governmental agenda. This policy orientation toward the provision of necessary resources to those excluded from other networks of resource distribution in France was fueled by the sentiments of national solidarity and, subsequently, the impetus of normalization. Since the 1970s, this orientation toward normalization has spread across Europe, first, and then, the globe.

Inclusion entered the Russian public space late in the first decade of the 21st century and into the early







From top to bottom: Actors in wheelchairs perform a dance on stage; Vladivostok, Russia (June 12, 2018); photo by Denis Kabelev/ Alamy Stock Photo. A blind expert demonstrates blind people's techniques of smartphone use to a blindfolded sighted person; photo by the author. A group of people discussing a project, Moscow (December 18, 2017); photo by Anton Brehov/Alamy Stock Photo. 2010s as *inklyuziya*, a social principle squarely associated with one specific social group: people with disabilities. In 2008, Russia signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), where "full and effective participation and inclusion in society" is listed as the third principle in Article 3, General Principles. In 2012, Russia ratified the Convention. As several laws, standards, and orders came out after Russia's ratification of the UNCRPD, inclusion appeared only in legislation on education. There, although inklyuzivnoye education is defined as "ensuring equal access to education for all students taking into account the diversity of special educational needs and individual capabilities" (article 2, point 27, of the Federal Law on Education of 29.12.2012), when read together with article 5 of the same Federal Law, it becomes clear that inklyuzivnove education concerns only people with disabilities, not taking into account others whose educational needs and abilities may be different for reasons other than disability (Shchekochikhina 2020). The singularity of inklyuziya's presence in the legal corpus often bled into everyday discourse, where it was initially understood predominantly as "disability inclusion in education."

Gradually, however, as NGOs and activists picked up the concept of *inklyuziya*, they brought it to various social domains, well beyond the domain of education. A review of 292 NGO projects that self-identified as *inklyuzivnye* and were submitted for funding between 2017 and 2020 to Presidential Grants, a major domestic funding stream for NGOs, shows that *inklyuziya*-guided programs are common practice in the domain of arts and performance, crafts and skills classes, contexts of work and employment, volunteering, etc. Although it is NGOs, cultural institutions, and activists that act to bring inklyuziya to ever new corners of the social world in Russia, it should be noted that the contemporary Russian state supports and invests in the development of inklyuziya (beyond inklyuziya in education), too-increasing numbers of inklyuzivnye projects funded through the competitive public program Presidential Grants or the establishment of a new commission on accessible environment and inklyuzivnye practices at the Public Chamber serve as testimony to this governmental support.

Together with NGOs, museums and cultural institutions have been at the forefront of inklyuziya and accessibility efforts. As the Ministry of Culture passed the Order of November 16, 2015, No. 2800, "On approval of the procedure for ensuring conditions for accessibility of cultural values and goods for disabled people," Russian museums became obligated to ensure that cultural values, spaces, and services are accessible to visitors with disabilities. In compliance, large museums hired professionals and instituted departments tasked with figuring out the best inclusion practices in museums, which in itself also stimulated the development of the professional field of inklyuziya experts in Russia. The push by museums toward amplifying their inklyuziya efforts also came from the international museum community: the 2020 International Museum Day followed the theme "Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion." Located between the internationally

approved and promoted discourse of diversity and inclusion, on the one hand, and pressed to build inclusion apparatuses at home, on the other, museums indeed have taken up the role of nurturing inklyuziya in society more broadly, through exhibitions, talks, courses, publications, and practices. For example, one of the first and most comprehensive collections of academic texts on the contemporary development of inclusion in the cultural sphere and arts is the first issue of Garage's own publication, the Garage Journal, titled "Transitory Parerga: Accessibility and Inclusion in Contemporary Art." Notably, if previously the questions of inclusion used to be compartmentalized and of little interest to the broader public, Garage's choice to dedicate the first issue of its journal to concerns with accessibility and inclusion signals the topic's significance and centrality to the institution.

Diversity-Based *Inklyuziya*: Hesitations

But why did Olya hesitate to embrace this new rendition of inklyuziya? Olya works in an NGO, in one of Russia's regional centers. Just like other small NGOs, hers is funded precariously: it relies on its ability to secure governmental and private grants to carry out its projects. The content and designs of its projects only partially account for its success as an NGO. Equally important is its ability to maintain relationships with local elites, involved in the distribution of public and private funds, as well as being able to appeal to different audiences. Sometimes, this means presenting sensationalist stories about people with disabilities who

benefited from its projects; on other occasions, demonstrating a stellar record of previously held grants and awards. And yet, sometimes, it comes down to having good relationships with sponsors and other NGOs in the area. In other words, Olya's NGO works in close collaboration with both: sponsors and elites, on the one hand, and the target audience, on the other. In contemporary Russia, NGOs are caught up between the threat of being cast as foreign agents (for receiving funding from outside of Russia), the need to navigate intricate mazes of bureaucracy and paperwork, and the goal to support vulnerable populations. To remain afloat, NGOs develop relationships with local and governmental elites, work on maintaining their public support, and learn to pitch their work to varied funding sources, often trying to minimize substantial risks they face: financial shortfalls, surveillance, and burnout.

Taking this background into account, let us hear Olya's three arguments: the historical argument, the strategic argument, and the expertise-driven argument. They add nuance to her hesitation around the diversity-based concept of *inklyuziya*.

y <u>The historical argument</u>. "I don't te know what to think of it. We all remember what happened when nly they lumped everyone together in the past," Olya said. The history of Soviet and post-Soviet politics of difference has known plenty of examples of grouping seemingly unrelated people together under one label. These examples were mostly tragic, as such "inclusivity" was undertaken with the purpose of excluding big groups of people from When inklyuziya remains a question of individual choices, attitudes, and values, it leaves unaddressed the problem of effective institutional support necessary for its material survival.

system of organized productive labor; those living with disabilities or addiction; those whose ethnic background or family and social connections did not align with the image of a model citizen. The labels they'd be grouped under would be enemies of the people, parasites, the mad, and marginals (*marginaly*) of various kinds. The places where the recipients of these labels would end up at would be labor camps, psychiatric facilities, or closed institutions-somewhere remote. removed from the public eye, and living under violently exploitative or, at the very least, uncomfortable conditions. If labor camps and psychiatric facilities for political dissidents have become a matter of the past, special homes for senior citizens and people with disabilities remain a painful reality for many who do not have access to alternative forms of care and support. The anxiety associated with previous attempts at creating underclasses out of marginalized groups fueled Olya's caution.

The strategic argument. Olya didn't really want people with disabilities to be put alongside other stigmatized groups for fear of them contracting the stigma metonymically, by virtue of associating people with disabilities with someone who has a low moral standing in society. After all, "you can fantasize as much as you want, but I have to work with a lot of people with conservative views, and they just got convinced that sponsoring disability inclusive projects is a good thing to do. Nobody has convinced them yet

participating in society: those who that bringing in other groups won't be thought, looked, and felt differently; harmful," Olya continued. A nonprofit those who didn't participate in the worker, she did not want to jeopardize years of work and carefully cultivated relationships with local elites and authorities who tended not to hold progressive views. She was concerned that the funding prospects may dry up once inklyuziya becomes something other than "helping the disabled." She was especially concerned about people with disabilities being associated with those whom the conservative discourse deemed responsible for their troubles: people with alcohol or drug addiction, homeless people, or LGBTO people. If people with disabilities in Russia over time have acquired a nonthreatening status, other minorities even today occupy a culturally more precarious position, threatening the idea of Russian "traditional" or "authentic" values. Thus, for Olya, the fear of lateral stigmatization ("contracting" stigma by proximity) raised questions of the uncertain future of the hard-earned political and public will to engage with the issues of social isolation of people with disabilities. Of course, by acting on this fear and reticence, Olya herself-and other like-minded NGO practitioners-only further retrenched the stigma associated with those vulnerable populations. In the climate where progressivist and liberal views tend to become categorized as threats to social security and stability, however, such fear and caution are strategically understandable.

The expertise-driven argument. "And then, what kind of expertise is it when there is no clear recipient; when there is no clear problem? We need more specialization, not abstraction," Olya continued. It had already been

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hard to find and get experts to solve accessibility and inklyuziya problems for one group-people with disabilities. In part, precisely because this group is incredibly heterogeneous, and their needs and desires reflect that. Disability itself is a vast category that unites people who often have nothing in common besides their experience of being discriminated against because of their disability. Without much optimism that the new, broader understanding of inclusion, connected to diversity, will bring about tangible improvements to the lives of those who ultimately suffer the consequences of exclusion, Olya was concerned with the risk of stretching the category so wide that any sense of expertise would be lost. What kind of solutions and programs can come out of such reframing of inklyuziya if the exclusion problems each group faces are so dramatically different? What kind of expertise is needed to address the problem of social exclusion at such a broad level?

With these hesitations in mind, Olya continues using the disabilityfocused rendition of inklyuziya, and it remains to be seen what changes the increasingly diversifying field of inklyuziya brings. And yet, I would be careful not to dismiss these hesitations as irrelevant or inconsequential. They reveal frictions in the growing domain of disability inclusion in Russia and challenges with its stabilization and control. They further unearth the vulnerable socioeconomic and political position of NGOs to whom disability inclusion has been outsourced. Finally, they demonstrate the instrumental power of framing civic action as homegrown, apolitical, nonthreatening, and complicit with the status quo, on the one hand, and

the perceived risks associated with undertaking a project of broader social redesign, on the other.

Concluding Remarks

Regardless of its inflection-inklyuziya as the integration of people with disabilities or inklyuziya of all-inklyuziya remains within the limits of what anthropologist Didier Fassin (2011) called humanitarian government, or the use of moralizing sentiments in governance. In either form, inklyuziya discourse appeals to one's values and emotions, instead of emanating from a political platform. Without mandating inclusivity at the political level, without reforming the system of the welfare state, and without providing stable funding streams to organizations tasked with materializing inklyuziya, changes in inklyuziya discourse remain at the level of moralized sentiments and individual choices. When inklyuziya remains a question of individual choices, attitudes, and values, it leaves unaddressed the problem of effective institutional support necessary for its material survival. It also, however, enjoys relatively less surveillance and governmental oversight, allowing variegated forms of civic participation and social critique.

Svetlana Borodina (Ph.D., Anthropology, Rice University, 2020) is currently a postdoctoral research scholar at the Harriman Institute, where she organized the speaker series "Minority Inclusion and Exclusion in Soviet and Post-Communist Societies" during academic year 2020–21. As a medical and cultural anthropologist, Borodina studies post-Soviet cultures and the politics of disability inclusion in Russia.

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¹For the sake of clarity, I have employed the Russian terms for the noun *inklyuziya* (inclusivity) and its adjectival forms *inklyuzivny* (-aya, -oye, -ye).

² https://yeltsin.ru/affair/Kurs-po-kulturnojinklyuzii-Seminar-Oksany-Moroz-i-Vlada-Krivoshekova/.

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THE LEGACY OF ALEXED NAVALNY **BY YANA GOROKHOVSKAIA**

fter being poisoned with a banned chemical weapon in August 2020 and imprisoned amid mass protests in January 2021, Alexei Navalny is today the most internationally recognizable leader of Russia's opposition. Whatever the outcome of the peril he faces at the moment, Navalny's career has already greatly altered Russia's political environment. The three aspects of the oppositionist's legacy that are particularly likely to shape the country's politics in the future are Navalny's multimedia messaging style, the political infrastructure he's created, and the wider societal impact of repressive measures used against him.

NAVALNY'S MEDIA APPROACH

For 15 years, Navalny has been speaking to Russians about corruption and bad governance via an array of social media platforms. Over time, he has amassed an impressive following, broadcasting his message to more and more Russians despite his long-standing, enforced absence from traditional media.

Navalny began writing about politics on the popular Russian blogging platform LiveJournal in 2006. He exposed corruption and malfeasance in Russia's natural energy sector by purchasing a small number of shares in oil and gas companies and using his status as a minority shareholder to gain access to financial reports. Navalny's readership and following grew steadily over the next few years, in large part thanks to his knack for conjuring up memorable catchphrases. For example, in the run-up to the December 2011 parliamentary election, Navalny urged people to vote for anyone but the ruling Kremlin party, United Russia. While discussing his proposed strategy during a live radio interview on Echo of Moscow, Navalny called United Russia the party of "crooks and thieves." It was an offhand remark, but the label resonated. After election monitors reported widespread fraud, and evidence of electoral malpractice *Opposite page*: Alexei Navalny at a Moscow rally in 2011. Photo by Dmitry Aleshkovskiy/ Wikimedia Commons spread on social media, Navalny's slogan turned into a rallying cry during months of massive anti-fraud protests that winter. A year later, public opinion polls showed just how far the label had penetrated the public conversation: 51 percent of respondents agreed that it was an appropriate characterization of United Russia.

