Herstory Revisionism

Writings and views on women warriors

• National heroines and the “herstorical turn”
• Gendered remembrance of political upheavals
• Narratives of norm-breaking women

also in this issue

UKRAINIAN WORRIES / AVANT-GARDE ART / ORIENTAL “OTHER” / NEGOTIATING NORD STREAM / NUCLEAR LEGACY
History, herstory and other stories...  

In this issue of Baltic Worlds, we present a selection of diary entries from 1917 in Russia, the year of the Revolution. It is a fascinating read, with depictions of a tumultuous, epochal event, recorded by men and women known and unknown, revolutionaries and their detractors; with everything from observations of growing bread lines to realizations that life had changed forever. Valentina Chebotareva, senior nurse at Empress Alexandra Feodorovna Palace Hospital, on the news of the Tsar’s abdication:

One signature and the way of life we had for centuries has been destroyed. Everybody is silent. People are seized with horror, Russia... without the tsar. There is total silence in the hospital.

Everybody is shocked and depressed.

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Gender studies have become a highly politicised research area, and as a result, a target of repression...}

In this issue of Baltic Worlds we present a section on Herstory which goes one step further in highlighting how the absence of depictions of women in history is exploited, and filled with depictions of a tsarist tsar and his tsarina, senior nurse at Empress Alexandra Feodorovna Palace Hospital, on the news of the Tsar’s abdication:

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I met Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk in Stockholm to talk about the phenomenon of anti-genderism, as they have recently written together on this puzzling yet so urgent topic.1 At CBEES Annual conference “Competing Futures: From Rupture to Re-articulation” 2017, Agnieszka Graff gave a thought-provoking keynote lecture on anti-genderism as a mobilizing force which incorporates such diverse ideas as anti-colonialism, anti-feminism, homophobia, Catholic conservatism, EU-skepticism, general populism, islamophobia and an aversion to refugees. In this amalgam, “gender” is used to connect the cultural with the economic, or as a “symbolic glue” which does not just attack women or feminism but functions as a tool to challenge liberal democracy.3 In her speech, Agnieszka Graff also highlighted the need to combine redistribution and recognition politics with gender (especially the inclusion of politics of care), in order to counter illiberal and conservative movements. Elżbieta Korolczuk examined the topic from the other side in her presentation of her recent research on parental movements, in which she sees anti-genderism from the point of view of the grassroots — showing the very attractiveness and political efficacy of the anti-gender discourse. Elżbieta Korolczuk also directed an appeal to us: as academics, researchers and feminists, need to show a genuine interest in people’s life-worlds and their concerns, and to start looking for what we have in common with those who are attracted to conservative and anti-feminist ideas. Thus, both Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk strive to understand the phenomenon which is spreading in Poland — and also elsewhere, in Hungary, Russia, France, Germany, Sweden, and the US.

In the last few years, something has happened to the notion of gender in the Polish public debate. In 2013, for instance, the Polish bishop Tadeusz Pieronek stated, “Gender ideology is worse than communism and Nazism put together.” In 2013 “gender” also became the word of the year in Poland. In 2014, conservative politicians formed a parliamentary group called “Stop Gender Ideology”. Around the same time, a parental group called “Save the Little Children” (Ratujmy Maluchy!) argued against the Istanbul Convention, claiming that it imposes gender equality

"Is it the swan song of patriarchy, or the beginning of a new ice age?"

Interview with Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk

by Eva Karlberg

Elżbieta Korolczuk is a sociologist, commentator, women’s and human rights activist. She works at Södertörn University in Stockholm and teaches Gender Studies at Warsaw University. Her research interests involve social movements, civil society, and gender. Her most recent publications include two edited volumes, Civil Society Revisited: Lessons from Poland, co-edited with Karstin Jacobsson (Berghahn, 2017) and Rebelious Parents: Parental Movements in Central-Eastern Europe and Russia, co-edited with Katalin Fabián (Indiana University Press, 2017). For over a decade she was a member of the informal feminist group Women’s 8th of March Alliance, and currently she is engaged in the association “For Our Children”, fighting for changes in the Polish child support system, and serves as a board member of the “Akcja Demokracja” Foundation.
Initially I thought it was a misunderstanding. We thought the Right didn’t understand the word gender and that is what we have to explain it” Agnieszka Graff tells. However, after a rather violent encounter with anti-genderism in the fall of 2011, when a group of men in the audience of a panel at the Dominican Church in Warsaw threw a smoke bomb and held up a banner with the words “Gender = 666”, Agnieszka Graff understood that some people were not going to be educated. This was a divide that she called the “anti-liberal movement”.

After initially assuming that the war on gender was a local Polish, or at most a regional East European, phenomenon, Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk soon realized that it is instead transnational and well-organized. And that the producers of the discourse of anti-genderism are based in Western Europe – such as the German writer Gabrielle Kuby, the Belgian theologian Marguerite Peeters and the French priest Tony Anselmi. This view, that anti-genderism is not something uniquely Polish, but a novel transnational phenomenon with local outcomes, brought Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk together and they have since published several texts on the topic, including their article “Towards an Illiberal Future: Anti-Genderization and Anti-Globalization” (published in Global Dialogue). However, they also share an interest in the politics of care, which they both connect to the Polish development of anti-genderism. At the center here is motherhood, or rather “motherhood as an institution, social practice, and experience, and the fact that the state in Poland has been ignoring the needs of mothers for decades”, according to Agnieszka Graff. Given that the Polish state for a long time has failed to make sure fathers actually pay child support, many single mothers struggle economically. A group of women from all over Poland thus initiated a grassroots movement fighting for their right to child support. Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk both took part in this movement as supporting activists and have also followed a series of debates which took place in the presidential place in 2012 concerning mothers’ social and economic demands. From these experiences Agnieszka Graff, remembers, “to these women it really didn’t matter whether the people trying to help them were right wing or left wing. All that mattered was that somebody would care for their issues. It is to some extent a historical coincidence that parental groups became ultra-conservative. If the left had been seriously interested in these issues, if liberalism had been attuned to these issues, they wouldn’t necessarily have gone in that direction. But the right had a feel for family oriented issues. During debates on specific issues, such as institutional child care or the child support crisis, there was no appetite for my own conservation, closer in my thinking to conservative women than thought to be feminists but who were actually business-oriented. The neoliberal agenda was, basically, ‘parenting is your own private enterprise’. And from the other side, there were women claiming that millions of people in Poland felt abandoned by the welfare state. So, two years later, these very same women were for example in Sweden, comparing the two countries. But in Poland, before the war on gender started, we found ourselves in dialogue with some of the people who would later denounce feminism. Elżbieta Korolczuk today showed this genuine interest in their world view. It’s not like they demonize us and we want to demonize them – no, we really want to hear what they are saying.

As you have said, this is not only happening in Poland but also elsewhere including the US, and I can see in Sweden – maybe not as much, but it is similar – that there is a feeling that the establishment has forgotten about me, and the feeling that “I am being accused of not being modern”.

“You put that beautifully, except I would replace the word ‘accused’ with ‘shamed’. I am constantly shamed for not being modern and I’ve had enough. I intend to be proud of the way I live my life,” Agnieszka Graff replies. Elżbieta Korolczuk adds that political parties have not been engaging with feminism in many years, and it is only in the last two years that they have started to take feminism seriously. The main difference is that in a Swedish context the question of gender equality has been integrated into the national identity of being a modern nation among those who are not yet developed, which makes it problematic. The claim that those who oppose gender and queer studies have been marginalized as at least partly grounded here and I think the attitude towards feminism is more anti-systemic than anti-feminist. These sentiments particularly resonate in anti-feminist groups. In Poland, I would say, the right wing is fighting against a straw man because feminism and the feminist movement never have been as influential as they are claimed to be. Of course, we had successes and the Black Protest was very important but, in terms of the political system we are still the pretenders to the political elite.”

Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk say they are not only trying to reach out to the feminist movement by making it aware of the complexity and the pragmatics of care issues, but that it is equally important to address the left and the so-called liberal movement to point out the ultimate importance of gender – liberal politics needs to take gender seriously and include it systematically. “We wrote this article for the largest Polish daily, Gazeta Wyborcza,” Agnieszka Graff says. “We were explaining why gender matters, trying to alert the people who are now in the position of trying to defend democracy from the Kaczyński regime that they cannot ignore gender, and that it is not just about paying lip service to how wonderful and brave women are. But, of course, this is a very difficult task because, at least in Poland, there is this sense that there are the real political issues of democracy, freedom, anti-genderism and anti-globalization – the big history that has been written by men – and then because we are civilized, we are pro-European, we also include women, but it is a kind of afterthought. I think it is symptomatic that our article for Gazeta Wyborcza got retitled by the editors as ‘The Polish Macron must be a woman’. The Left has a problem with thinking of gender systematically, as a set of social, cultural, and economic issues. Instead we have a discussion on who is going to win the next elections: will it be a male or female leader? Again and again, who we fight against anti-genderism find ourselves relegated by the liberal press into this tiny little corner called ‘women, children and sex related topics’. I think that until the Left takes gender seriously, the Right will turn this topic to their advantage. Because gender is a hugely important topic which concerns the distribution of resources and dignity. Sweden is at least considered to have understood this long ago – or maybe that is a myth. Both women are major players in their issues. They have been so long and have had their successes. Agnieszka Graff agrees: “Our feminism is community-based, left-wing in its attitude towards capitalism and not just anti-liberal because left-wing in its attitude towards capitalism and not just left-wing in, let’s say, its attitude towards the Church. Poland has a Left party which, paradoxically, completely ignores economic issues. This is one of the reasons why I think the public’s opinion of feminism is that it is a form of individualism; that it is about getting those seats on boards of directors. Elżbieta in her presentation today used the word ‘alienation’, and it struck me how this is a double-edged word. On the one hand, it has a long tradition in Marxist theory as alienation in labour. On the other hand, it is a state of emotional abandonment – a feeling that you are the one who are misunderstood use although there is a significant debate around this – and the feeling of alienation is one that is often articulated in the case of alienation and nationalism. People want the family and gender roles to be a space of predictability, of naturalness and community, and there is a strong demand for any talk about gender in the public sphere to confirm their pre-conceptions. For a long time, I have studied popular cultural discourses about gender in Poland and the US, and it is astonishing how pop-sociology is filled with endlessly repeated stereotypes. No matter how many times these
ideas are debunked, the books that promote them are best sellers. Women are monomous, men are polygamous. 
Women are caring, men are competitive. It’s all in your brain. All your preconceptions are true. Gender studies is 
a field of critical thinking which is, by definition, suspicious of such discourses, and so it arouses people’s anger. People 
want the study of gender to be a confirmation of what they thought gender difference was all about, and so I 
don’t think it is a coincidence that Judith Butler, for instance, arouses such fury. She is hard to understand and what 
she says is counter intuitive. So alienation and nostalgia, these are the public feelings that needed a language and 
anti-genderism became a language for expressing these feelings. 

Would you say that feminism and the discussion on gender equality have been an enclosed academic debate not disseminated, or made relevant to people? 

Elżbieta Korolczuk does not completely agree “if we think about leftist feminist activism, which I was involved in 
for a long time, I would say that we used the language of class struggle and social justice, which at that time seemed 
fresh, or even revolutionary, because the main stream was so neoliberal. The problem is that when I look at what 
I wrote five or ten years ago in the pamphlets which were distributed during demonstrations, and compare it 
with those which are distributed now, I see they basically use the same language. It is a language which transplanted 
from debates on the left which reflect the Marxist language of class struggle. And the only alternative became the language of identity politics, which refers to the uniqueness of individual experiences. So the problem is 
not so much that we are using the academic jargon, but that we don’t develop new ways of communicating with 
the people. And it is interesting to see how popular feminist ideas can become when they are trans-
lated into a more accessible language – for example, through popular culture – and I think that actions such as 
#metoo show a great potential and a great need for retelling our feminist stories in more personal, emotionally compelling ways, which is something we never really had in Poland – compared to Germany, for example, where consciousness-raising groups have been very popular.” 

Agnieszka Graff remembers how readers flooded her with emails once, after she had written an 
article on the topic of being a mother with a small child in a Polish hospital, and about being hu-
miliated by doctors and nurses: “This was to some extent an essay about the horrors of the Polish 
health care system, but also about the invisibility of a woman once that woman is in the position of 
a mother. I received so many stories from women. There is clearly a desire to share these stories.” 

This makes me think of the Polish symbol “Matka Polka”. How is it possible that, in a country 
where motherhood is almost worshipped, so many women report such treatment at 
hospitals and, as we said earlier, single mothers need to fight for their right to alimony? 

“For that I actually have an answer”, Elżbieta Korolczuk exclaims. “Because – together with Renata 
Hyćniak – we have written about this in a book called! Farewell to the Polish Mother!” in which 
we argue that the Polish mother is venerated only when she is self-sacrificing. That is, sacrificing 
herself, her happiness, her basic needs. The moment she starts making demands, the situation changes.” 

Agnieszka Graff interposes that “the Polish mother is idealized because she makes no demands. Once she starts making demands, as a citizen, she is actually demonized as selfish, grabby, as making ungrounded demands – this is exactly what happened to the single 
mothers who were asking the state for help with alimony.” Elżbieta Korolczuk adds: “There is a class aspect here: what kind of mother do we really respect? We have seen a lot of hatred and disrespect for poorer mothers, and for 
less educated mothers, a Polish version of the ‘welfare queen, discourse in the US’. There is a strong discourse of 
class division which is dressed up as a division between those who are truly respectable and those who are ungrate-
ful and demanding, and of course those who are ungrateful and demanding always happen to be poor and are 
attacked for having made bad choices.” 

But given the recent mass protests such as the Black Protest, isn’t there hope for change regarding women’s 
needs and the position of feminism in Poland? 

“Yes, for someone who has been doing feminism for years,” Agnieszka Graff says, “what is happening is quite hearten-
ing. Yes, this is the huge anti-gender movement. But on the liberal and leftist side, everybody seems to identify 
with feminism today, and a lot of male pundits and politicians on the opposition side attach importance to feminism as the possible pillar of Polish democracy. On the other hand, this mobilization comes too late; the 
right wing has already consummated political effectiveness. I think there is a cause and effect relation between 
the war on gender in 2012–2014 and the electoral victory of PiS in 2015. In other words, I think that anti-genderism 
paved the way for the acceptance of this authoritarian regime. Anti-genderism mainstreamed populism in Poland: 

“the elite has shamed us and we need to regain our dignity.” A lot of this populist rhetoric in Poland was articulated 
in a language of gender, or rather anti-genderism, responding to Western protests against Polish homophobia, and it 
was considered a disrespect of the Polish national identity. I think that on the wave of that, plus of course the fear 
of refugees, Kaczyński took over. The Black Protests were of course wonderful – we both wept seeing the crowds 
and I was deeply moved by seeing tens of thousands in the streets saying what I have been saying mostly alone for 
a long time – but I think these protests came too late.” 

Elżbieta Korolczuk agrees, but wants to place Poland in a larger, global, context: “You mentioned the refugee 
crisis, and I think this shows how much now depends on what is happening globally. In that sense, predicting 
the future becomes incredibly difficult. If not for the refugee crisis, anti-genderism and other trends would not 
be enough. But then the question is: is it the way of re-traditionalization or right wing populism the swan song of patri-
archy, or is it the beginning of a new ice age? I think that we should look at the Black Protest and other mobilizations 
not so much in terms of the immediate effects they have but in terms of long-term changes in the ways people think. 
The Right have absolute power today but their anti-gender discourse is based on the idea that they are the victims – 
this notion becomes more and more empty and ridiculous. So the question is how this reconfiguration can play out 
in the long term. If there truly will be a strengthening, and self-identification of many women with feminism, then 
it can have consequences in the long run – given that there will be openings in the political opportunity structures 
in terms of parties which can win in the next elections. The next question then is: What will happen with the liberals? 
The reason why the Black Protest was so big was because the struggle of women has become reconstructed 
as a struggle against the regime, and that’s why they decided to support us. So the question is: What, in the long 
term, will be the consequences of seeing the feminist struggle at the forefront of progressive thought?” 

As and a reply, Agnieszka Graff ends with a powerful remark: “We’re right back where we started. Our agenda 
– and we have made a vow to repeat it endlessly in various forms – is to convince the well-meaning, liberal left and 
defenders of democracy that gender is absolutely central to the current political debate. Not just because women 
deserve equality, and certainly not because women are morally superior to men, but because this is where the 
struggle is happening – gender is where recognition meets redistribution in the most politically explosive way.” 

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Farewell to the Polish mother? Discourses, practices and 
representations of motherhood in contemporary 
There are different views on the conflict in Ukraine. Russia defines the conflict as a civil war, claiming to deliver only humanitarian support to the eastern separatist parts of the country. For Ukraine and most of the world, Russia is an active participant of the conflict and often its main instigator, and there is a wealth of evidence to support this view. This article describes the development of popular beliefs and attitudes in the Ukraine of today on what should be done in the country, while also taking into account that the war is not the only problem in Ukraine. This article also reviews the Ukrainian-Russian attitudes and changes in the geopolitical orientation of the Ukrainian people since 2014, both of which seem to be considerably influenced by the war. The data are based on opinion polls in Ukraine, focusing on what is happening in the Donbas region, how the conflict should be resolved, what is the preferred political orientation of the country, how ethnic relations look today, and other worries of the people. The key findings of this article are based on the data of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) along with some other poll data that are used for supplementary and comparative purposes. The KIIS data were collected by surveys carried out in compliance with international standards of public opinion surveys. The findings are discussed in relation to regionalization and the development of a modern civil society. The occupation of Crimea is not addressed.