More recently, Navalny has made YouTube his main media platform. There, with the help of his team at the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), he regularly posts video investigations of Russian politicians, bureaucrats, and oligarchs that have high production value, slick graphics, drone-assisted aerial shots, and acerbic narration. A 2017 investigation documenting Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev's luxurious lifestyle garnered over 42 million views. And the two-hour "Putin's Palace" exposé, which showcased a \$1.3 billion palace on the Black Sea allegedly belonging to Vladimir Putin, was viewed over 110 million times within one month after its release in January 2021.

Navalny's success in spreading his message online is especially significant in light of the nature of Russia's media landscape, which is dominated by state-controlled federal television channels and state-aligned national newspapers. As a recent report from the Harvard Kennedy School observed, censorship is widespread in traditional media and enforced by a variety of actors, including media owners and a network of state regulatory agencies.

Faced with a choice between state-controlled television and a relatively free internet, many Russians are increasingly choosing online sources for news and information. Recent public opinion polling shows a steady overall decline in television consumption and an increase in reliance on the internet and social media for breaking news,¹ a trend that is even more pronounced among young Russians aged 18 to 24.² Online, the informational playing field is not only less censored but also more even in terms of resources, allowing opposition voices to compete with state-sponsored ones. Navalny's YouTube channel boasts almost 6.5 million subscribers, as compared to the state-funded and state-controlled Russia Today, which has 4.1 million subscribers.

The extent of Navalny's online reach has forced authorities to issue scores of official rebuttals to his investigations, a tendency that recently reached the very apex of power. In late January, Putin, who has never publicly uttered Navalny's name, directly responded to claims contained in the "Putin's Palace" video in a teleconference with university students, saying, "Nothing that is listed there as my property belongs to me or my close relatives, and never did."

NAVALNY'S POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Navalny's innovative approach to media, which seeks to bypass traditional roadblocks to speak directly to Russians, mirrors his approach to formal politics. Russia's political system is a kind of "hybrid" regime, meaning that it combines authoritarian practices with democratic institutions. This allows authorities to continue to claim the mantle of democracy while undermining democratic norms—such as free and fair elections—in order to stay in power. While formal democratic values like government responsiveness and representation remain in place within the system, authoritarian practices seek to insulate the politicians as much as possible from the influence of voters. Over the course of his career, Navalny has found ways to turn the surviving democratic elements of Russia's political system against the authorities. Along the way, his organizational efforts have both







Above, top: Alexei Navalny and his wife, Julia Navalnaya, at the Nemtsov Memory March (February 29, 2020). Photo by Gregory Stein/ Alamy Stock Photo.







Above, middle: Navalny speaking at a concert rally (September 6, 2013). Photo by Putnik/ Wikimedia Commons. *Bottom*: Navalny marching on Tverskaya Street (March 26, 2017). Photo by Evgeny Feldman/ Wikimedia Commons. connected citizens more directly to politics in a novel way and attracted scores of people to political activism.

One of Navalny's first efforts to empower citizens was the RosPil.net website, which collected and posted information on violations of government procurement rules that signaled corruption within the state purchasing system. The project both furthered Navalny's existing anti-corruption campaign and also seemed to answer the government's own anti-corruption rhetoric advanced at the time most prominently by Prime Minister Medvedev. The site was effective; several state agencies canceled tenders for purchases that were highlighted by the project hours or days after their publication.

Navalny's subsequent RosYama project (literally, "Russian Hole"), combined the targeting of existing democratic rules with an effort to generate greater citizen engagement. The website automatically sent uploaded pictures of potholes, unmarked speed bumps, and other road hazards to the responsible local authorities—usually the traffic police—who had 37 days to address the problem before it was forwarded to prosecutors. RosYama automated complaint-making, simplifying the process for citizens who now only needed to share a picture and geolocation details, while also taking advantage of existing guarantees of government responsiveness to citizens' complaints enshrined in Russian law.

In 2018, Navalny introduced an initiative called Smart Vote that aimed to harness voter discontent and overcome the authoritarian elements of Russia's electoral system. Due to decades of reforms that whittled down the number of legally allowed political parties and to various forms of electoral malpractice, opposition-minded voters routinely faced a field of equally unappealing candidates at the ballot box. Unable to agree on a single opposition candidate, voters unwittingly split their vote, allowing United Russia candidates to win despite a widespread lack of support. Smart Vote aimed to overcome this problem.

The idea behind Smart Vote is both simple and effective. Voters register on Smart Vote's website and, shortly before election day, the system sends them the name of the person deemed to have the best chance of unseating United Russia's candidate in a particular district. The recommended person need not be an oppositionist—a point of some criticism among activists—but must only be a member of a political party other than United Russia. Smart Vote does not purport to help voters elect the most genuine members of the opposition. Instead, it systematizes and automates Navalny's decade-old call to "vote for anyone but United Russia" by directing voters to alternative candidates. Smart Vote works. A recent peer-reviewed study showed that it helped elect recommended candidates and reduced overall votes for United Russia in the 2018 regional elections.³ In 2019, Smart Vote helped the liberal democratic Yabloko Party regain seats in Moscow's city council for the first time in fifteen years at the expense of United Russia incumbents. The platform's next big campaign will take place during the September 2021 parliamentary election.

While Navalny's various online initiatives help people to exert influence on an authoritarian system designed to strip away their political agency, his network of campaign offices offers an opportunity for education, training, and network building for young activists. Shortly after he announced his plan to participate in the last presidential election, Navalny began to open campaign headquarters across Russia's 85 regions. These local offices (*shtaby* in Russian) helped him collect the

300,000 signatures he needed to register as an independent candidate. Ultimately, the central electoral commission used a legal technicality to bar Navalny from actually appearing on the ballot.

Despite Navalny being out of the race, the regional headquarters stayed open. They worked on anti-corruption investigations, helped organize protests, and supported the electoral campaigns of local oppositionists. After interviewing the staff and managers of these offices, researchers have found that they attract a wide assortment of activists with differing political orientations that are "socialized" into political activity.⁴ The offices help normalize political activity among young people, especially in the regions, which is important in overcoming the longstanding notion among many Russians—born of years of experiencing an unstable and increasingly repressive political system—that participating in politics is both dangerous and futile. Today, with Navalny in prison and most of his closest associates also in detention or under house arrest, the regional offices continue in their activism even in the face of serious pressure from authorities.

REPRESSING ONE POLITICIAN RISKS POLITICIZING A WHOLE SOCIETY

Navalny has shaped Russia's political system in important ways. But it is the regime's treatment of him and his supporters that may ultimately have the biggest impact on Russia's political ecosystem, because suppressing a protest with overwhelming, brutal force risks spreading discontent beyond those who are already directly involved in the opposition movement.

Navalny's return to Russia in January 2021 and immediate arrest led to two weekends of mass protests across the country. Since the rallies were unsanctionedmeaning that they lacked official permission from the authorities-the size of the protests can only be estimated; however, reliable sources have claimed that at least 100,000 people came out to protest on January 23. Importantly, the demonstrations spread across more than 100 cities-previous movements had largely been confined to major urban areas. Riot police set arrest records, detaining nearly 10,000 people across the country. Moscow's jails ran out of space and shipped people to immigration detention centers outside the city, where many had to wait for hours in unheated police vans for their turn to be processed. In addition to arresting thousands, authorities also went to extreme lengths to discourage mass assembly. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, police cordoned off the city centers to both car and pedestrian traffic for hours. Seven stations in the Moscow metro system were shut down completely-a measure not seen since World War II, when the city faced imminent invasion by Nazi forces and authorities contemplated blowing up the Metro to keep it out of German hands.

Scholars have long agreed that protests convey important information, such as the extent of public support for an idea or movement. The same can be said of police responses to protests; militarizing city centers inconveniences the entire urban population and alerts people to the fact that something of note is happening. A recent survey showed that 80 percent of Russians have heard about the protests.⁵ Arresting thousands of people impacts the lives of tens of thousands of their friends and family members, while images of police brutality transmitted via social media can cause moral outrage among the wider public. To see the potential consequences of protest repression, one need only look to Russia's neighbor Belarus, where

Opposite page, top: Navalny at a rally in Yekaterinburg (September 6, 2017). Photo by Copper Kettle/ Wikimedia Commons. *Middle*: Alexei Navalny (May 6, 2013). Photo by Evgeny Feldman/ Wikimedia Commons. *Bottom*: Release of white balloons during a rally on Bolotnaya Square (February 4, 2012). Photo by Bogomolov.PL/ Wikimedia Commons. Alexander Lukashenko's crackdown on election protests in August led to a mushrooming of protests that have lasted for nearly six months.

Repression can produce other ripple effects. Since Navalny's arrest, donations to his Anti-Corruption Foundation have doubled. The *Bell* reported that Russia's largest and most well-known independent news network, Dozhd, gained thousands of monthly and annual paid subscribers after its extensive coverage of the protests and Navalny's court hearings. Mediazona, an independent news outlet focused on legal reporting, saw its monthly donations almost double. OVD-Info, an organization that provides legal help and information to people detained at protests, saw its Telegram and Instagram followings triple between the end of January and the beginning of February. The growth in donations to civil society organizations and increased consumption of independent media is so striking that media has dubbed it "the Navalny effect."

NAVALNY'S POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE MAY BECOME MORE EVIDENT IN THE FUTURE

The outcome of the current confrontation between Navalny and the Kremlin is difficult to predict. In the last five years, a cascade of new laws has greatly increased the already substantial restrictions on Russia's civil society organizations, independent media, activism, freedom of assembly, and judicial independence. Amendments to the constitution adopted during an economic downturn, and following pandemic lockdowns this summer, opened the door for Vladimir Putin to remain in power until 2036. Nevertheless, Russia's political system is not a static behemoth. Alexei Navalny and his supporters have already influenced it in important ways: leading the way in producing online political media, building channels through which ordinary Russians can influence the political system, and spreading their message into increasingly broader circles of Russian society. Crucially, some of the most far-reaching consequences of Navalny's activism—the political change spearheaded by the next generation of Russia's opposition—may only become evident in the years to come.

Editor's note: On February 1, 2021, the Harriman Institute hosted a webinar, "Navalny and the Kremlin: Politics and Protest in Russia." Gorokhovskaia was a participant. You can watch the event on our YouTube channel.

Yana Gorokhovskaia conducts research on Russian civil society. She was a postdoctoral research scholar at the Harriman Institute from 2016 to 2019.







¹https://www.levada.ru/2020/09/28/ggh.

² https://www.levada.ru/2018/09/13/kanaly-informatsii.

³ Mikhail Turchenko and Grigorii Golosov, "Smart enough to make a difference? An empirical test of the efficacy of strategic voting in Russia's authoritarian elections," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 37, no. 1 (2021): 65–79. ⁴ See Jan Matti Dollbaum, Andrey Semenov, and Elena Sirotkina, "A top-down movement with grass-roots effects? Alexei Navalny's electoral campaign," *Social Movement Studies* 17, no. 5 (2018): 618–625; and Jan Matti Dollbaum, "Protest trajectories in electoral authoritarianism: From Russia's 'For Free Elections' movement to Alexei Navalny's presidential campaign," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 36, no. 3 (2020): 192–210. ⁵ https://www.levada.ru/en/2021/02/11/january-protests.

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VS.

THE KLEPTOCRATS?

BY TOM MAYNE AND PETER ZALMAYEV



he presidency of Joe Biden comes at a time when there is a growing awareness of "kleptocracies"countries where a ruling elite embezzles state funds at the expense of the people. The damage caused by this corruption isn't just local; it also has a corrosive effect on democratic countries. Oligarchs from abroad who buy luxury apartments and mansions (which often sit empty) raise property prices past what the average citizen can afford. Corrupt money destabilizes markets when companies are used as cash cows and need to be bailed out-not to mention, democracy itself can be undermined by these forces.

There are several examples of these corrosive effects. To cite just one, for years the Azerbaijani government ran a secret slush fund that funneled millions of dollars to various entities. In turn, these entities would lobby governments across the world in its favor. One recipient of these funds was a mysterious Baku-based organization that hired a Virginia firm to lobby the U.S. government; for more than a decade it orchestrated praise for Azerbaijan and funneled campaign donations to senators and representatives who sat on committees that determine foreign aid budgets. If the problem were just a question of corrupt foreign actors, Western law enforcement agencies could seize assets, refuse visas, or jail these individuals. Yet the problem is more insidious, and key to understanding kleptocracies is the West's role in enabling such theft in the first place.

People tend to think of kleptocracies as geopolitical backwaters-of little importance to the West, save for their oil and gas; however, this fails to take into account the interconnectedness of the political economy of these corrupt nations with the financial economies of so-called liberal democracies. Kleptocrats can only thrive when a team of Western enablers helps them-lawyers, accountants, real estate agents, reputation managers who facilitate the transfer of officials' illgotten gains from their home countries to our shores. Harriman director Alexander Cooley and coauthor John Heathershaw make this point in their 2017 book Dictators without Borders; "dictators operate beyond borders ... and across borders [using] elite and even cosmopolitan networks that have enhanced the international status of these autocrats and safeguarded the privacy of their dealings," they write.

When we examine U.S. anticorruption efforts related to this region, the overwhelming focus has been on Russia, due to the allegations of state-sponsored election meddling and the introduction in 2012 of the Magnitsky Act, which sanctioned those involved in a specific scandal—the imprisonment and resulting death of a lawyer who had been working on a Russian corruption case.

This was expanded in 2018 with the introduction of the Global Magnitsky Act, which allows the U.S. to sanction any foreign actor involved in corruption and human rights abuses anywhere in the world. Yet, before December 2020, only two individuals from the former Soviet Union had been sanctioned: the daughter of the former president of Uzbekistan and a Latvian oligarch. This is surprising, given that countries such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan have consistently poor scores on international corruption rankings. The reasons for this blind spot are debatable, but they are likely to be a combination of a relative lack of geopolitical interest and a preoccupation with countries involved in high-profile human rights abuse cases, such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Above: Opposition supporters hold portrait of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky during a march in memory of murdered Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov in downtown Moscow (February 29, 2020). Photo by Nikolay Vinokurov/Alamy Stock Photo. Change may be on the horizon, however: December 2020 saw Raimbek Matraimov, a former customs official of the Kyrgyz Republic, added to the sanctions list for his involvement in a customs scheme in which at least \$700 million was laundered. The Biden administration can draw a sharper line by adding Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, and Azerbaijani officials who commonly feature in corruption investigations. The first question would be: where to start?

In Azerbaijan, the president's daughters control key telecoms and mining contracts and invest the money in luxury real estate in the UK. In Turkmenistan, the country's eccentric president, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, runs his country like a family business, with dissenters thrown in jail and never heard from again. In Kazakhstan, the country's rich are all political cronies or family members of the country's first president, Nursultan Nazarbayev. His son-in-law, Timur Kulibayev, earned tens of millions of dollars from a secret scheme linked to the construction of a multibillion-dollar gas pipeline between Central Asia and China; and Karim Massimov, who served two terms as prime minister under

Above: IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei (*far left*) escorts H. E. Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan (*center*), during his departure at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna, Austria, alongside Vilmos Cserveny (*far right*), IAEA birector, Office of External Relations and Policy Coordination (September 9, 2004). Photo courtesy of IAEA image bank/ Wikimedia Commons.



Nazarbayev, was alleged to have been in line to receive a €12 million bribe in relation to a deal involving the sale of helicopters to Kazakhstan by Airbus.

Along with sanctioning individuals, the U.S. can do much to improve the oversight of the U.S. banking system to unravel the often-complex offshore structures that corrupt officials use to steal state resources. Last year's **Financial Crimes Enforcement** Network (FinCEN) file leak-of Suspicious Activity Reports filed by banks when there is a suspicion or risk of illegal financial activity-raised several important issues. First, that though filing a report is an obvious good, banks have little incentive to close the account, as they continue to accrue bank fees while escaping legal liability. Second, for such a system to stop financial crime successfully, you need proper enforcement by a well-funded FinCEN that is equipped to analyze the 2.75 million reports it received in 2019. This is however not the case: FinCEN is estimated to have only around 300 staff to investigate literally millions of documents. So the dubious money keeps flowing.

One likely destination for these dubious funds is real estate. The problem is especially acute in the United States where, unlike in the UK and EU, real estate agents are not bound by the same money laundering regulations as bankers. This means that professionals involved in a real estate transaction in the U.S. do not have to perform due diligence on their client, or even establish whether these clients are foreign officials or "politically exposed persons," in antimoney laundering lingo. When Radio Free Europe revealed last year that the now former President Nazarbayev's relatives had invested \$785 million in real estate in six countries, it came as no surprise that the United States was one of them, with Nazarbayev's brother and his brother's ex-wife owning a beachfront apartment in Florida, an eight-bedroom mansion in New Jersey, and three luxury apartments in Manhattan.1

On the plus side, the U.S. government has had some recent success in clamping down on dubious real estate investments: in January 2016 FinCEN introduced Geographic Targeting Orders, requiring the identification of the actual owners of companies used in all-cash purchases of residential real estate over a certain value in key metropolitan areas. After initially being introduced in just two regions, Targeting Orders were extended to cover 12 metropolitan



and Los Angles-high-end markets which attract potentially corrupt buyers.² According to research by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the University of Miami, clients buying homes with cash via shell companies in Miami-Dade decreased by an astonishing 95 percent in the first year after Targeting Orders were introduced.3 It is clear that the U.S. government should make this legislation the norm across the country to prevent criminals and corrupt foreign officials from simply moving to a region not currently covered by it.

areas, including New York, Chicago,

The United States could also follow the UK's lead and introduce Unexplained Wealth Orders, which reverse the burden of proof. Instead of law enforcement officials having to prove criminality—an extremely time-consuming, resource-draining, and often impossible task—foreign officials or those suspected of serious crimes have to prove that their sources of wealth are legitimate. If they are unable to do so, then their properties can be seized through civil recovery proceedings.

There are, however, some limitations to this approach. Recently, UK law enforcement suffered a

major setback when a wealth order related to the family of Kazakhstan's former president Nazarbayev was rejected by the High Court. The case collapsed in part because UK law enforcement focused on trying to tie the properties to Nazarbayev's dead son-in-law instead of on the sources of his daughter's wealth. At the time, she chaired the Kazakh Senate. It is unclear why the UK did this, but one can well imagine the sort of political and diplomatic pressure that may have been in play. This raises an important point: political will is needed to go after kleptocrats, even if it causes some geopolitical tension. Historically, the United States has been one of the only countries not afraid to go after the networks of those in political office, even our so-called allies. In 2003, despite American companies vying for oil and gas contracts in Kazakhstan, the U.S. Department of Justice indicted a Californian businessman, James Giffen, on Foreign Corrupt Practices Act charges.⁴ This caused considerable embarrassment for one of the bribe recipients, President Nazarbayev, who, along with the country's oil minister, was alleged to have received \$84 million in Swiss bank accounts. Focusing enforcement

Above: U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson (*right*) meets with Kazakh Chairman of the State Security Service Karim Masimov at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC (October 10, 2017); photo from Alamy Stock Photo. efforts on former incumbents or lowranking political figures will not bring change—those in power will continue to move money with impunity. In order for any enforcement action to have teeth, it needs to target people with political power.

Yet, if the U.S. or other governments do ultimately end up freezing the money of corrupt officials, they will face another dilemma: How to best repatriate this corrupt money to the kleptocracy without it ending up in the pockets of another-or even the same-corrupt network or official? On two occasions, Switzerland repatriated money to Kazakhstan: first in the James Giffen case mentioned above, and second in another case relating to an unnamed Kazakh official. The first case was more successful-Switzerland and the U.S. set up a foundation managed by international NGOs that benefited impoverished Kazakh families. It had strict provisions governing fund disbursement. The second case did not work out so well: the money was sent back with fewer safeguards and mainly benefited GONGOs, pro-government NGOs with close ties to Nazarbayev's political party.

There will be no easy solutions in this global fight against kleptocracies—we often see money launderers adapt to new legislation and to the closing of loopholes. But it is a battle that needs to be fought, and President Biden seems to understand this. In 2020, he announced that he would issue a presidential policy directive that "establishes combating corruption as a core national security interest and democratic responsibility." As Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and General David Petraeus observed in 2019: "the fight against corruption is more than a legal and moral issue; it has become a strategic one-and a battleground in a great power competition." Yet many a law has been introduced only to be rarely enforced. With a pandemic-induced economic downturn ahead, one can envisage not only how government spending might be diverted elsewhere but also how, despite good intentions, the U.S. could end up backsliding on anti-corruption reforms. A floundering economy will leave the country desperate for capital inflows, whatever their provenance. But growing evidence indicates that succumbing to such temptations would be a grave mistake: the threat presented by foreign kleptocrats is well-concealed but poses a danger to the foundations of democracy as we know it.

Tom Mayne is a research fellow at the University of Exeter, where he is investigating money laundering through real estate. For 12 years he was responsible for Eurasian investigations at Global Witness, an anticorruption NGO that campaigns to end the exploitation of natural resources.

Peter Zalmayev is director of the Eurasia Democracy Initiative, a nonprofit organization. Currently, he divides his time between New York and Kyiv, where he takes an active part in local civil society, hosts a weekly TV program, and provides frequent commentary to print and broadcast media on international and local political developments. He received his M.I.A. from Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs in 2008, along with a certificate from the Harriman Institute.

Editor's note:

Mayne participated in the Harriman Institute's 2019 "New Directions in Anti-Kleptocracy Forum." You can watch the video on our website. In recent years, the Harriman Institute has become a leading institution for post-Soviet kleptocracyrelated research, events, courses, and resources.

 ¹ https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-nazarbayev-family-wealth/31013097.html.
² https://www.fincen.gov/news/news-releases /fincen-reissues-real-estate-geographic-targeting-orders-12-metropolitan-areas-1.
³ https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business /real-estate-news/article213797269.html.
⁴ The Harriman Institute conducted an interview with Giffen for its Oral History Project.
The interview will be available soon on oralhistory.columbia.edu.

Building Community in 2020: The Harriman Institute's Student Mentorship Program

By Masha Udensiva-Brenner



Pictured, top: Dora Chomiak; *bottom*: Ben Cohen.

ora Chomiak met Ben Cohen (MARS-REERS, 2022) in ultimate 2020 fashion—in a Zoom breakout room at a mixer for incoming students and Harriman Institute National Advisory Council members. The students and council members were divided into Zoom rooms and reshuffled every few minutes. "It was kind of like speed dating," says Chomiak, who has been on the Advisory Council since 2017. "Exactly the cocktail-party-length conversation you want to have."

Chomiak is president of Razom, a nonprofit organization that supports development, entrepreneurship, and media initiatives in Ukraine, which she describes as "a nonprofit with a startup attitude." When Cohen entered her breakout room, she was immediately struck by how interested he was in Ukraine and by how much he knew about current developments there.

Cohen was struck by Chomiak, too. He has been fascinated with Ukraine since studying there in a Russianlanguage intensive course as an undergraduate in 2013 and then on a Fulbright Fellowship to study historical memory in 2016. As he learned about Chomiak's involvement in Razom, he was thinking, "this is someone I need to get to know right away." After the mixer, he emailed Chomiak and she responded. It was summer, coronavirus numbers in New York City were low, and the two decided to connect in person. Chomiak rode her bicycle from the West Village and met Cohen in Riverside Park. They had a great time discussing Ukraine and soon after were paired in the Harriman Institute's mentorship program.

The two-year-old program, still in its pilot stages, connects students with practitioners in their fields of interest. Chomiak, who has participated from the beginning and had already mentored two students before Cohen, says that the program not only helps students meet new people and learn more about their chosen field; it has also helped her gain new perspectives on her own experiences. "When you're in conversation with someone who is in a different place in their career, it makes you rethink where you are and where you've been," she says. "I get a lot out of it."

Cohen will be entering his second year at the Institute in the fall. He didn't know about the program when he applied to the Institute and says he feels grateful for the guidance it provides—recently, he met Chomiak for coffee to discuss his thesis. "Regional studies is a broad field, and it can be really overwhelming to figure out what to do next," he says. "Having a mentor, and knowing there is someone there to help me, really alleviates some of that pressure."

Chomiak sees the program as a valuable tool for Harriman students, alumni, and other practitioners in the field. "My hope is that it builds a global community of people who are knowledgeable and passionate about that part of the world," she says.

The Tale *of* Three Stalins

ate one night in June 2010, a team of Georgian government officials and municipal workers snuck into the central square in Gori, the town of Joseph Stalin's birthplace, and toppled a 20-foot bronze statue of Stalin (or "Koba," as he was known in Georgian) that had adorned the town since the 1950s. They had to

sneak in because, in spite of Stalin's notorious brutality and the intense de-Sovietization campaign pushed by the pro-Western leader Mikhail Saakashvili, many Georgians still admired Stalin—he was, after all, their compatriot. The story of a local boy turned powerful global leader had become legendized, particularly among older Georgians. Tinatin Japaridze at the Stalin Museum in Gori on Joseph Stalin's personal railway carriage, which Stalin rode to the Potsdam Conference in 1945. All photos in the article are by Zaqaria Chelidze and taken in April 2021.



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Tinatin Japaridze *in* Profile

BY MASHA UDENSIVA-BRENNER

The toppling of the statue—and its resurrection under a new government only a few years later—is the perfect illustration of the complexity (and controversy) that still surrounds Stalin. And this complexity has fascinated Tinatin Japaridze (MARS-REERS, 2019) ever since she wrote a paper about it for Alexander Cooley's Legacies of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union course in 2016—a paper that Cooley encouraged her to continue expanding after the course ended, and which she had kept researching throughout the program, visiting Georgia and conducting interviews with the help of various grants from the Institute. Now, five years later, that paper has grown into a book manuscript, forthcoming with Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group next fall.