Since 2014, the social and economic situation of Ukraine has worsened. The present war, which started in full-fledged form in 2014, has had a major negative impact on these developments. Even without the war the economy of the country would be in a rather poor state and in need of urgent reforms. For 2015, the IMF reported a GDP reduction of 9.9% in Ukraine, which was the second massive drop since 2014, but for 2016 there was 2.3% growth, which seems to have continued at the pace of 2% in 2017, and the IMF and the World Bank forecasts for 2018 are growth between 3.2% and 3.3%. Thus, Ukraine is recovering to the modest, European level of economic development; nevertheless, the losses of 2014 and 2015 have not been compensated for. The economic recovery is uncertain, with international experts having given rather reserved comments on its sustainability and emphasizing the need for long-term external support and funding.

However, a way out of the war in the eastern territories of Ukraine is not at hand; there are continuous casualties, and the interpretations concerning the Minsk 2015 agreement and its implementation are heavily contested. With the separatist territories, Ukraine is estimated to have lost approximately 20% of its economic potential—either in separatists’ hands or destroyed by the war—and there is a considerable internal refugee problem bearing a potential impact also beyond the Ukrainian borders both in the Russian Federation and Western Europe. According to the UNHCR, the conflict has affected 4.4 million people in Ukraine, of whom 3.8 million need humanitarian assistance. The population has also diminished, some moving to the west and others to Russia. For instance, it is estimated that there are up to 800,000 Ukrainian citizens in Poland, many of them working informally, although this is not only due to the war, and it also reflects the link between Ukraine and the EU. Serious problems of governance remain in Ukraine, and the popularity of the present political establishment as well as trust in many key institutions is down.

According to Habermas, public opinion is constituted in the public sphere, which is accessible to all, by means of rational discourse, where anybody independent of their social status can contribute. Rationality is a heuristic idea, however, and in practice it is not the case that all citizens have equal access to the public sphere or an equal capacity for discourse. Public opinion is strongly influenced by elites and interest groups, and the public sphere is today international. In Ukraine, public opinion is of key importance: the concept of “cyber war” was first coined for international usage during the first year of the war in Ukraine, and it has been estimated that Internet information concerning what is happening in Ukraine is often manipulated. It is advantageous for the people if there are various groups or elite blocs in a country, because in that case the groups or blocs need to compete for the support of the people by utilizing various media, and this is an argument for democracy. However, the competition also takes place by means of distorted information, and there can be external stakeholders manipulating information, which seems to be the case in Ukraine. In the case of a massive and successful deme-
the Donbas region, i.e., Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, was 82%. Approximately one third of the people in Donbas did not have any confidence in the information from Ukrainian television, while the corresponding share of distrust in Russian television information was only 7%. In contrast, in the whole country 15% did not trust the information from Ukrainian television, while the share of those who distrusted Russian television information was around 50%. These figures indicate the influence of Ukrainian versus Russian mass media, although the differences in regional mass media markets have deep historical, cultural, and linguistic roots. These differences are in compliance with what we find in the people’s opinions of the war, the possible ways out of it, and their confidence in social institutions, and they might at least partly explain the differences.

In this article, we want to give a rare insight into Ukrainian views on the war in the eastern region of the country. Ukrainian Russian relations as they are experienced at the grassroots level, and other worries of the population during the ongoing conflict. This insight is rare not due to a lack of adequate and reliable data, instead, to a lack of interest in Ukraine, which is internationally often considered to be a mere passive reflection of Russian or NATO/in fact, but a lack of interest in Ukraine, which is internationally often considered to be a mere passive reflection of Russia or NATO.

The conflict – war or something else?

According to KIIS,13 Ukrainians from the very onset of the war most often (49%) supported the view that the war was conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, approximately one fifth of the respondents in 2014 said that they believed the conflict to be a civil war provoked and supported by the Russian Federation. Thus, the majority of Ukrainians put the blame for the conflict on Russia. There was, a minority of 12% who considered that there was a geopolitical conflict between Russia and the US taking place in the territory of Ukraine. This is in stark contrast to international debates often centering solely around US-Russian relations. In the southern and eastern regions of the country in 2014 there was also a minority of 14–26% who regarded the conflict as a civil war provoked and supported by the Kyiv Government. Thus, in these territories the blame for the war was firstly put on the Kyiv Government as often as it was on the Russian Federation. Regional differences were considerable, and the response pattern remained very much the same in 2016; while in all Ukraine 65% of the respondents considered the conflict to be a civil war between Russia and Ukraine, Donbas only 8% saw the conflict in this way.14

In April 2014, when it was less obvious what was happening and what would happen, the possibility of civil war was brought up in a KIIS survey. Almost 50% of the respondents in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine considered that there was a risk of civil war. Global Attitudes Surveys show that there have been some fears of an ethnic conflict for quite a long time in Ukraine, practically since 1991. In 2014, the share of those considering that there was a risk of a serious ethnic conflict was as high as 73% in all Ukraine. This finding most certainly also reflects what was happening in Donbas, but there was also an fear of an escalating conflict, which happily enough did not occur.15

During the initial stage of the armed conflict in the eastern part of the country, war effort included the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense and the Ukrainian army, but this was supported by only a third of the respondents. In Donbas, this alternative was preferred by only 8% of the respondents, while one third of the respondents supported autonomy for Donbas. However, the interview scheme did not go far further by asking how the borders of the autonomic region or how the autonomy itself should be defined. Autonomy for Donbas was also often supported in other eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. In 2014, one fifth of the respondents in the western parts of Ukraine supported an economic blockade of the separatist territories in order to make them understand that they would not be able to survive independently. Today, we see these territories drifting away from Ukraine and that some form of blockade has been set up, although it is commonly assumed that the economic feasibility of the separatist territories depends more on Russian support than on the performance of the territories themselves.16

The most important trading partner for Ukraine, although the trade between the two countries as a share of both country’s total trade has declined since the beginning of the war. Today, the EU is the leading trading partner with a share of over 40% of all trade.17 The change is largely due to the EU accession treaty signed by Ukraine in 23 November and 27 June 2014, which led to a Russian boycott of Ukrainian imports. Russia has, however, been a more important trade partner for Ukraine than Ukraine is for Russia, whose economic interests in Ukraine have mainly been indirect and related to energy policies or transfers. European markets must still be conquered by Ukraine. There is, however, a promising perspective due to the visa-free regime established between Ukraine and the EU in 2017.

In April 2014, approximately half of the Ukrainian population was unwilling to join the war because the leadership of the army was considered incompetent. This attitude was more typical (79%) in the eastern parts of the country, but in non-separatist parts of the Donbas region with a direct risk of war, the share was 57%. Other government institutions criticized due to the unsuccessful war effort included the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense and the Administration of the President. Approximately half of the respondents saw, however, that the war was necessary in order to defend the regional unity of the country. In the Donbas region, a more typical view (38%) supported resolving the conflict through negotiations.18

In the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, people were also asked in 2014 what they would do if the Russian army were to occupy their territory. The most popular alternative chosen was to stay home and not to be involved (39%), although armed resistance was supported almost as much (35%). In Donbas, 66% of the respondents supported the former alternative. The choice might be explained by the cultural proximity of Donbas to Russia. Giving a warm welcome to the Russian forces or expressing a willingness to join them were alternatives given in the KIIS survey, but they were favored by only a few percent of the respondents. The responses show indifference to the Kyiv government in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, but they do not show any preference for Russian governance.
the corresponding shares were 25% and 68%. In Ukraine, 65% of the respondents said that there were Russian troops in Ukraine, while in Russia this statement was reported as true by 22% of the respondents and false by 52%. What is interesting here is not the Ukrainian views per se, but the difference between Ukrainian and Russian views and responses. In 2016, KIES surveyed the sociopolitical situation in Ukraine by also asking how the military conflict in Donbas should be resolved. Now, two thirds of Ukrainians supported the continuation of inter- governmental negotiations, and 21% supported military actions until full liberation of Donbas, while for 13% it was difficult to say how the conflict should be resolved.26 The responses show a sense of reality among the population in Ukraine in a situation where the war had lasted over two years – and now three and half years have gone by with no prospective end to the conflict.