The manuscript, "The Tale of Three Stalins," examines Stalin's increasing popularity in Georgia and Russia and analyzes how his image, and the nostalgia it evokes, is "manipulated and exploited" for political gain, says Japaridze. It argues that, in addition to the evil dictator and the Georgian comrade, there is a third portrayal of Stalin—the one projected by the youngest former Soviet: "the generation that saw the tail end of the Soviet Union," says Japaridze.

Born in Georgia in the mid-1980s, and raised in Russia, Japaridze belongs to the post-Soviet generation she describes, and she incorporates some of her experiences into the manuscript. "It's a book about Stalin's legacies and Stalin's broader legacy as a political figure, but seen through the very personal prism of a memoir," she says.

The project did not start out this way. Rowman & Littlefield publishes academic work, and Japaridze, who is not an academic, fell into the publishing contract by chance. At the time, just a few months after she'd graduated from the Harriman Institute, she was managing a political campaign for an assembly candidate in New York-she wanted to understand the inner workings of U.S. politics from the inside so she could have a better grasp on U.S.-Russia relations. But she also continued to be active in the world of Slavic and Eurasian studies and had submitted an abstract to present a paper on the role of Georgian Orthodox Church in Georgian politics to the 2019 convention for the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. The publishing house



Japaridze at the Stalin Museum in Gori, inside the Jughashvili family's wood-and-mudbrick house where Soso Jughashvili lived for the first four years of his life.

noticed the abstract in the conference program and, thinking that Japaridze was an academic, approached her to submit a book proposal on the topic.

As fate would have it, Japaridze missed the conference because of her political work and never ended up writing the proposed paper. When the publishing house asked whether she had any other ideas, she sent them the paper she'd written for Professor Cooley's Legacies course and explained that she had been conducting research on the topic for years. Rowman & Littlefield's acquisitions editors loved the idea and asked for a book proposal. Japaridze agreed, without realizing how time-consuming writing a book proposal would be. It was only after she sent it off, and Rowman & Littlefield was about to take her on, that the academic publishing house realized she did not have a doctorate and she realized they had assumed she did. They had never published someone without a Ph.D. before, but they told her that if she wrote a draft, they would consider it. By then, Japaridze had invested too much time in the project to say no.

Meanwhile, she was working overtime for the New York City Census 2020, overseeing strategy to mobilize New Yorkers to complete the census at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Right after the census, she began to work on New York's COVID-19 response as the press secretary for NYC Health + Hospitals. On the side, she was also volunteering for an organization called Girl Security, mentoring girls and female-identifying high school students who wanted to pursue careers in international security. It was an intense period. She would wake up before sunrise and write until she started work, around 8:00 a.m. "I treated it like a workout regimen," she says.

Japaridze is no stranger to hard work. In her previous career, she was an acclaimed singer and songwriter. She toured internationally, penned songs with composers who worked behind artists like Barbra Streisand and Celine Dion, and cowrote Iceland's 2009 Eurovision Song Contest entry (which won Silver). And, when she started her bachelor's at Columbia University's School of General Studies in 2014, she was in the process of staging a successful Off-Broadway show, *Matryoshka: The Musical*, that she'd cowritten and produced with the now late composer and lyricist Timothy Graphenreed.

The work ethic she had developed earlier in life was invaluable during the book writing process. After six months



of intense labor, Japaridze was able to complete a rough draft. Though it was largely an academic work, she had included one small personal section about visiting the Stalin Museum in Gori. The publishers loved it and wanted her to incorporate more personal elements. That's how the book, which recently passed through the peer review process, became a hybrid that will be marketed to both academic and general audiences.

Japaridze is excited. As she completes the peer review edits for her book in progress, she is already working on her second manuscript-a nonfiction narrative about her great-aunt, the wife of the head of the Cultural Propaganda Department of the Central Committee in the Georgian SSR and editor-in-chief of the newspaper the Communist, who was murdered by the Stalin regime. She received a grant for the project from the State Department Title VIII program on Russia and Eurasia and has been conducting research in Georgia this year. She is also a fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy's Eurasia Democratic Security Network on Georgia-related security issues and is directing policy and strategy for the Critical Mass, a female veteran-owned, Virginiabased organization focusing on global security, where she's finishing a report on disinformation and public health.

It's a lot to manage, but, Japaridze has learned to prioritize. "I never bite off more than I can chew," she says. "And it helps to truly love and be grateful for what I do. There's a great sense of accomplishment at the end of each day."

Left: Japaridze's reflection in the glass frame of an oil painting, "Stalin and a Girl."

FEATURED

Black and white photos, top to bottom: Padma Desai, Leningrad, June 1964; Desai with her sister Savita and brother-in-law Parmanand, Leningrad, 1964; Desai with Parmanand and Savita in the countryside.



y first chance to visit the USSR came surprisingly soon, in 1964. When I returned

to India after Harvard, my sister Savita had looked after me in Delhi like a surrogate mother and with the full consent of her husband, Parmanand Desai, who had joined the Foreign Service after earning his master's degree from Columbia University (which, by a strange turn of fate that marks our lives, would turn out eventually to be where I myself would settle after 1980). She was now living in Odesa, where Parmanand had been posted as the Indian consul to oversee the growing trade between India and the Soviet Union, blessed by the political interests shared by Jawaharlal Nehru and Nikita Khrushchev.

Knowing of my deep interest in the Soviet Union, and also seeking my company, Savita invited me to Odesa. It was an invitation that I immediately accepted and which would define a range of experiences that gave me an The Potemkin Steps in Odesa, Ukraine (Photo by Dean Conger/Corbis via Getty Images).

Discovering the USSR Odesa, Moscow, Leningrad

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insight into the USSR of which few of my fellow Soviet specialists could boast.

I noticed at the outset that three ships arrived in the Odesa port, with cargo from India, and three Soviet ships left with cargo for India. The Indian cargo consisted mainly of consumer goods such as razor blades and soap, which were in short supply in the USSR, and which paid for the Soviet cargo that consisted mainly of machinery for the heavy industry that India needed as it turned to building its own steel mills and capital goods sector.

The Indian consulate in Odesa was set up because the Indian government needed to have an official representative in Odesa to expedite the handling of this trade. The only other foreign presence in Odesa at the time was the Cuban consulate. The Indian consulate was located in a quiet, leafy street. Spacious and recently painted, it sparkled in the delicate summer light and appeared inviting to passersby. But appearances can be misleading. A Soviet guard posted in a booth at the entrance kept watch so that no Soviet citizen would enter the consulate without prior clearance. Nor could Savita and Parmanand drop in on local citizens without a similar clearance.

The only local contacts that they enjoyed were confined to official dinners, which Savita gave frequently, assisted by Milina, the office secretary; Olga, the maid; and Keshav, an Indian youngster brought from

the Himalayan valley who cooked, cleaned, and ran errands. Parmanand was a diplomat who carried himself with quiet dignity, a quality which he had acquired from having spent 10 formative years as a teenager in the ashrams with Mahatma Gandhi. His stepbrother, Mahadev Desai, had been the Mahatma's personal secretary. Parmanand's unruffled manner and empathetic temperament was a product of his interest in yoga, long before Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned it into a worldwide preoccupation. My husband, Jagdish Bhagwati, who adored Parmanand, used to joke that Parmanand was protected by his diplomatic status from being sued by his pupils if they wound up tangled into yogic poses

Opposite page: The docks of Odesa Harbor (Photo by Dean Conger/ Corbis via Getty Images). (asanas) from which they could not extricate themselves.

By contrast, Savita was in a state of permanent revolution, as it were. She had boundless energy, a lively tongue, and shrewd powers of observation. She preferred to confront problems rather than shy away from resolving them. She was convinced that the consulate was bugged with listening devices; but she did not hesitate to denounce freely the Soviet communist system, almost hoping that the commissars bugging the consulate would hear her frank condemnation of the system. Amusingly, Savita was also ready to indulge fearlessly Olga, the maid, in her secretive religious observances, which were frowned upon by the godless Soviet regime. Olga even got a bottle of vodka in celebration of her grandson's communion, which had been performed quietly by an Orthodox priest.

But despite her disapproval of the Soviet system, Savita did not fail to carry out her role as the consul's wife. Although she was a vegetarian—the Gujarat state from which we come is largely vegetarian, and my husband says that he had not even seen an egg until he left for Cambridge, in England, at the age of nineteen—she followed the Indian foreign ministry's rules and served nonvegetarian food at their official dinners. So, she entertained the official Soviet guests with delicacies like beef tenderloin, pork sausages, ox tongue, and calf sweetbreads. Savita doubtless felt that she was annihilating the animal kingdom of the tundra! The dinners





Black and white photos, from left: Padma Desai with Savita, Leningrad, 1964; Desai, Leningrad, 1964; Desai with her nephews, photographed in front of the Consulate of India; Desai, Leningrad, 1964. were popular; and the invitees, when they could not come, often sent "substitute" guests in their place, as was the custom.

Another contact with Soviet reality came from Keshav, our handyman, who had picked up a smattering of both Russian and Ukrainian. He came back with stories that deepened our appreciation of the country. He shopped and stood in the queues that were ubiquitous, commiserating with the exasperated and exhausted citizens who stood in the long lines, at the end of which they often encountered empty shelves. He also chatted endlessly with the Soviet guard at the entrance, leading the



Opposite page, top: The docks of Odesa Harbor; photo by Dean Conger/Corbis via Getty Images. *Opposite page, bottom*: View of the Odesa Opera and Ballet Theater, Odesa, Ukraine, circa 1960; photo by Archive Photos/Getty Images.

Right: The Moscow metro, 1960s; photo by Chronicle/Alamy Stock Photo.



Soviet authorities to complain to Parmanand: Keshav had to be restrained. But Keshav was a free spirit, much like Savita. Ultimately, the Soviet authorities addressed the issue by changing the guard frequently.

Keshav also brought home to us the fact that the people were traditionally addicted to vodka, a cultural fact that would affect attempts at economic reform. This addiction is so widespread that an old proverb says: if you are looking for a good son-inlaw, you do not look for someone who does not drink; you just ask how he behaves when he is drunk. Typically, therefore, when Keshav went out for long walks in the morning, he would turn down offers of vodka from strangers with "ya uzhe gotov," meaning: "I am already loaded!"

Keshav went into hysterics when he went to the beach and saw men plunging into the cold water, with their bulging midriffs and with no embarrassment at their nakedness. Indian men are brought up to avoid nudity in the presence of other men. In fact, this cultural inhibition was brought amusingly home to me in Odesa when, one day, a couple of Indian students arrived at the consulate, with their towels. Savita told me that they were there to take a bath. I thought this was strange until I discovered that they could not bring themselves to wash in a public bathhouse. There, they were expected to stand naked in a line at the entrance to the bathhouse. Embarrassed, they had tried to cover themselves with their towels, only to find the Soviets in the line shouting, "*Snimai, snimai*!" (Take off your towels!), which frightened them so that they fled from the scene!

But there were also more prosaic activities that the consulate oversaw, giving me yet further glimpses of life in the Soviet Union. For instance, the consulate was where marriages between Soviets and foreigners were sometimes consecrated. Thus, I was once sitting on the floor, chopping vegetables, when I heard a man ask me in an American accent: "Do you speak English?" He wanted to marry a Soviet woman and sought Parmanand's help in persuading the Soviet authorities to let him do so. Then again, an Indian engineer, a South Indian Brahmin no less, had fallen in love with a local woman: the consulate was happy to help, and Savita and I were drafted to

dress the bride in a sari and to tie the knots in a civil ceremony. When the bride saw a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of India, she asked who that was; Savita could not help remarking to me wryly and illogically in Gujarati that a woman who could not recognize Mahatma Gandhi did not deserve to marry an Indian!

FEATURED

But the most dramatic episode came our way when Savita declared: "Today is Friday, and we have an American guest for lunch." The guest was Molly, who taught English to students at a language institute. Her husband, Maurice, was an engineer who worked in the Odesa shipyard. Both had American passports. But both were starry-eyed admirers of Communist regimes and had been on their way to China when their Soviet friends had contacted them in Warsaw and urged them to settle instead in the Soviet Union. This they had done, with their young daughter and a parrot, in Odesa.

But while it took the distinguished intellectuals and authors of *The God That Failed* (1949)* years to suffer disillusionment with Communism and to abandon it, Molly and Maurice

^{*} Subtitled "A Confession," the collection of essays by Louis Fischer, André Gide, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, and Richard Wright, edited by Richard Crossman (Harper & Brothers, 1949).

had arrived at their disillusionment within months of arriving in Odesa. Maurice had been crazed by the continual propaganda spewed out on the radio about the glories of the Soviet economy under Communism and had often pulled out the electric wiring in rage. They were ready to leave, but they had to get an exit visa, which was denied to them. Molly and Maurice were as good as prisoners in Odesa. Molly put up with the situation, largely thanks to her visit every Friday to the Indian consulate, where she made friends with Savita, who shared her distaste for Soviet Communism.

The lucky break for Molly and Maurice came when a reporter from the International Herald Tribune arrived in Odesa. Savita was excited: she knew that the Soviets disliked adverse publicity in the Western media. If the sordid plight of Molly and Maurice was brought out in the Tribune, exit visas for them would soon follow. Savita's guess was correct. Meanwhile, Savita, I, and her two teenage sons, Manoj and Sukumar, who were visiting their parents because of the school holidays in India, soon set out for a trip on the Black Sea (a memorable trip that I describe below). By the time we returned some weeks later, Molly and Maurice had been liberated, just as Savita had predicted. Their plight had been detailed in a Tribune story by the visiting reporter: Savita had informed Molly about the reporter's hotel. The exit visas predictably came soon after. with the ritual condemnation that Molly and Maurice were being expelled because they were Chinese spies!

Adding a light touch to their departure from Odesa was the sale by Molly of her furniture and lineneven some of her clothes and a sewing machine (highly prized by Soviets who did not have access to one). Someone wanted her parrot, the popugai. Molly was resolute: "No, my popugai is going back to a free country." Many years later, when Jagdish and I joined Columbia University in 1980, I tried to locate Molly and Maurice in New York, where they had lived prior to their Soviet misadventure. Alas, there was no trace of them. The land of the free had swallowed them up, leaving me only with my memories of them.

The Black Sea trip from which we had returned to find that Molly and Maurice had vanished from Odesa was memorable and provided me instead with insights into recent Soviet history. We had sailed on the Soviet ship *Abkhaziya*. As a result, the crew was aware of our diplomatic status and obliged us with commentary on the highlights of what we were witnessing. Thus, at Sochi and Sevastopol we were escorted to witness the eternal flames commemorating the Ukrainians who had died during the German invasion.

We were told that virtually every family in Ukraine had lost a member in the war that the Germans had waged against the USSR: Ukraine had suffered alongside Russia. I was also aware that the great writer Nikolai Gogol was of Ukrainian origin, with both Russians and Ukrainians claiming him as their own. Years later, when President Putin annexed Crimea, my memory went back to my days in Odesa.

Our Soviet ship had also taken us to Batumi, in the Georgian Republic, where we climbed up the shore to a botanical garden and waved from there at the handsome Georgian men as we enjoyed watching the foliage.

When we returned to Odesa, our joy at coming home was marred by the news, announced on the ship's loudspeakers, that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, an iconic figure to Indians, had passed away. The ship's captain came to offer us his condolences. I should add that the close interaction between us and the Soviet crew during the Black Sea trip, which was novel and not permissible when we were in the consulate and were denied free interaction with Soviet citizens, made us acutely aware of some of the cultural differences, especially concerning food.

At the consulate, Savita had offered nonvegetarian food to her Soviet guests. But she and Parmanand themselves had remained strict vegetarians. On the Black Sea voyage, they realized much to their chagrin, even horror, that the Soviet



Left: Paintings in The Hermitage, Leningrad, 1960s. *Right*: Palace Square, Leningrad, 1960s. Both photos by Chronicle/Alamy Stock Photo.

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conception of vegetarian food was not the same as the Indian. Savita had requested vegetarian food for herself, Parmanand, and the two children. The captain obliged. But then we realized that the cooks had no conception of vegetarian food. They simply removed the meat from the cooked dish.

That would not do in India, where vegetarian food was cooked without any contact with meat, fowl, or fish. The Indian concept of vegetarian food is informed by the Hindu notion of pollution, a concept foreign to the Soviet practice. This difference was brought home to Savita again when we were in Istanbul, where Savita searched for hours for vegetarian food, only to be obliged by a waiter who had simply taken the offending meat out of the dish, leading Savita to cry in horror when she detected some remnant of the meat in her "vegetarian" dish!

When we returned to Odesa from our Black Sea trip, the two boys left for India as their school holidays were over. Savita, ever restless, next arranged for us to travel by car to Kyiv and then by air to Moscow and on to Leningrad. We would then see the Soviet Union far more intimately than during the Black Sea trip.

The journey by car from Odesa to Kyiv was the first lap of our marathon trip. Already, it had paid dividends, revealing to us the deplorable conditions in which Ukraine was mired under Communist rule. Barring a few trucks that we passed, our car was the only vehicle speeding along the highway to Kyiv. There was also just one gas station, where we stopped because Savita wanted hot water to make her tea. We were wearing saris, and we were literally mobbed by a group of local women that materialized from nowhere. They wanted to know everything about us: did young girls also wear saris; did your mother get married when she was a child; are you married; if so, where are your husbands; what does the red dot on your forehead mean; what do you earn as a professor in India; and so forth. Their curiosity, stifled by the Communist regime, was unbridled with us.

When we finally reached Moscow, our Soviet hosts took us to Lenin's Mausoleum, where we were brought to the head of the long line to see Lenin's embalmed body—a ritual honoring the founder of the Soviet Union. Once again, we became the object of curiosity to Russian women who crowded around us when we took time to rest on a bench. They were fascinated by Savita when she took out her knitting and began weaving the woolen thread with her knitting needles. They had never seen raw wool and had no idea how to knit a garment such as a woolen sweater with knitting needles: it was magical for them! Pretty soon, as always in the Soviet Union, a policeman appeared and told them to leave the distinguished visitors alone, a demand that was summarily rejected by the women, with our approbation and indulgence.

Later, in the evening, we were treated, as suited our diplomatic status, to a ballet. We were pleasantly surprised, however, to discover that the ballet we were to see was based on the classical Sanskrit play Shakuntala by the poet Kalidasa, one of India's literary gems from the fifth century and often considered India's greatest literary achievement. The play had enthralled Goethe, Herder, Schiller, and Friedrich von Schlegel. The Russian ballet unfolded on the stage with Indian touches of music and dance rather than classical Russian choreography. During the intermission, I walked up to the stage with a bouquet of flowers, which I presented to the lead ballerina, at which the audience got to their feet with thunderous applause. We realized that music and ballet were two Russian achievements that even the Soviet state could not control or eliminate, though literature remained captive to Soviet propaganda and the Gulag faced those who strayed from the Communist path.

From Moscow, we drove to Leningrad, a city whose beauty dominates the Neva River. We were aware of this city's tragic history during the Second World War, when it was subjected to a horrific blockade by the Nazi troops. Artistic treasures were to be found everywhere in this historic city. And, as honored diplomats, we got to see the treasures in the famous Hermitage Museum, which was housed in six historic buildings on the Palace Embankment. Unfortunately, we were unable to visit the Kirov Ballet and Opera, now the Mariinsky Theatre, as it was not in season.

From Leningrad, we returned to Odesa, where Parmanand's consular duties related principally to his management of the Indian ships that brought Indian goods to Odesa. As it happened, an Indian ship had docked at Odesa just when we had returned. The captain was gracious and invited us on board. Parmanand was the point man for solving, expeditiously, several headaches that Soviet procedures posed for the Indian ships. Delays, no matter what the reason, led to fines. Thus, the Soviets insisted on fumigating the Indian ships, even though Parmanand pointed out that they had been fumigated in India in the presence of Soviet representatives. The Indian shipping company often sent telegrams to the consulate, with uniformed Soviet personnel waking up Parmanand in the middle of the night, despite his instructions that such communications be delivered to him only in the morning.

The fumigation process was hilarious, if annoying. It went beyond spraying the ship and involved an examination of the fresh produce on board. The captain told us that a group of women officers had boarded the ship, saying "we are the doctors who will 'inject' the potatoes you have on your ship." When Parmanand tried to board the ship, he was confronted by a young guard posted alongside the dock. Amusingly, he addressed Parmanand with the familiar "*dyadya*," meaning uncle," instead of the formal *gospodin*, meaning "sir." Savita was amused and told me in Gujarati: the poor boy; they picked him up in a village and dressed him in a uniform and put him here as a guard. We surrendered our passports to him.

The tales of woes by the captain of the Indian ship brought home to us the ways in which the Soviet system worked (or rather, did not work). The workers at the docks, ever slow, followed the Soviet adage: "We pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us." With no liability for damages when a crate full of vegetables, tea, and dry fruit was dropped from the ship—intentionally, so that the crate broke open—the workers would crowd around the crate and walk away with whatever they could grab.

As for Savita, the arrival of the Indian ship was like a gift from the Indian gods! She quietly went up to the ship and collected her own bagful of green chilies and coriander, garlic, and ginger—luxuries in Odesa (and even in the United States at the time, before the huge influx of immigrants from India would make them available in ordinary grocery stores). Savita smiled and walked past the guard with a friendly *do svidaniya*, as we picked up our passports and headed home to the consulate.

Savita longed for feminine company to chat with and relieve her isolation in Odesa. But she had to settle for what she could get. And this was largely circumscribed to playing hostess to the many Indian students, all men, who were in Odesa to train as engineers and technicians in Soviet institutes. Their experience was generally positive, though most of them would rather have gone to the United States, their destination of choice. On rare occasions women had been chosen to study in the Soviet Union. A prominent example would be Amina Mohamed of Kenya, who studied in Kyiv and would later become a distinguished trade expert and then a leading contender for the vacant post of director general of the World Trade Organization.

Savita would quiz the students to see if they had experienced any racial discrimination but found nothing. Evidently the racial discrimination did not extend to Indians; African students, we found, were another matter. We were told-through the student grapevine, not reports in the state-controlled media-that the African students at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow had been sufficiently upset to set out on an impromptu march to protest the disappearance of an African student. We were told that several African students had joined the procession, assuming that the protest was officially sanctioned, only to find that the march was illegal and therefore was disbanded.



Schoolchildren seen here in Red Square, Moscow, following a visit to Lenin's tomb,1960s; photo by Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy Stock Photo.

The Indian students were the source of much of our information in a Soviet system that allowed no respite from draconian restrictions on free speech. In particular, these students, who had picked up Russian, were a source for us of the jokes that the people told among themselves about the Communist regime and even about some of the leaders. But the students also brought us the tragic anecdotes that they heard, which described the wanton cruelty of the Communist regime and of Stalin in particular. One especially stayed in my mind for years, haunting me for the tragedy that had befallen the land of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Apparently, after having met a delegation of visitors, Stalin discovered that his pipe was missing. So, he sent Beria, the KGB chief, in pursuit of the delegation. On

returning, Beria told Stalin that he had sent half the delegation to the gallows and the other half to the Gulag, only to be told by Stalin that the missing pipe was in his desk drawer.

Stalin's cruelty was the subject of dark humor, and the terrified populations coped with it as best they could. So arbitrary were the arrests and resulting disappearances that a perceptive observer of the terror remarked that, when the KGB struck a household, the neighbors coped with it by convincing themselves that the victims were indeed guilty; for if they were not, what could prevent themselves, innocent as they were, from being swept into the terror and extinction?

Odesa had also impressed on me that in the czarist days the city was widely regarded as the "Pearl of the Black Sea" and "Little Paris." Now, however, under Communism, it seemed to be in permanent mourning. The French and Italian cafes of its cultural heyday, which I imagined had been frequented by Pushkin and Tolstoy, had disappeared. Indeed, when Mark Twain passed through Odesa in 1869, he wrote: "We saw only America. There was not one thing to remind us that we were in Russia."

Padma Desai, Gladys and Roland Harriman Professor Emerita of Comparative Economic Systems, is a leading scholar of the Russian economy. She is the author of over a dozen books, including Conversations on Russia: Reform from Yeltsin to Putin, which was the Financial Times Pick of the Year in 2007, and From Financial Crisis to Global Recovery (2011), which Paul Krugman hailed as the "best book yet on the financial crisis." Harriman Magazine published an excerpt from Desai's memoir, Breaking Out: An Indian Woman's American Journey, in its Winter 2014 issue.

Editor's note:

Due to an editorial error in the original print version of this issue, Professor Desai's contribution appeared under the title "Discovering Russia: Odessa." This text is an excerpt from a longer work titled "Discovering Russia," in which her account of the Ukrainian city represents an interlude in the story of her study of the Russian language and culture and the Soviet economy and of her travel in the USSR. The text of the print version also contains passages that can cause confusion concerning Odesa's relationship to Russia, and other inconsistencies. The Harriman Institute did not intend to imply that Odesa is anything but a Ukrainian city, which was, in the 1960s, located in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. We apologize for this error in the original print version and have reissued the magazine with an updated article.

THE DAUGHTER OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

FROM IN MEMORY OF MEMORY (A ROMANCE)

BY MARIA STEPANOVA TRANSLATED BY SASHA DUGDALE et's suppose for a moment that we are dealing with a love story.

Let's suppose it has a main character.