European Union or Russia – views on Russia and Russians

Ukrainian views on the political and economic future of the country have fluctuated somewhat, but we can discern a clear tendency as of 2014. Support for the EU has in the western parts of the country been two- or three-fold higher compared to that in the southeastern and eastern parts of the country, especially in Donbas, where only 25% supported the EU in 2014 and the majority was against joining the EU. In Ukraine as a whole in December 2014, altogether 66% of the population supported joining the EU.27 In March 2017, if there had been a referendum, 77% would have voted for joining the EU and 23% would have voted against it. The support for NATO membership has been somewhat lower in the surveys, but lately it has risen. In Russia and more. Earlier regional differences, however, remain.28

Before 2014, the support for the EU and support for the Russian customs union was usually at an equal level of approximately 40%, but things changed due to the war, probably partly also due to the Russian boycott of Ukrainian goods. As the ex Finnish Ambassador to Russia Rens Nyberg29 stated, “Russia and Ukraine are not the same as EU and Russia.” The Global Attitudes Survey, the influence of the Russian policy on Ukraine was in 2014 considered negative by two thirds of the respondents, while the corresponding positive views on EU influence was held by one third of the respondents.28 The support for EU membership and European political orientation, however, fluctuates, while the support for membership in the Russian-led customs union has stabilized. For comparison, we might bear in mind, for instance, the Nordic referendum results on EU membership in the 1990s, where the support for joining the EU was in all countries at the same level or less than it is today in Ukraine. The difficulty in taking a stand, however, is reflected throughout the surveys carried out by KIES. The share of those giving no response to key questions or explicitly saying that they do not want to take a stand has often been up to 20%. These results show insecurity towards the future, but we see also a rise in the responses emphasizing the self-sufficiency of Ukraine; people feel more often that instead of relying on external aid the country must be able to stand on its own. Since 2016, the share of those supporting neither EU membership nor joining the customs union has been 28%, and this is the most popular alternative in Donbas.30

The KIES All-Ukrainian survey in 2014 contained a question concerning double citizenship, which today is not available in Ukraine. Almost half of the population took a critical stand against double citizenship, while around 30% supported it. The reasons for this were quite varied, very much linked with the region – the western and the central parts of the country were against it, while the southern and the eastern parts were for it. The reasons for the double citizenship were, however, very practical; the respondents who supported it did so because they felt it would allow them to have formal employment abroad and would make travel easier. This is most relevant for those Ukrainians who have worked in the Russian Federation, which today might be far more complicated if they want to maintain their Ukrainian citizenship, and it is also relevant for the Ukrainians working in the EU and might gain in relevance due to the visa-free EU regime for Ukrainians. However, dual citizenship is not favored by the decision makers in Ukraine.

Besides citizenship, the views on the political and economic orientation of Ukraine are linked with ethnicity and language, but the relationship is far from simple. Ukrainians have a very positive view on Russians, which is productive for the social climate of the country. Russians are a very important minority in Ukraine and made up 17% of the Ukrainian population in 2001.31 The polls indicate that discrimination and ethnic intolerance are higher in the separatist territories in Ukraine, and the attitudes in separatist territories are hardening, while there seems to some what increasing tolerance in the remaining Ukraine.32 Polese33 found that the development of the Ukrainian nation has been a tolerant process, less due to official political declarations and policy-making than to the everyday practices of the population – Ukraine is an officially monolingual country but in practice the country is bilingual. Utilizing Richard Sakwa’s34 terminology, we might state that officially monistic policies have not been supported by monistic practices in Ukraine, and there is an interesting parallel in Russian developments, where the officially pluralistic policies have not been supported by pluralistic practices.35 Taras Kužio36 discussed the concept of “the other” in Ukraine and stated that Russia does not have the status of the “other” in Ukraine in contrast to what is often presumed. The relationship with Russia and Russians is very important in general for Ukraine and Ukrainians, and Russia is regarded as “the other” only by a small percentage of Ukrainians. Sakwa’s and Kužio’s arguments focus on different things; Sakwa looks at legislation, while Kužio emphasizes policy-making and everyday practice.

Ethnicity in Ukraine is separated from the mother tongue, and a very large segment of the country speaks Russian but defines itself as Ukrainian. In 2014, altogether 47% of Ukrainians spoke only Ukrainian at home, 27% spoke only Russian, and 66% spoke both. In practice, bilingualism is the standard, with only approximately one fifth of the population stating that they only know Ukrainian or Russian well.24 In 2017, only 1% were concerned about the status of the Russian language and 2% about the relationship between different nationalities in Ukraine.27 Nevertheless, the views on the Russian Federation and its policies have become much more negative, which might in the longer run also have a social and cultural impact, especially when taking into account that a similarly increasing distance to Ukraine has been found in the Russian Federation. The loss of almost monolingual Russian Crimea has considerably weakened the status of the Russian language in Ukraine.37

In general, the Russian views on Ukrainians and Ukrainians have always been less positive than the Ukrainian views on Russia and Russians. Volodymyr Paniotó38 compared the development of Ukrainian attitudes to Russia with the corresponding Russian attitudes towards Ukraine, the latter being based on parallel research by the Levada Center in Moscow. The earlier positive attitudes seem to have become rarer in both countries. While in 2006 up to 88% of Ukrainians had a positive view on Russia, the share in 2014 was down to 48%. While in Russia the corresponding share in 2008 was 55%, but in 2014 it had been reduced to 23%. The change took place in 2013–2014 in both countries, and the most obvious reason for this is the war and war-related media. Paniotó39 finds several reasons for the popularity of Russia in Ukraine, including the differential policies and the impact of mass media in Russia and Ukraine, the influence of pro-Russian lobbies in Ukraine, the increasing routinization of war, and distrust among the population of Ukraine of policymakers in their own country.

Russians, while the corresponding attitude towards Russian political leaders was only 8% in 2016.1 The populations both in Russia and Ukraine make a clear distinction between policies and people.

Instead of a conclusion: stability or change?
The KIES survey in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine in 2014 pointed out key issues to be addressed by the central government of Ukraine. These were disarmament and the dis-

dispersion of extremist groups (39%), dialogue with Russia (23%), and support for regional development by means of supporting regional business (22%). The first issue might have been raised because of the separatist groups, but also because of the right-wing organizations that are active and demonized in the Russian media. There was rather modest support (23%) for the armed occupation of government buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk, which was how the separatist movement originally manifested itself.2

A clear majority in all Ukrainian regions has supported the unity of the country throughout the conflict. In Donbas in 2014, 14% supported a merger with the Russian Federation, and 9% supported independence. Those were the highest figures by oblasts – in other eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, the share of those supporting the merger with the Russian Feder-

a tion was only 3%. Also, the Global Atti-

tudes Survey48 has shown a high level of

antipathy among the Ukrainian public towards the Russian occupation of Crimea. This phenomenon was particularly strong in those regions of Ukraine, which were the first to be occupied by Russian troops.51

The current distribution of attitudes concerning the conflict is rather a distant problem, and everyday life related to income expectations are in the southern oblasts.52

Concerning who is in power and how this power is used.60 This is what is politically feasible. Various solutions are on the table, but each of them seems to be unacceptable for different reasons: Boratko and Popovskiy63 stated that the powers of the central govern-

ment increased during the Yanukovych regime largely due to a concentration of corruption on the central level.

We might define the pre-Maidan Ukraine as “a captured state”, which is not a rare case in post-Soviet countries. In a captured state, the benefits of transition are usurped by a mono-
lateralist government and the public sector - the government and private services and helps to cope with structural injustice, and this was the case during the Soviet times and has continued to this day in independent Ukraine. However, particularist networks, which are needed when formal institutions fail, are inadequate for efficient functioning of a modern society and might become counterproductive because successful functioning of a modern society requires societal-level capital where trust is universalized.7

In the somewhat rising trust in NGOs, we might see urgently needed modern social capital developing; however, whether this process will be enhanced and a societal “trusting society” will emerge as a result of this remains to be seen. The support for the EU reflects, among other things, hopes for a societal order with better governance and decent life for all. But life is slow and time is running out: as J.M. Keynes said, “in the long run, we are all dead.”8

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9 Abram de Swaan, “Elite perceptions of the poor: reflections on a modern society requires societal-level capital where trust is universalized.” In the somewhat rising trust in NGOs, we might see urgently needed modern social capital developing; however, whether this process will be enhanced and a societal “trusting society” will emerge as a result of this remains to be seen. The support for the EU reflects, among other things, hopes for a societal order with better governance and decent life for all. But life is slow and time is running out: as J.M. Keynes said, “in the long run, we are all dead.”

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**UKRAINE WAS RANKED 131st OUT OF 176 COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO THE 2016 CORRUPTION INDEX BY TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL.**
The empire was one of the key concepts of the 19th century consciousness and of contemporary cultural studies. Images of the empire were reflected in many of the philosophical and artistic works at that time — including literature, painting, and photography — but the latter was a new kind of art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The leading European empires of the 19th century were France, Russia, and Great Britain; these empires struggled for dominance in politics, economics, and culture, and also worked to widen their borders. The famous theorists of postcolonialism and nationalism (Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Benedict Anderson, and others) have insisted that empire, race, and nation are artificial constructions, whose purpose is to create a positive image of the “self” (i.e., the nation or empire), and a negative image of the “Other”. The “Other” is a central figure in the formation of an empire or nation; this is particularly true of the European image of the Orient, in which “the Orient” does not have a geographical meaning (i.e., the East) but is rather used in a symbolic sense (i.e., as cultural and political opposition toward western, Christian Europe). The concept of the Orient was given important symbolic meaning from the beginning of the formation of the European empires, and from the development of Romanticism and Orientalism in the 19th century. Contemporary Western scholars have analyzed the imperial consciousness in the works of Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Rudyard Kipling. Orientalist ideology, according to Said, was formed in the 19th century as a romantic image of the mysterious, exotic, and rich lands that were presented as the racial and cultural “Other” to Europe. “Oriental plots” with exotic people and volcanic passions became essential sources in the formation of the self-consciousness of the European empires in the 19th century because they fulfilled the role of the Other to whom the European subject was opposed. Said argued that the creation of the image of the exotic or hostile Orient was an effective tool of the imperial European consciousness to confirm its own positive identification and to mark the symbolic borders of European normative culture. The most powerful instruments in the construction of the imperial consciousness were European Romantic literature and the Orient-oriented paintings of the 19th century; the “Oriental plots” with the depiction of the fatal “Oriental” passions, exotic sexuality, insidious beauties, and wild animals were to emphasize the chaotic, unpredictable and illogical nature of the “Orient” that needed to be disciplinated by the logical and rational “West”, that is, Europe. Such an approach asserted the inequality of races and cultures at a symbolic level and thus justified the colonial aggression of the European empires. Many scientists in the 19th century searched for evidence of racial hierarchies in biology, medicine, anthropology, and other natural sciences. I argue that the image of the Orient in the European mass consciousness was founded not on real knowledge about the economic and cultural life of the Eastern peoples, but on the visual metaphors of the Orient that were created in European painting and photography. The Orient was often represented in Western European painting as a selection of exotic boundary effects, such as the hareem as a metaphor for the sexual subordination of women, the bazaar as a metaphor for economic backwardness, and ottom as a metaphor for moral depravity. “Oriental plots” in the works of European artists visualized the phenomena that appeared strangest in comparison with Western Christian culture: images of Oriental masculinity were symbolized in the European visual mentality in images of Turkish scimitars, Arabian racing horses, and tiger or lion hunts, while Oriental femininity was imagined as Oriental harems and beautiful odalisques; these images played a leading role in the exotification and eroticization of the East (as presented in Western European painting of the 19th century, in works by Eugène Delacroix, Jean Léon Gérôme, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, John Frederick Lewis, and others). A similar situation existed in European photography of the Orient of the 19th century: the people in those photos symbolized the exotic to the same extent as Oriental temples and tombs, bright Eastern bazaars, and rare wild animals. Although photography became an independent art form in the 20th century, early photographs followed the artistic canons and ideological traditions of the 19th century and were concentrated on the unconscious wishes and expectations of European viewers. The aim of this paper is to analyze the symbolism of the Chinese-Eastern Railroad (KVGD) in the Russian imperial consciousness, and to assess how the Russian Empire constructed and visualized its borders within its cultural self-image. I develop these ideas based on early Russian photographs of the Far East and of Manchuria, locations that represented the most distant Eastern borders of the Russian Empire. The first photographs of the Far East and Manchuria were taken during the construction of the KVGD — an event that had significant political and cultural importance in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries as a connection between the European territories of the Russian Empire, and Manchuria and the Amur River. I want to determine what position the KVGD occupied in the Russian imperial consciousness and in the frames of Orientalist ideology, and to identify how the KVGD was reflected in earlier Russian photographs: was there a difference in the perception and visual constructions of the “Oriental Other” in Western Europe and in Russia?

The peculiarity of the Russian expansion to the Far East in the 19th century lay in the fact that many countries from different circles of Russian intelligentsia actively participated in the reclamation of the new lands: mining engineers and geologists, school teachers and university professors, army and navy officers, doctors, and political exiles were among the first explorers.
Many of these had not only military, political, or economic interests, but also research and cultural ambitions. Scientific management missions were carried out by the Russian Geographical Society. Siberian merchants and industrialists were interested in studies of the natural resources of the Far East and the Amur region, and provided logistical and financial support to those expeditions. It is notable that, in the Russian public consciousness of the 19th century, the Russian movement to Siberia and the Far East was considered to be a type of territorial extension of the empire; rather than being seen as a conquest or possession of “others” (i.e., Eastern peoples), it was considered as a way of joining of stateless lands and sanguinolent tribes. The perception of the advancement of Russian researchers and military engineers into Siberia and the Far East in the cultural consciousness of the Russian Empire had much in common with the perception of the movement of America into the West in the American consciousness of the 19th century: both poetized human will, the technical progress of the motherland, the development of new spaces, and the concept of “wild nature”.

Does this similarity mean that the Far East and Manchuria did not play the role of the “Oriental Other” in the Russian cultural consciousness? According to the Canadian scholar Shkandriy,15 this similarity means that, in the Russian public consciousness, the Far East and Manchuria did not play the role of the “Oriental Other” in the Russian cultural consciousness? According to the Canadian scholar Shkandriy,15 this similarity means that, in the Russian public consciousness, the Far East and Manchuria did not play the role of the “Oriental Other” in the Russian cultural consciousness. However, in Siberia and the Far East in the cultural consciousness of the Russian Empire, the Siberian, Northern, and Far Eastern regions were perceived as culturally other (i.e., foreign) in the mentality of the Western consciousness against the phobia of Russia’s possible superiority to the West.

EUROPEAN WRITERS and painters often imagined southern and eastern lands as places of European dream fulfillment — that is, as a sort of eternal paradise. Paintings of the 19th century, followed by early photography, created a “catalogue” of Oriental motifs in which young, beautiful, and partially clothed women played a significant role. However, Russian Oriental images were largely determined by the paintings of Vasiliy Vereshchagin, one of the most famous Russian Orientalists of the 19th century, and a representative of critical realism in art.16 Vereshchagin’s poetics of the Orient differed from the Western European Orientalism of Delacroix and Jerome: Vereshchagin did not personify humanity as a particular national or cultural group, whether European Westerners or exotic Easterners; rather, he critically depicted both the cruelty of the British Army in India and that of the Russian Army in Central Asia. Unlike Western European Orientalism, which was based on unconscious escapism by Europeans from everyday bourgeois contradictions, Vereshchagin tried to depict the East not as an exotic place in which naked odalisques were held in harems, but as an independent culture with its own spirituality and ethics. Although Vereshchagin never used gender metaphors to represent the opposition of the East and the West, he created many ethnographic sketches of the different Asian ethnic groups and of traditional Asian sacred buildings that evidenced the spiritual life of the Eastern peoples. At the same time, he actively painted not only the locals of the Russian Far East, but also typical Russian settlements and Russian peasants. The same approach — both an ethnographic and a spiritual one — toward the Eastern peoples and their life can be seen in the early photographs of the Russian Far East and the Amur region, which were intended to portray life in those regions in a naturalistic style.17 On studying these early Russian photos, I believe that one of the semiotic purposes of the early photos of the Russian Far East and the Amur region was to emphasize that Russian life was similar everywhere, for all Russian citizens and in all parts of the Russian Empire: despite their distance from the center of the empire, Russian locals in the Amur region lived in the same manner as Russian peasants in the central provinces. I consider that the Far East and the Amur region were not understood in Russia as the exotic or hostile Orient, or as something alien, unpredictable, and hostile to the traditional culture of the Russian Empire. According to the concept of Benedict Anderson, “maps, censuses of populations, and museums played very important roles in the construction of empires: the map of a country is the political symbol of the “body” of a nation or an empire; the census of population asserts the existence of the nation or empire in terms of the physical bodies it contains; and museums represent the history of the nation or empire in the form of visible artifacts in order to establish the ontological right of that nation or empire to exist within generational memory. For this reason, photographs of the distant parts of the Russian Empire performed not only geographical and cognitive functions but also political ones in the imperial struggle for dominance. From this perspective, photography was an important tool that transformed the everyday life of the empire into visible and documented facts. What kind of reality was reflected in the images of the KVDG?18

The last part of the 19th century was a time of active development of photography. The first Russian photographers, beginning with Maxim Dmitriev and Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky, used photography to display the everyday life of different ethnic groups and professions in the Russian Empire, along with images of nature and the cities of this huge empire. For example, Dmitriev was the creator of the famous “Volga Collection” of photographs, which included unique images of the cities and natural environment of the Volga River, from its sources to its mouth (1894–1903). Prokudin-Gorsky became famous by undertaking the first major photography trip around the Russian Empire (1909), during this trip, he took about 400 color photographs of the Caucasus, the Crimea, and Ukraine. In 1907, he also created color photographs of Samarkand and Bukhara. Prokudin-Gorsky conceived the project of capturing Russia’s history, culture, and modernization in photographs of modern Russia. In 1918, he twice performed photography expeditions to Turkestan, and filmed monuments in the Yaroslavl and Vladimir provinces.19 The goal of early Russian photography was to be scientifically accurate in recording the humanity of the Russian Empire: photography as ethnography was used to examine and position the different lifestyles in the various parts of the empire. In 2001, the Library of Congress in the United States opened an exhibition titled “The Empire which Was Russia”, for which 122 color photographs were selected from Prokudin-Gorsky’s collection.