This character has been thinking of writing a book about her family since the age of ten. And not just about her mother and father, but her grandparents and greatgrandparents whom she hardly knew, but knew they existed.

She promises herself she will write this book, but keeps putting it off, because in order to write such a book she needs to grow up, and to know more.

The years pass and she doesn't grow up. She knows

hardly anything, and she's even forgotten what she knew to begin with.

Sometimes she even startles herself with her unrelenting desire to say something, anything, about these barely seen people who withdrew to the shadowy side of history and settled there.

She feels as if it is her duty to write about them. But why is it a duty? And to whom does she owe this duty, when those people chose to stay in the shadows?

She thinks of herself as a product of the family, the imperfect output – but actually she is the one in charge. Her family are dependent on her charity as the storyteller. How she tells it is how it will be. They are her hostages.

She feels frightened: she doesn't know what to take from the sack of stories and names, or whether she can trust herself, her desire to reveal some things and hide others.

By Marina Stepanova, translated by Sasha Dugdale, from IN MEMORY OF MEMORY, copyright © 2018 by Maria Stepanova. Translation copyright © 2021 by Sasha Dugdale. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing, Corp. This family photograph appears at the end of *In Memory of Memory*. Courtesy of Maria Stepanova. She is deceiving herself, pretending her obsession is a duty to her family, her mother's hopes, her grandmother's letters. This is all about her and not about them.

Others might call this an infatuation, but she can't see herself through other peoples' eyes.

The character does as she wishes, but she

comforts herself by thinking that she has no other choice.

If she's asked how she came to the idea of writing a book, she immediately tells one of her family's stories. If she's asked what it's all for, she tells another one.

She can't seem to be able to, or doesn't want to speak in the first person. Although when she refers to herself in the third person it horrifies her.

This character is playing a double role: trying to behave just as her people have always behaved, and disappear into the shadows. But the author can't disappear into the shadows — she can't get away from the fact that this book is about her. There's an old joke about two Jews. One says to the other, "You say you're going to Kovno, and that means you want me to think you're going to Lemburg. But I happen to know that you really are going to Kovno. So – why are you trying to trick me?"

*

In Autumn 1991 my parents suddenly began to think about emigrating. I didn't think they should. They were only just in their fifties, and the Soviet regime had finally fallen — they'd waited so long for this moment. It seemed to me that now was the time to be in Russia. Magazines were openly printing the poems and prose we had known only from typewritten copies passed around. Colorful things were being sold right on the street, nothing like the boring stuff we'd had before. With my first ever wage I bought blue eyeshadow, patterned tights, and lacy knickers as red as the Soviet flag. My parents wanted me to go with them, but I held my peace and hoped they'd change their minds.

This lasted a good while, longer than anyone could have predicted. Permission to move to Germany came only four years later, and even then I couldn't believe our inseparable life together would come to an end. But they were in a rush and wanted me to decide. There was nowhere else I wanted to be. Apart from anything, this new life fascinated me, it stood half-open, constantly inviting me in. I simply couldn't see what was so clear to my parents: they had lived through enough history. They wanted to get out.

A process began, and it was somewhat like a divorce: they left, I stayed, everyone knew what was happening, no one spoke about it. The guts of the apartment had been ripped out, papers and objects were divided up, the Faulkner and Pushkin *Letters* disappeared, the boxes of books stood ready-packed and waiting to be dispatched.

LET'S SUPPOSE FOR A MOMENT THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH A LOVE STORY. LET'S SUPPOSE IT HAS A MAIN CHARACTER.

My mother spent more time thinking about the family archive than anything else. Under the Soviet rules still in place, all old objects, whether they belonged to the family or not, could only be taken out of Russia if you had a certificate stating they had no value. The country had sold priceless paintings from the Hermitage, but it wanted to make sure that other people's property didn't escape its grasp. Grandmother's cups and rings were sent away to be certified, along with the old postcards and the photographs I loved so much. Their old order was disrupted; my mother, not trusting my memory, wrote down names on the backs of photographs and placed them in piles. She stuck the pictures she'd selected into an album with a once-fashionable Japanese patterned cover. On the first page a crooked line of writing read: For Sarra. To remember me by, Mitya.

Now *everything* was in this album: everyone she remembered by name, everyone she felt compelled to take with her on this freshly provisioned ark.



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SHE STUCK THE PICTURES SHE'D SELECTED INTO AN ALBUM WITH A ONCE-FASHIONABLE JAPANESE PATTERNED COVER.

Grandmother's school friends rubbed shoulders with mustachioed men and the pink-cheeked children of the London aunt, who, it's said, became close to the exiled Alexander Kerensky. Lyolya and Betya shared the same page, I was there in my school photographs, and Grandfather Nikolai sat glumly on a hill. Our dogs, Karikha and Lina, and then me again, grown up, aged twenty, stuck on one of the last pages, in grand company, squeezed between two newspaper portraits of the dissident physicist Andrei Sakharov and the priest Alexander Men. We were all listed, even Sakharov, in my father's hand: "Friends, Relatives, Family Members from 1880 to 1991."

They left on the train. It was during the hot month of April in 1995, and the weather was celebratory: the sky above Belorussky Station, formerly Brest Station, in Moscow, was a giddy blue. As the train's tail lamp zigzagged into the distance, we who were left behind turned and wandered back along the platform. It was Sunday, quiet, and I was just considering whether I should be crying when a man holding a can of beer glanced at me from out of a train door and said: "Kill the yids and save Russia." It's all too neat, but that is how it happened.

Later, I went to Germany to visit them and stayed a month, not convinced I could build a new life there or elsewhere. In the huge hostel in Nuremberg where ethnic Germans from Russia occupied ten of the twelve floors, the top two floors had been allocated to Jews, and they were half-empty. I spent two days there, all on my own like a Queen in my enormous empty room with ten bunk beds fixed in two lines like a sleeping car. No one else was put in the room with me. I was given food tokens to buy food with, a little like green postage stamps (Germans were given orange tokens). When I first arrived I made myself a cup of tea and sat down to watch the European night: in the distance, surrounded by black trees, I could see the



twinkling lights of an amusement park and the shape of a stadium. I could hear the sound of someone playing the guitar from the floor beneath.

My parents came back to Moscow once, six months before my mother had her operation. The coronary artery bypass she needed was not an operation undertaken very frequently in the 1990s, but we were sure that they'd be good at that sort of thing in Germany. Anyway there wasn't much choice, the congenital heart defect first diagnosed in wartime Yalutorovsk had deteriorated and now needed urgent treatment. I was twenty-three, and I felt quite grown up. We'd lived with my mother's condition for as long as I could remember. At the age of ten I used to wake up and stand in the hall outside her bedroom to check that she was still breathing. But the sun always rose and the morning came, and all was fine. I slowly got used to it and never asked any questions as if I was afraid of upsetting the already delicate balance. We never properly spoke about the operation itself, perhaps just the insignificant details of her hospital care. So it was not to us, but to her friend that she said wearily: "What's to be done? I don't have any other option."

Although I tried very hard to ignore all the signs that this was her last visit to Moscow, I wondered at her unwillingness to enjoy old memories. It was a carefree summer, and Moscow smelt of dust and dried up ponds. I was sure she would want to visit our old home and sit on a bench outside on the boulevard, or go and have a look at the school where her mother, she and I had studied. I'd also planned a long conversation about "the olden days" just as we'd always had in my childhood, and I was going to make notes this time, so not a drop of precious information would be lost. After all I was going to write this book about our family. But my mother resisted the idea of a nostalgic stroll, at first with her usual gentleness, and then she simply refused point blank: I'm not interested. She

GRANDMOTHER'S SCHOOL FRIENDS RUBBED SHOULDERS WITH MUSTACHIOED MEN AND THE PINK-CHEEKED CHILDREN OF THE LONDON AUNT. started cleaning the apartment instead and immediately threw away some old bowls with chipped edges we'd had since the seventies. I would never have attempted such blasphemy and I looked at her with a mixture of shock and excitement. The apartment was cleaned and polished until it shone. Her school friends and relations visited, but no one spoke the truth aloud: that they were all saying goodbye. And then my parents left.

I remembered all of this many years later when I tried to read the old family correspondence to my father. He sat and listened for ten minutes with an increasingly downcast expression, and then he said that was enough, everything he needed to remember was in his head anyway. Now I understand him almost too well: over the last few months my state of mind has likened looking at photos to reading an obituary. All of us, both the living and the dead, seemed equally to belong to the past, and the only possible caption: "This too will pass." My father's old and new photographs in his Würzburg apartment were the only things I could look at without feeling shaken: the empty leaf-scattered riverbank with a black boat, a yellow field without a single human figure, or a meadow of a thousand forget-me-nots, no human touch, no selectiveness, just purity and emptiness. None of this was painful to look at, and for the first time in my life I preferred landscape to portrait photography. The Japanese album with the grandparents lay in a drawer somewhere and neither of us wanted to let it out.

One spring I had the pleasure of spending a few weeks in Queen's College, Oxford, where my book and I were received with open arms, as if my occupation were reasonable and respectable, rather than some embarrassing obsession, a sticky flypaper spotted with quivering, half-dead associations. My college lodgings had white walls lined with bookshelves, but I had nothing to put on them. In the dining halls and libraries memory had a different meaning, one that had so far been alien to me. It was no longer the endpoint of a wearisome hike, but the natural result of *duration*: life generated memory, secreted it, and it deepened with time, disturbing no one and causing no one anxiety.

I'd come to Oxford to work, but I found it hard to get down to writing because life there was tranquil and it made me feel stupefied, as if I'd been placed back into a cradle that had never in fact existed. Every morning I touched my bare feet to the old wooden floorboards with the same feeling of gratitude. The gardens were vessels of trembling greenery, and the nightingale rattled its empty tin above them; even the way the delicious rain dispensed itself on the perfect facades and stone follies filled me with tender delight. I sat at my desk every day with my pile of pages and stared straight ahead.

The road outside the college was called the High, and it loomed very large in my life. The right-hand side of the window was turned toward the interior of the college, and its cool shade. The left-hand side faced the High that in sun or rain drew my gaze like a television screen; it stubbornly refused to disappear into the horizon as a road should and instead tilted upward like a ship's deck, higher and higher, so the people and buses seemed to become more visible as they moved away from me and no figure, however tiny, ever quite disappeared. Against all probability they seemed to move closer and become more distinct — even the mosquito cyclist, the slant line of his wheels — and this trick of perspective preoccupied me, halted my already intermittent progress.

The endlessly fascinating life of the street moved in intricate patterns like a puppet theater, to the hourly ringing of bells. The long-distance coaches thundered down the street, eclipsing the light, and at the bus stop the drivers changed places; people appeared from a distance and moved closer, while remaining always in view, and sometimes deliberately standing out, like the long-legged lanky girl who came out into the middle of the road, performing a circus-style leap. In short, my idleness could not be justified, but like a character from a Jane Austen novel I sat for hours at the window watching passersby who did not fade into oblivion, but became larger and more recognizable with every passing day. I was continually amazed that I could look out of the window and count the buses at the top of the street where it twisted away, and I became obsessed by the way people, with their tiny jackets and even tinier sneakers, remained forever in focus. It was like watching the mechanism of a clock that had moving figures to mark the hours. A large and glossy black car turned the corner as if this was the deepest past, when

SQUARES OF GLINTING PHOTOGRAPHIC PAPER FLOATED IN RIBBED TRAYS IN THE RED LIGHT OF THE BATHROOM, WHICH SERVED AS MY FATHER'S DARKROOM.

even the smallest detail gained the aura of a witness. Only there was nothing to witness, it grew warmer and lilac shadows brushed the opposite pavement.

Then one day Sasha took me to the Ashmolean Museum, to see a picture by Piero di Cosimo called "The Forest Fire." The long horizontal picture resembled a multiplex wide screen showing a disaster movie. It occupied a prime position in the museum, but in the shop there wasn't a single postcard or coaster with an image from the painting. Perhaps that's understandable, as the painting is far from any notion of comfort. It was painted in the early sixteenth century and is supposed to make reference to Lucretius's poem De Rerum Natura and contemporary controversies over Heraclitus's doctrines. If that is the case, then Piero agreed with Heraclitus, who said fire coming on would "discern and catch up with all things." Something similar is depicted on the wood panels of the painting: Doomsday on the scale of a single island, overgrown with bushes and trees and inhabited by all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

The painting resembles a firework going off, as if a carnival were taking place in the forest: flashes of red, yellow, and white streak the panels to an inaudible and deafening crack. The fire is not only the center of the picture, but the *omphalos* of their universe, and from it the dozens of stunned beasts canter, crawl, and fly in dotted lines, not knowing what has happened, or who they are now. My sense of it is that this is an image of the Big Bang, although the painter wasn't yet aware of such a name.