Since the development of photography, images of the Far East and the Amur region occupied a significant place among early photographs of the Russian Empire. The first photographic images of the powerful nature of the Amur region and the Far East amazed the inhabitants of Central Russia and acted as visual evidence of the vastness of the Russian Empire. Many of the early photographs of the Far East belong to the landscape genre and depict the forests, rivers, volcanoes, and hills that formed a background to the geographic or military expeditions in those locations. On the one hand, photographs of the natural environment in the Far East were seen as very exotic by Russians in the central parts of the Empire; on the other hand, these same photographs inserted the natural envi

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The natural power and severity of the Russian Far East and the Amur region. The title of the photograph: “Forms and Types of Manchuria.”
The KVDG was imagined as a part of the great Trans-Siberian way that would establish a direct rail link between the Western European countries and the countries of Eastern Asia (between Russia and China). It was built at a record pace for those times, despite problems which included the extremely difficult construction in the mountains, gorges, and canyons; a lack of roads for technical equipment; a severe climate for Russian workers; and an extremely ethnically diverse local population, with whom Russian engineers interacted.

In its symbolic position within the Russian Empire, and in the way in which the KVDG connected the two continents of Asia and Europe and the nations of Russia and China, the construction of this railway was consistent with the 19th century belief in the possibilities of universal progress, transatlantic traffic, and the universalization of social and human values.

The photographs of the KVDG can be divided into four major groups: the first group is devoted to the wild nature of the Amur River, the KVDG region, and Manchuria; the second group comprises images that are devoted to the railway itself, the new tunnels in the mountains, stations, and other results of hard work; the third group comprises photographs of the trains themselves, and includes internal and external views of carriages, locomotives, passengers, and conductors; and the fourth group is devoted to photographs of ethnic communities that were located within the KVDG region, and of their national and religious lives.

The first group of the photographs contained the images of the Siberian primeval forest, the mountain rivers of the Amur region, the Far Eastern mud volcanoes which were posted in many postcards which were distributed all over Russian Empire. These photos of the Russian Far East played several roles in the imperial consciousness: for one thing, they had an “educational” function and introduced the images of the far boundaries of the Russian Empire to a broad public audience, as it was symbolically “domesticating” the wild and exotic nature of the Far East in the Russian cultural consciousness. That Far Eastern natural landscape was very unusual in comparison with the typical natural landscape of the Central Russia and the knowledge about the extreme variety of Russian landscapes and imperial borders encouraged the national myth about the “illimitable space” of the Russian Empire. For other thing, the photos of the Far Eastern natural landscape were intended to stimulate national pride among the ordinary Russian citizens in their “great and powerful country” whose territory was so diverse and vast.

The second group of photographs depict the railway as an embodiment of the romantic spirit of technical achievement in the Russian Empire. It should be noted that very few Russian urban photographs were taken of the Far East and the Amur River in the early part of the 20th century. This situation reflected the reality of that time—this is the absence of cities or even large settlements in these regions. However, the lack of urban development aligned with the way in which the inhabitants of Central Russia viewed the Far East as a kind of “natural kingdom” as opposed to the urban environment of the European part of the Russian Empire. The famous scholar Yuriy Leving wrote that “the emergence of trains, airplanes, and cars had a profound impact on the cultural consciousness of the 20th century, a concept that was reflected in many literary texts of the era. These phenomena, along with the introduction of electricity into the domestic sphere, became cultural sensations. The train became a “hero” in the early cinema of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a symbol of the industrialized world. Examples include the famous silent French documentary by the Lumière brothers, The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat (1896), the American cinema adventure titled The Great Train Robbery (1903), and the American documentary Northwestern Pacific Railroad (1914). In particular, the Northwestern Pacific Railroad spends 18 minutes representing the landscapes of California: images filmed from the moving train encompass the new tunnels in the mountains, wild forests, mountain rivers, and canyons that the train passes on its journey. The railway, which ran along the severe and formidable natural environment of the American Western coast, is the main focus of the visual effects in that film. However, the main idea of the film represents the admiration of the director for the achievements of the American workers and engineers who built tunnels and laid rails in such inaccessible places. The triumph of this achievement is analogous, in my opinion, to the triumph that is present in the first photos of the KVDG, because many of the latter photographs depict the newly discovered and little-known Far Eastern lands, with their grandiose landscapes of taiga and great mountains, along with the rails and trains that were built to pass through all of nature’s obstacles.

The aesthetic paradigm of the time also had a definite impact on the aesthetics of the early KVDG photos, which show the influence of the industrial and urban aesthetics of modernism that were the style of the epoch, and which romanticized the technological achievements and growth of cities (similarly to futuristic aesthetics).

Upon analyzing the gender symbolism in the photographs of the technological achievements of the KVDG, it is apparent that nature was not given connotations of femininity or passivity in these photographs, as it was in the traditional European metaphors of the East (the Orient). On the contrary, the nature of the Amur River region could be considered to have a “masculine” character (because of its severe climate), while the Russian workers and engineers of the KVDG achieved their success in laying tunnels and roads using characteristics traditionally associated with femininity: patience and perseverance. Despite the difficult and unusual climate, the summer heat and the severe winter cold, the Russian workers continued to construct the railway and build stations and settlements through the most difficult terrain; the triumph of their labor is shown in the photographs. For this reason, the optimistic triumph of the noble human spirit through the technological achievements of the KVDG was not simply a cultural myth of the Russian Empire, but was also a fact of the construction that was achieved. The construction of the KVDG and its accompanying photographs were expected to stimulate pride among the citizens of the Russian Empire regarding the new opportunities and achievements that had been obtained thanks to the KVDG. Thus, the photographs no doubt increased
European civilization. These photographs show views of luxurious railway travel and buildings that symbolized the modern transportation of the Russian Empire, from Chita to Vladivostok and Port Arthur, with Khabarovsk. In addition, the construction of the KVGD yielded many positive achievements for the region: in particular, the old districts of contemporary Harbin are more pleasant and attractive than they were in the center of Russia to the Far Eastern borders of the empire. Thus, the Russian Empire expanded its cultural, political, and financial influence in China, Manchuria, and Mongolia; this expansion acted as a kind of "soft power" of the Russian Empire in the Far East and the Amur. Because hundreds of Chinese and Manchurian workers obtained jobs thanks to the KVGD, this expansion acted as a kind of "soft power" of the Russian Empire in China. As a result, although the KVGD belonged to the Chinese territory, making it defenseless: in the spring of 1900, the Chinese religious revolt started in an area close to the KVGD, and its income was not significantly higher than that of agricultural workers. The board of the KVGD even provided free medical care for workers of all nationalities and citizenship, paid temporary disability benefits, and paid benefits to families in cases of workers' deaths.

Chinese markets ("Oriental bazaars") are also present in the KVGD photographs, but these appear to have more of an ethnographic function than a decorative one; that is, these images depict the traditional life of people in the Far East. Some images depict the different physical appearances and traditional clothes of the people living around the KVGD and building it. Some photographs show a very naturalistic style, and demonstrate the poverty of the local Chinese and Manchurian people. In my opinion, the underlying message of such images was that the KVGD was bringing civilization to the most distant regions of both China and Russia, and that the poverty of the local ethnicities was being transformed into progress by the urban and technological achievements of the KVGD. Thus, the KVGD, which connected the center with the outskirts of the empire, was regarded as being of the highest benefit to the far-flung population.

The photographs of Chinese, Mongolian, and Manchurian temples among the KVGD photos depict the traditional way of life of the Far Eastern peoples and were ethnocraphic in nature, aimed at a wide Russian audience.

In summary, I can draw several conclusions regarding the photographs of the KVGD. First, the principles of visual representation of the Russian Far East were different from the Oriental paradigms of Western painting and photography: the Russian

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THE PROZHITO PROJECT AIMS TO CREATE AN ARCHIVE OF DIARIES

Initially, Prozhito was intended to become a digital library and an archive containing diaries of people who lived through the Soviet period. However, it turned out that creating a digital archive of personal diaries is impossible without real people eager to spend hours transcribing manuscripts, proofreading scanned copies of published diaries or preparing texts for upload. As the project evolved it turned into a social network connecting volunteers from Russia and abroad interested in history of the twentieth century.

The digital project Prozhito was launched by Russian historian and activist Mikhail Melnichenko in Moscow in 2014. Ilya Venyavkin, was one of the founders of the project. The aim of the project is two-fold: on the one hand, to digitize already published diaries and on the other, to find previously unknown or unpublished manuscripts and to convince their owners, whether public or private, to make them available to broader audiences. The latter involves convincing the owners that the project is reliable and, what is more important, that their diaries really matter.

The idea behind the creation of such an extensive archive of diaries is to provide an alternative to the state-centered and state-controlled version of history promoted during the Soviet period and still dominant today. Given that during Soviet times the social sciences and humanities were under ideological control and independent media were literally non-existent, we chose to look for another perspective on the past by turning to first-person accounts. It was not an easy choice, as we soon realized any selection of diaries would be fragmentary and voluntarist. Hence, we decided to archive all diaries that ended up with us. It is difficult to say how many weeks it will take to reach such an utopian goal as archiving all existing diaries, but we believe that even in the form of “a work in progress”, this project can be of great help to various scholars, journalists, artists and other users.

So far, we have published about 800 diaries, ten percent of which are made public for the first time. This amount constitutes only a tiny part of all diary accounts of the Soviet era, but it may be enough to give some impression of personal experiences of crucial events of Russian history in the 20th century.

Collecting diaries of people who lived through the Soviet period

D I A R I E S  A R E  o r i g i n a l  h a n d w r i t t e n  p e r s o n a l  r e c o r d s  c o n s i s t i n g  o f  e n t r i e s  a r r a n g e d  b y  d a y ,  r e p o r t i n g  o n  e v e r y d a y  o c c u r r e n c e s ,  r e f l e c t i o n s ,  e m o t i o n a l  e x p e r i e n c e s  a n d  i m p r e s s i o n s.  D i a r i e s  a r e  u s u a l l y  w r i t t e n  f o r  t h e  a u t h o r’s  o w n  u s e  a n d  n o t  w i t h  t h e  i n t e n t i o n  o f  b e i n g  p u b l i s h e d.  H o w e v e r ,  h i s t o r y  k n o w s  e x a m p l e s  o f  d i a r i e s  b e i n g  i n t e n t i o n a l l y  w r i t t e n  f o r  p r o f i t  o r  s e l f-vindication with a possible reading public. Therefore, this project can be of great help to various scholars, journalists, artists and other users.

The idea behind the creation of such an extensive archive of diaries is to provide an alternative to the state-centered and state-controlled version of history promoted during the Soviet period and still dominant today. Given that during Soviet times the social sciences and humanities were under ideological control and independent media were literally non-existent, we chose to look for another perspective on the past by turning to first-person accounts. It was not an easy choice, as we soon realized any selection of diaries would be fragmentary and voluntarist. Hence, we decided to archive all diaries that ended up with us. It is difficult to say how many weeks it will take to reach such an utopian goal as archiving all existing diaries, but we believe that even in the form of “a work in progress”, this project can be of great help to various scholars, journalists, artists and other users. So far, we have published about 800 diaries, ten percent of which are made public for the first time. This amount constitutes only a tiny part of all diary accounts of the Soviet era, but it may be enough to give some impression of personal experiences of crucial events of Russian history in the 20th century.
This collection of excerpts from diaries of 1917 and 1918 may give insights into how different people experienced the Russian revolution and found words to give meaning to these events.

Translation and editing: Ekaterina Kalinina and Alexandra Kochergin

Tatiana Sukhotina-Tolstaya
October 4, 1864 – September 21, 1950
Author of memoirs, elder daughter of Lev Tolstoy, and wife of M.S. Sukhotin, public person, member of the First State Duma.

January 2, 1917
Yasnaya Polyana. Yesterday I read striking news in the newspaper: Rasputin has been shot. I won’t tell you the details as I am attached to the press-cutting from The Russian Word.

For a long time a lot of people have been talking about the necessity getting rid of this dark force and now we have new Decembrists who have sacrificed themselves for what they consider the good of their Motherland.

I am happy that I am in the village. I live in the Yasnopolyanskoye rear is awful: pillage, thirst for money and irritation.

I am sad and I think that the crime committed won’t bring anything good to our miserable homeland but will weigh on the conscience of those who have done it like a bloody indelible stain.

“The dog has been shot”. But will it make our ruler wiser and help him to choose his advisers?

Will hysterical dissolute women become rational and chaste?

Will the bankers and ministers with blotted reputations be more honest and won’t they find other people whom will they bribe for their own rehabilitation?

I think that the disappearance of Rasputin won’t change anything. And this case may and probably will become the spark which will lead to the explosion of people’s seething resentment.

Misha would be concerned about the event. He took a special interest in Rasputin. His notes are about Rasputin. He took the information from people who personally knew him and who learned a great deal about him.

They are starting to talk about peace. I can’t believe that this season it is covered with snow, located on an end-ritted five kilometers further from Petrograd on the way to Tsarskoye Sel’.

It’s suitable scenery for yesterday’s event. The empress and her ill-omened friend were crying near the corpse and described the wounds, Professor Kosorotov invited Akulina, a young novice, to the hall where the autopsy had been carried out. She had become acquainted with Rasputin in Olitsky convent where he exorcised demons from her. In accordance with the will of the empress she and an orderly started to dress the corpse for the last time. Akulina was the only one who could approach him: Rasputin’s wife, his daughters, his most ardent fans begged to get permission to see the dead man, but in vain.

The formerly obsessed, now pious Akulina spent half of the night washing the corpse, filled his wounds with aromatic herbs, dressed him in new clothes and put him in the coffin. Finally she put a cross on his chest and a letter from the empress in his hands. Here is the text of the letter which I got from Lady T., an acquaintance of Rasputin and Akulina’s friend:

“My dear martyr, give me your blessing so that I may have it with me all the time as long as I am alive. And pray for us in heaven in your holy prayers. Alexandra.”

The next morning, i.e. yesterday, the empress and Lady Vyrybova came to Rasputin’s body to pray and brought a lot of flowers, icons and lamentations.

A lot of times while going to Tsarskoye Selo I passed by Chesma asylum (the former residence of Catherine II) which I could see through the trees. In this season it is covered with snow, located on an endless foggy and cold plain – an ominous and sad place. It’s suitable scenery for yesterday’s event. The empress and her ill-omened friend were crying near the swollen corpse of a dissolute man whom they loved so much and whom Russia would curse for all eternity: history, the greatest playwright, created these pathetic episodes.

At about midnight the coffin was taken to Tsarskoye Selo under the supervision of Lady Golovina and Colonel Loman, and then it was brought to the chapel in the imperial park.

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February 20, 1917
The previous days, I came to Tsarskoye Selo from the Romanian front on February 20. On the front line life took its course. We had a good supply of ammunition but very little food. On average in Romania we got 60 percent of what we were supposed to get but in certain units this number fell below 20 percent. We had to eat dead horses. The situation with railroads was awful, mainly because of the trains’ miserable condition. I don’t know where it was worse: on Romanian railroads or on ours. But the ministers didn’t want to hear the truth; in this respect the head-quarters were braver.

“Protopopov, etc. The eyebrows are knitted angrily, the fists clench. “We are expecting not only a revolution but also a knife-fight. They will slaughter those who don’t have calluses on their hands. We will win but not without a small revolution. Now we must go to war and not pay attention to any provocations.”

February 26, 1917
I have been having a rest at home in Tsarskoye Selo. It seems that it is calming down. But it is a sign, of course. Let’s play at war, we are expecting not only a revolution but also a knife-fight. They will slaughter those who don’t have calluses on their hands. We will win but not without a small revolution. Now we must go to war and not pay attention to any provocations.