Animals, like the newly created galaxies, scatter from a central point — you can't look away from it, it's like the open door of a stove, or the mouth of a volcano. Like lava they have not yet ceased their flowing, to the extent that some of them have human faces. There were doubtless



also people in this world, at least there were *before* the fire. They have a wooden well on an outcrop. And there are a few people, just sketched lines, like frescoes in Pompeii. They are definitely humanoid, although alongside the beasts with their warm corporeality, they look like shadows, like the outlines of humans on a wall lit by an explosion. There is one survivor, a cowherd, clearly drawn, standing half-turned toward us, as bewildered as his lumbering cattle, ready to lower his head and charge with them. His face is not visible, just the stick, the implement he uses because he knows, like Heraclitus, that "beasts are driven by blows."

The beasts cross the painting in pairs, like the inhabitants of the ark, and the fact that some are partly human causes neither distress nor affront. The human faces grew on the beasts as they ran – on the domestic pig and the deer – and they are notable for their expression of gentle thoughtfulness. It's said that the artist added the faces at a late stage, when the picture was nearly finished: one theory is that they are caricatures done at the patron's request. Yet there is not a shadow of comedy about these wreathed hybrids, they look more like students of philosophy who have gathered to stroll under the oaks. Still, even this I can't quite comprehend - a transformation is taking place, but its logic is hard to grasp: is man becoming animal before our eyes, or is animal becoming man, growing a human face, just as it might grow horns or wings? Did Daphne become a laurel, or did the bear become its human hunter?

It would seem that in a postapocalyptic world the beasts *are* the remaining humans; and all hope resides in these animate creatures. There they are, the family of bears bowing fearfully before the lion's fury; the unbending golden eagle; the melancholic stork – all the carriers of distinct qualities, ready to emerge as egos, as "I"s. In contrast we, the humans, are barely distinct, we

THEN ONE DAY SASHA TOOK ME TO THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, TO SEE A PICTURE BY PIERO DI COSIMO CALLED "THE FOREST FIRE."



seem no more than raw material, or rough drafts for a future that might or might not come to pass. The rest were saved and they inherited the earth, and walked upon it, live and blocklike like the figures in paintings by Pirosmani or Henri Rousseau.

It's surprising that the focus of the picture falls not on the predator, the King of Beasts, but on the harmless ruminant. A bull with the powerful brow of a thinker stands dead center, aligned with the tree of knowledge, which divides the picture into two equal parts, and the furnace mouth of the fire. His expression of tortured reflection makes him look a little like the sinner in Michelangelo's "The Last Judgment," mouth opened in incomprehension, furrowed face. But here the creature is without original sin and it has a choice: the bull is free to decide whether or not it becomes a human.

In the dark days of 1937 the German-Jewish art historian Erwin Panofsky described Piero di Cosimo's pictures as the "emotional atavisms" of a "primitive who happened to live in a period of sophisticated civilization." Rather than a civilized sense of nostalgia, Piero is in the grip of a desperate longing for the disappeared past. In my view this interpretation stems from the age-old desire to see the artist as "other," as a transported creature, an Indigenous person at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, a Martian on a foreign planet. It might be worth arguing but he is right in one important way: the state of mind he describes is also a sort of metamorphosis, the result of a terrible disaster that has thrown the world out of joint.

In "The Forest Fire" we see the moment of exposure, the flash, when light burns out the image and replaces it with the blinding white of nonexistence. The point at which everything shifts into its final shape is beyond memory and impossible to convey. It's the moment we first open our eyes.

Piero di Cosimo's picture is for me a close equivalent of Courbet's "L'origine du monde" — its exact rhythm, even the way it shocks and spellbinds, is the same. This equivalence is due in part to the directness of the message, the documentary scale of the narrative of the formation of the universe, how it casts off new detail, forcing life to roll ever onward down the eternally angled slope. Is catastrophe then simply the starting point of genesis? The kiln for firing small clay figures? The crucible for transmutation? This is how creation happens in a post-Promethean world, and this is how the fall from heaven must have looked in an age of aerial warfare and chemical weapons – the flaming sword of the forest fire, and partridges swooping in the skies, triangular as jet fighters.

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In one of the exercise books where my mother wrote down all my childish phrases and conversations, right at the top of a lined page filled with notes about summer and dandelions and cows, she has written: *My mother died today*. *And we didn't know*.

I remember that day well. I can see in my mind's eye the morning light in an unfamiliar building; a huge dog coming out from under the table, which was too high for me; the strange window frames; and then later that day, a vast stretch of water, as far as the edge of the world, and bobbing and flickering in it, my mother's head, for my mother had decided to swim out into this waste of water, and had near vanished. I was certain she was gone — a new and strange life had just begun and I was completely alone. I didn't even cry, I stood on the bank of the river Oka, where it meets the Volga, and there was no one to hear me. When the adults swam back, laughing, something had changed irrevocably.

I don't really think life can begin with a catastrophe, especially not one that happened a long time before us. *Misfortune*, sweeping low and fierce overhead like an Orthodox banner, crackling with burning twigs and tongues of white flame — maybe it's simply a condition of our existence, the maternal womb from which we emerge screaming with pain. Maybe it isn't even worthy of the name Misfortune. When we got home that August and went out to our dacha, grandmother's bouquets of dried flowers decorated the walls, and her bag still held her purse and season ticket; it smelt of phlox; and our life was already arranged for years to come, like a song

THIS BOOK IS COMING TO AN END. EVERYTHING I WASN'T ABLE TO SAVE IS SCATTERING IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

with a repeating refrain. Grandmother Lyolya was only fifty-eight, she died of a heart attack before we could come home to her. And now my mother's life had been given its shape, its model for imitation. If up till then she had just been wandering along, following her heart, now she had an impossible standard to meet. She never spoke it aloud, but she seemed to want to become someone different, for herself, for us: she wanted to become Lyolya, with her easy hospitality, her radiating joy, her cakes and hugs. She couldn't do it, no one could.

The story of our home, as I heard it, began not a hundred years ago, but in August 1974. Grandmother reluctantly let my mother and me go off on holiday, away from summer at the dacha with its curtains, patterned with red and green apples. When we returned it was to an empty house, and we were alone. My mother blamed herself, and I sat by her. I remembered the terrifying story of the little girl who was slow to bring water to her sick mother and by the time she got to her mother, it was too late. Birds flew overhead, and one of them was her mother, and it sang: *too late too late I won't come back*. Somehow this story seemed to be about us, although no one had precisely said this. I just knew it, and I wept over the untouched water like an accomplice.

All my later knowledge was in light of this story: my mother spoke, and I fearfully tried to remember everything although I still forgot. I ran away, like the child in the story, to play, to grow up and live a little. I think that must be how she felt too, a young woman, younger than I am now, with her exercise book of recipes written out in pencil, and her dependents: a two-year-old daughter and two old people who no longer recognized themselves or each other. Later she began wearing Sarra's wedding ring; on the inside it had the name Misha, which was my father's name as well. Nothing ever comes to an end.

Squares of glinting photographic paper floated in ribbed trays in the red light of the bathroom, which served as my father's darkroom. I was allowed to watch as shapes appeared: the complete blankness was suddenly roiled with lines and angles and they slowly became a coherent whole. I loved the contact sheets best of all, covered in miniature images that could potentially be enlarged to any size, just like me at that age. The tiny portraits of my parents fitted in my pocket and made the evenings spent at nursery school more bearable. I remember my parents realizing I'd torn the picture of my father out of his passport so I could keep it with me. My own first camera was a little plastic Soviet 35mm, a Smena-8, with dials to change the aperture and shutter speed. I was given it as a present when I was ten, and I immediately set about saving and preserving: the graying pines, the sleepers at the railway halt, someone my parents knew, water running over the stones — all industriously rescued from oblivion. The images, lifted from the fixing tray with tongs, dried on a line, but didn't regain their former vitality. I soon gave it up, but I didn't learn my lesson.

This book is coming to an end. Everything I wasn't able to save is scattering in all directions, like the dumpy birds in "The Forest Fire." I have no one to tell that Abram Ginzburg's wife was called Rosa, I'll never write about Sarra's joke, in the middle of the war, that mold was good because it produced penicillin. Or how grandfather Lyonya demanded that Solzhenitsyn's dissident masterpiece The Gulag Archipelago (despite strenuous efforts to get hold of it) be removed from the apartment after only one night as it would "kill us all." Not even how all the women in the Moscow communal apartment would gather in the kitchen with tubs and towels to chatter through the weekly ritual of a pedicure. Or even that a squirrel lived on the balcony of a Moscow apartment seventy years ago. The squirrel had a wheel and it would run round and round, watched by a little girl.

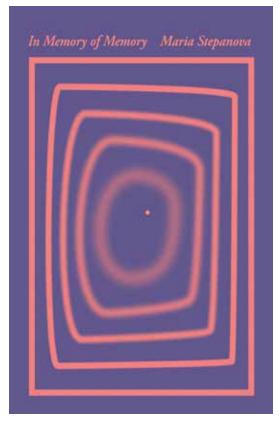
In the 1890s the family in Pochinky sat down at the table for dinner every evening and waited silently for their meal. The soup was brought in. Amid the silence Father took the lid off the tureen and a cloud of fragrant steam rose. He would sniff the soup and then make a pronouncement: "I doubt it's any good" — only after this the soup could be served. The terrifying *paterfamilias* always drank down all of his soup and asked for more.

Before Mikhailovna became Lyolya's nanny, she was married to a soldier. In the drawers of the archive where everything has settled like sediment, there are three photographs and an icon. The icon shows the Virgin Mary appearing to Russian troops somewhere in the Galician marshes. The three photographs told the story of Mikhailovna's life: here she is as a young woman standing head-to-head with a dour and innately weary man in a worker's smock. And here she is holding a pitifully skinny little baby. The last picture shows the man in the cap and thick greatcoat of a soldier. Her husband was killed, the baby died; her entire earthly estate consisted of the paper icon, depicting a Pre-Raphaelitish Madonna, and once framed by a heavy silver surround that my greatgrandfather gave her. When life got hard again after the revolution, she secretly took the silver surround off the icon, sold it, and brought the money back to the household she stayed with for the rest of her life. In all later photographs Mikhailovna is in her own iconsurround of pale gray, her cone-shaped black headscarf covering everything except her face. All that is left of her are a few cheap religious images and a Psalter that she read every evening.

Aunt Galya made me a present of a colorful Indian dress not long before her death, saying that she'd only worn it once, "for half an hour, when I had a dog come in here." I knew of her secret and unrequited love for her neighbor who walked his dog in the yard and who died without ever guessing why she used to come out every evening to see him.

Sometimes it seems like it is only possible to love the past if you know it is definitely never going to return. If I had expected a small box of secrets to be hidden at my journey's end, something like one of Joseph Cornell's boxes, then I would have been disappointed. Those places where the people of my family walked, sat, kissed, went down to the river's edge, or jumped onto streetcars, the towns where they were known by face and name — none of them revealed themselves to me. The green and indifferent battlefield was overgrown with grass. Like a computer game I hadn't mastered, all the prompts lead to the wrong gates, the secret doors were just blank walls, and nobody remembered anything. And this is for the best: the poet Alexander Blok tells us that no one comes back. The poet Mikhail Gronas replies that "living comes of oblivion."

The parcel had been packed with all possible care, the box was lined with cigarette paper and each of the items was wrapped in the same thin, opaque stuff. I freed each one from its swaddling, and they lay on the dining table in a line so you could see all their dents, all their cracks, the earth ingrained in the china, the absences where feet, legs, hands should have been. Most of them still had heads, and some even had their little socks, the only item of toilet they were permitted. But on the whole they were naked and white, as if they had just been born, with all their dents and flaws. Frozen Charlottes, representatives of the population of survivors; they seem like family to me – and the less I can say about them, the closer they come.



In Memory of Memory (A Romance) Maria Stepanova; Sasha Dugdale (Translator) New Directions (2021) ISBN-10 : 0811228835, ISBN-13 : 978-0811228831

About the Author

While readying for publication Maria Stepanova's "The Daughter of a Photographer," the final chapter of her *In Memory of Memory (A Romance)*, it was announced that the English translation by poet Sasha Dugdale had been shortlisted for the 2021 International Booker Prize. Stepanova is only the third Russian writer to be so honored.

Maria Stepanova (b. 1972, Moscow) has long played a central role in post-Soviet culture as leading poet of her generation, essayist, and editor-in-chief of Colta.ru, the enormously influential online publication. The prestigious Andrei Belyi Prize and Joseph Brodsky Fellowship are among her many awards. *In Memory of Memory* solidified her reputation with the Bolshaya Kniga Award and the NOS Literary Prize, not to mention the dozens of translations and reviews that have appeared in the international press.

Stepanova's documentary novel opens with the death of her aunt and the task of sifting through what has been left behind—photographs, postcards, diaries, letters—as she attempts to reconstruct the story of how an ordinary Jewish family survived the events of the last century. As the narrator writes in this chapter, she has been "thinking of writing a book about her family since the age of ten." In the process she takes part in a dialogue with such writers as Roland Barthes, W. G. Sebald, Susan Sontag, and Osip Mandelstam.

Twenty twenty-one is the Year of Stepanova with the publication of two other translations: *War of the Beasts and the Animals* (Bloodaxe Books), her first book of poetry in English translation, also translated by the superb Dugdale; and *The Voice Over: Poems and Essays*, edited by Irina Shevelenko (Columbia University Press).

Stepanova will be in residence this fall in Columbia's Department of Slavic Languages, where she will teach the course Between History and Story: (Post) Memory.

In Memoriam



Stephen Cohen at the Harriman Institute Oral History panel, October 2018.

Stephen F. Cohen (1938-2020)

Eminent historian, distinguished alumnus of the Russian Institute ('69), and member of the Harriman Institute's National Advisory Council, Stephen Cohen died at his home on Manhattan's Upper West Side, on September 18, 2020. He was 81.

Cohen came to Columbia University and the Russian Institute for his Ph.D., after earning his master's degree in Russian studies at Indiana University. In his interview for the Harriman Institute's Oral History Project, Cohen recalls his time at the Russian Institute: But about those years—and remember, I entered all this with the mind and eyes, despite having been to Russia and being semiworldly, of a young person who'd grown up in Kentucky. . . . I don't know exactly how Columbia gathered these people, but the happenstance of this array of scholars, personalities, and autobiographies was just perfect for me. Boy, I really was lucky. . . . And then of course there were the events. . . . They were bringing in for seminars, and as visiting scholars, authors of the books I was reading.

Reflecting on his time at the Russian Institute for the Institute's 50th anniversary book, Cohen writes: "I recall, above all, and value even more as the years pass, the wonderfully eclectic collection of senior scholars gathered at the Institute in the '60s—all of them devoted in their own ways to understanding and teaching about Russia, none of them instilling any orthodoxy in the students, and few of them afflicted by the cold-war passions of the time. I know of no academic institution that could have been a better place to study, then or now."

Professor emeritus of politics at Princeton University and professor emeritus of Russian studies and history at New York University, Cohen was the author or editor of 10 influential books, a frequent contributor to the *Nation*, and a CBS-TV commentator. His first book, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography*, *1888–1938*, the first full-scale biography of the Soviet leader, had its beginnings as Cohen's Columbia dissertation; the book was published by Knopf in 1973 and named a finalist for the National Book Award. The Russian translation of Cohen's *Bukharin*, published by a small independent press in Ann Arbor, ended up in President Mikhail Gorbachev's hands, which led to an invitation to speak on Red Square on May Day 1989. Inclined to turn down the invitation, Cohen was urged by his Russian friends to accept, as he recounts in the oral history interview: "This is your *sud'ba*,' your fate, your destiny."

By this point Gorbachev had befriended Cohen and Katrina vanden Heuvel, his wife and intellectual partner, now currently editorial director of the Nation. Tellingly vanden Heuvel recounts "meeting" Cohen through his essay "Bolshevism and Stalinism" (1977) and his Bukharin biography, which, she writes, "challeng[ed] prevailing interpretations of Soviet history, and was to me, and many, a model of how biography should be written: engaged and sympathetically critical." In that same personal reminiscence, vanden Heuvel recalls the years the couple shared in Moscow beginning in 1980; the friendship with Bukharin's widow, Anna Larina, "matriarch of [Cohen's] second family"; and that their "marriage coincided with perestroika" (see vanden Heuvel's "Moi Stiv (My Steve)" on the Nation's website). Vanden Heuvel's essay ends with the letter of condolence on the death of her husband from Mikhail Gorbachey, in which he writes: "Steve was a brilliant historian and a man of democratic convictions. He loved Russia, the Russian intelligentsia, and believed in our country's future. I always considered Steve and you my true friends."

Other important books include *Rethinking* the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917 (Oxford University Press, 1985); Sovieticus: American Perceptions and Soviet Realities (Norton, 1985); Voices of Glasnost: Interviews with Gorbachev's Reformers, written together with vanden Heuvel (Norton, 1989); Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia (Norton, 2000); and The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag after Stalin (2010). His most recent book, War with Russia? From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate, was published in 2019.

Cohen was the recipient of numerous fellowships and honors: John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (two); ACLS Grant (three); Rockefeller Foundation Humanitarian Fellowship; NEH Fellowship; Newspaper Guild Page One Award for Column Writing; Olive Branch Award for Magazine Writing; Indiana University Annual Distinguished Alumni Award, and the Harriman Institute Alumnus of the Year Award.

To say that Cohen's impact on the field was "significant" would be an understatement he was an extraordinarily influential Russian/Soviet historian, a thoughtful and enthusiastic mentor to graduate students, and a generous supporter of the Russian studies field across the academy—including at both Indiana University and Columbia as well as at the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. His passion for improving U.S.-Russian understanding and striving to improve the quality of debate and analysis in the United States has inspired countless observers.





Top: Cohen with Catharine Nepomnyashchy at the Russian Samovar, where he received the Institute's distinguished alumni award (2002); *bottom*: with his wife, Katrina vanden Heuvel, at the Russian Samovar.



Jamey Gambrell with her daughter, Callie.

Jamey Gambrell (1954–2020) By Michael Greenberg and Bela Shayevich

Jamey Gambrell, the unrivaled Russian translator of our time, died of cancer in Manhattan on February 15, 2020. She had only recently returned to New York City, after spending several years in Austin, Texas. Known particularly for her translations of Vladimir Sorokin and Tatyana Tolstaya, Gambrell could certainly make "Russian writing sing, in English," as the *New York Times* obituary put it (March 10, 2020). Gambrell received her M.A. in Russian literature from the Columbia Slavic Department, and in 2002–3 she was a visiting scholar at the Harriman Institute.

On February 19, 2021, the Harriman Institute hosted a Zoom memorial tribute to Gambrell with speakers chosen to address different aspects and periods of her career. The texts by Michael Greenberg and Bela Shayevich that follow are presented here as a partial snapshot of the event, "Remembering Jamey Gambrell."

A video recording of the event is available on the Harriman website.

MICHAEL GREENBERG

Jamey and I met in 1968 as students at Elisabeth Irwin High School on Charlton Street in downtown Manhattan. Elisabeth Irwin was still a lefty "red diaper" school in those days, for the children of McCarthyera blacklisted professionals, though neither Jamey's nor my parents were especially radical or politically active. She was a sixth-generation Texan-her family had settled in the Hill Country in the 1850s-which, along with her modest, reflective nature, made her exotic to us New Yorkers. We spent those years romping around Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side like minor outlaws, friends for life.

What really connected us was our love of literature, which, in adolescence, carried the power of a religious passion. Jamey's gift for language, her drive to communicate, to *connect*, were remarkable. She had an intuitive understanding of the very structure of language, how far words and meaning could be pushed without the foundation that supports their coherence falling apart. She was simultaneously precise and experimental, rigorous and imaginatively unbound, which gave her translations their special quality. More than once she held me mesmerized explaining the various meanings of this or that Russian expression. They were glimmers of another culture, another way of thinking that she had mastered.

Jamey had been a student and friend of Joseph Brodsky, and the immersive delight she took in translating his poems for the one-man show *Brodsky/Baryshnikov* that ran in 2016 at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York was infectious. I went to one of the performances, Jamey sitting uneasily beside me editing her translations even as they were being projected onstage.

Robert Silvers adored her for these very qualities. He lit up at the sight of her and was always trying to coax her into writing more frequently for the *Review*. The pieces that she did write, from inside those chaotic post-Soviet days, as the oligarchs emerged and Russian society reconfigured, were brilliant.

The warm, sometimes desperate company of Russian émigrés and artists suited her, especially the nights of marathon conversation. In the 1970s and '80s, at her cavernous loft on Great Jones Street, anyone was likely to show up, in unpredictable states of ecstasy or torment, knowing that Jamey would let them in. Her place was a refuge. Russian artists and writers newly arrived in New York mixed with New Yorkers from the downtown art scene, producing a fruitful (and unquantifiable) pollination of sensibilities and ideas. Her passing marks the loss of an irrecoverable consciousness and world.

Michael Greenberg, a frequent contributor to the New York Review of Books, is the author of Hurry Down Sunshine and Beg, Borrow, Steal: A Writer's Life.

BELA SHAYEVICH

I still can't believe that Jamey taught at Columbia the year I was there, one of the most brilliant strokes of luck I've been struck with. I already knew her work because when I decided to become a translator, I too had wanted to translate the most exciting and appealing contemporary Russian author, Vladimir Sorokin, until I saw how she'd done it. Jamey was a real translator: fluent in multiple languages and literatures, a brilliant poetic interpreter, fully immersedpossessed by the living idiom, living in it, moving through that other world with her tongue. And a wild wit in English, clever and garrulous-nothing more devilish or laborious than translating wordplay steeped in allusion and radical changes in voice, and yet: Jamey could play and play. Everyone knows that this is why she was the best: at her best, she was fluid and light, floating the dense and obtuse right over the fence where it lands with a thud: Russian literature. Swift, smooth, and musical.

She said a translation is the reality where the original is the dream; that when you're translating, in a dream state, things make sense in the dream logic—the logic of the original—but then, you render them into reality. I disagree. To me, her translations contain both reality and a dream.

Jamey held office hours at her apartment among her rare books and rugs and quilts and paintings, a samovar, seven-toed cats I remember as pink, and Callie belting out a *High School Musical* song from behind the closed door of her room. I was of course intimidated by all the ways Jamey was my unreachable idol and role model: all the culture she had acquired and represented with her head-spinning, melodious Russian;





Top: Gambrell with sign "Bolshevik Party on Trial!"; *bottom*: Gambrell with Vladimir Sorokin (August 1991). her staggering roster of writers; her stature in two worlds I was so interested in entering-both art and literary-and then, of course, how she was: a strong, unapologetically independent, fiercely loving mother, who adored Callie and did everything possible for her. We would hash out my every false word, errant comma, and flopping sentence, of which there were many-or rather, which Jamey, with her characteristic generosity, dedication, and meticulousness, did not let me get away with even once. Working with her as my editor did not inspire confidence in my work, per se-but for all that, there we were in the kitchen, leaning on the stove, sharing her Marlboro Lights, ashing them into the dishes, and laughing.

As a teacher, although I would call her my mentor, although never to her face, Jamey did not wear a mask. It wasn't just her excellence and expertise and support that she taught with. Jamey shared something with me that unfairly made me feel better about how I was and am: she could be frazzled, exhausted, breathless. She'd disappear. But she never hid these things. In fact, she always stood up for her right to work at her own pace, to her own satisfaction; a vivid example of self-respect. She would not cave to external demands to do otherwise. At a critical moment in my learning, Jamey showed me that you can be excellent while also struggling-it wasn't one or the other; moreover, that you could do it with grace and immense generosity, counting just what was important, discounting the mess.

Ultimately, "success" was impossible, she assured me. I needed another job (she repeated); anything earned through translation was mostly a matter of luck; it had nothing to do with the work or what it required. The work, especially the most tedious and invisible parts, which are never paid for or taken into account by those setting our deadlines, was simply a given. In fact, for lack of other rewards, doing your best, forcing yourself through the most thankless parts, was all that we had. Slogging to your own finish line was the win.

If all she had been was an emblem of greatness-conventional achievement attained through conventional means-I may have never found courage to keep getting back up from my continuous failures. Jamey taught me how to live with myself. She was especially supportive to me when I was going through the immense task of completing the Alexievich translation for two publishers simultaneously on a crazy deadline right after she'd won the prize. A pep talk from then: "Fuck them all. Just do your best job. Your heart is in the right place. And I'm sure your words will be, too." (Look: she puts heart over skill, like skill is an afterthought.) Me, about her, from around then, too: "She is someone that I feel 100 percent safe with, who can teach me without breaking anything in me that doesn't need to be broken."

I didn't get to see Jamey before she died. Her illness was sudden. I didn't know she was sick; I hadn't seen her in two years. But the last time I saw her, funnily enough, I watched her receive the Thornton Wilder Prize for Translation and get inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Meryl Streep was there, and I think that they even handed Jamey the check for \$20,000 right on stage. She was radiant-that spring, she was also translating Brodsky poems for Mikhail Baryshnikov to dance to, attending rehearsals in order to calibrate meter and words to his movements, the kind of thing that makes a translator marvel at the doors opened by her peculiar key. And the prize was like that as well-that's why it was so funny. She'd never expected it ("I almost deleted the email; I thought it was spam")-or maybe it's just funny now, to have such a "resplendent" last image when we are so sad she is gone.

Bela Shayevich received the 2017 TA First Translation Prize for her translation of Svetlana Alexievich's Second-Hand Time. She is adjunct assistant professor of writing in the Faculty of the Arts at Columbia University.

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