February 27, 1917
I went to Petrograd in the morning. First I went to the institute and gave an announcement that lectures would start again on Wednesday. Then I worked in the office the whole day. Volkov, who had come from the Vyborg district said that there was shooting and a barricade had been put up in Kirochnaya Street. We could hear the shooting here. It’s not clear who is shooting at whom. It’s more likely that they started to shoot at the demonstrators but a part of the military troops went over to the opposite side. It’s awful. But in spite of all this recklessness of the armed conflict, there is a happy feeling in my soul.

Nevertheless some soldiers are for their people.

They say that there are machine guns in the attics from which the police shoot at people. In December Misha (my cousin, an officer) told me that gendarmes and the police are taught to shoot in the front any more as they decided to put me in charge of coal manufacturance. It is too late to give him my plan for it. He was talking about months and years ahead but not very sure. But in the administration of railroad communication and in other administrations – the same old way! They were as cool as cucumbers. After having been at the front their clerical work seemed useless and their complacent archness dignifying. I wanted to come back to real life.

In Romania I felt helpful but here it was very doubtful. I didn’t believe in the success of my coil dictatorship. I found out the way! They were as cool as cucumbers. After having been at the front their clerical work seemed useless and their complacent archness dignifying. I wanted to come back to real life.

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March 5, 1917
Everybody felt fear for George. 18-year-olds were drafted into the army on February 3. George is in the 7th grade and he is 18. Aunt Manya had forgotten to obtain a draft deferment and Gorge could have been taken to the war. But everything turned out all right. Aunt Manya did get a draft deferment and he wasn’t drafted. I am going to play the Song of Gondolier at our school concert on March 3. I am terrified of making a mistake.

Yesterday I had such a terrible migraine that I wasn’t able to go to the Gantovers for lunch. I don’t know why but I am always sick when the Gantovers ask us for lunch. The first time I had a stomach ache, the second – migraine.

I feel very sorry for Kalinovich. My mother and I are going to write him a letter to the Black Sea Fleet.

It’s very difficult to get meat and sometimes we don’t have it for months. A lot of people didn’t have any pancakes for Shrovetide [Maslenitsa] but we have a lot of sources to get food.

Yesterday I had so many impressions that I wasn’t able to set them in order. Before the strike there was a lot of unrest in Petrograd. Workers were very tired of the war and I start to fear for our future. Slack discipline in the army is putting our lives at risk. The new government wants to spread in the front? It will cope with this scourge or will it allow a contagious agitation of the strict discipline. Will the new government be able to die for the idea, but most will sacrifice their lives because means the death of the state. Only a few people are ready to go to war and I start to fear for our future. Slack discipline in the army is putting our lives at risk.

The chosen government is perfect for a spiritual life. I am waiting and I am sure that a miracle will happen and the mysterious will come revealing its attractive and those who have become stars on the vanished horizon are troubled and sticky.

Maria Vishnevskaya
January 31, 1901 – late 1970s
High school student.

October 11, 1917
I thought I would meet Alexander. Why? – I didn’t know. In the morning I hoped, no, it was not a hope, I was sure I would meet him. Now it’s ridiculous and strange to think of it. We got separated a long time ago and it is done with. Days are going past, so empty and sad, sometimes awfully dreary.

They say there will be a massacre at night. It is disturbing outside. They are whispering unchecked facts to each other. And me… I am waiting for a meeting, awfully nice and amazingly tender, mysterious words and charming smiles. Against the background of horror and outrage I am waiting for a spiritual life. I am waiting and I am sure that a miracle will happen and the mysterious will come revealing its attractive but uneasy horizons.

Dreams, dreams about the beautiful but life is a horror, troubling and sticky.

Everyday life is remote and alien to me. The impossible and those who have become stars on the vanished horizon are close, charming and beautiful.

Rurik Iynev
February 11, 1891 – February 19, 1981
Poet, writer, translator.

October 1, 1917
Afternoon. Tram 2. Michailovskaya Square. A general, his stout wife (wearing fur) and a cadet (who may have been their son) were sitting in front of me. A poor boy entered. He was asking for some money. Nobody paid any attention to him. Neither the general’s family nor the others.

The general’s wife gave him anJ ahaughey (and even gloato) look (I was sure that this boy symbolized revolution for her). I was paralyzed (like in a dream sometimes). When I put my hand into the pocket to get a wallet, it was too late: the boy had gone. I heard the words of a gentleman (the mocking words addressed to the boy): “Come to my house to do the washing up.”

“I am through with having anemia. I want to go alone. I am leaving now. I want to go alone. It’s such an interesting thing!”

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Valentina Chebotareva
Circa 1879–1919
Senior nurse of Empress Alexandra Fedorovna Palace hospital, who stayed in contact with the royal family after their abdication. Daughter of the military doctor I.S. Duyunsky, wife of the general P.I. Chebotarev.

March 6, 1917
Yesterday I had so many impressions that I wasn’t able to set pen to paper. I learned of the abdication only on March 4, in the morning; the news came to Petrograd on March 3 in the evening. I will never forget the moment when I got the news. It was snowing hard and cold. I saw an artisan with a page of Izvestiya. I asked him to read it. I was standing in a crowd and he read the fatal words to all of us: Nicholas abdicated for himself and for his son. Five days and the monarchy has gone. One signature and the way of life we used to have for centuries has been destroyed. Everybody is silent. People are seized with horror. Russia… without the tsar. There is a total silence in the hospital. Everybody is shocked and depressed.

Vera Ignatievna was crying like a helpless child. We were waiting for a constitutional monarchy but suddenly the throne was given to the people and we are going to have a republic. All the newspapers came out yesterday. I read all of them from cover to cover. The chosen government is perfect but the demoralization of the army as soldiers will chose the authorities, the deputies, among doctors and orderlies – and I start to fear for our future. Slack discipline in the army means the death of the state. Only a few people are ready to die for the idea, but most will sacrifice their lives because of the strict discipline. Will the new government be able to cope with this scourge or will it allow a contagious agitation to spread in the front? 
Michael Menshikov
September 25, 1859 – September 20, 1918
Writer, journalist, and public person, one of the ideologues of the Russian nationalist movement. Executed.

July 7, 1917
Oh, my God! Time flies! Today is July 7 and we are still alive. We have nothing to believe in but a dispensation. The same dispensation killed some people and didn’t protect others from the theft of all their property, from poverty, from slavery when you are old, from the bitterness you feel when you see your children bare-foot and hungry, going as yesterday to a monastery to get some bread. What a difference compared to the last year! Last year we had plenty of bread, milk and meat were five times cheaper (meat was 7–8 times cheaper), my property was then mine, there were no revolts and threats, and the danger of being occupied was far away. If we survive this year, will milk cost 9 rubles a bottle and meat 30 rubles a pound? And a pound of bread for 100 rubles? It’s clear that there are three ways out: to die, to wait for peace or to run away to southern or eastern countries where there is bread. It’s easy to say: to run away in the time of siege! Where to live? How to live? In the afternoon.

Nicholas II has been shot. “The official news came at once. My heart is heavy. What is this blood for? Everybody covered the tsar’s eyes with their own handkerchiefs. Executed.

The newspapers write that the allied ambassadors have
now thrown this welcome sop to the Bolsheviks. As a result of it, the army committee as well.

December 30, 1917
I am using different methods to get non-suspicious documents to go to the south if my business trip to Japan fails, but in vain. I am scolding myself for little revolutionary experience. I should have taken some stamped papers when the old corpus committee and the commissar were working. I could have got them from the army committee as well.

Alexey Budberg
May 21, 1869 – December 14, 1945
Lieutenant general. Managed military department in A.V. Kolchak government.

October 28, 1917
The situation is still unclear; the fight for power in Petrograd is going on. We only know that Kerensky took Gatchina and the sailors and the Izmailovsky regiment that guarded it surrendered. Some Emergency Committee was created in Luga that announced that it would take state power until the Constituent Assembly was created.

Petrograd has its own government with Lenin at the head and some Boholiks Ethiopians as ministers. All newspapers except the bourgeois ones came from Petrograd. The Bolsheviks have been seized by the Boholiks and the situation is so bad that even the New Life, the meanest and most harmful Boholik newspaper, suddenly became more right wing and cries havoc because of the regime that has been established by its friends.

In the afternoon our radio stations caught the radio of the Petrograd garrison revolutionary committee, which asked for help and called for taking Kerensky, who occupied Gatchina, in the rear. The tone was very uncertain but taking Gatchina could lead to very serious consequences; the Bolsheviks reassured themselves and the executive committee of the army.

On the fifth day of October our radio stations caught the telegram of the army committee as well.

The last day of the fatal year for Russia. The year is equal to many hundreds years and its results will affect the lives of many dozens of generations.

Between the Boholiks and Kerensky is taken some stamped papers when the old corpus committee and the commissar were working. I could have got them from the army committee as well.
October 12, 1917
The anarchy is continuing. In the south (in Bendery, Eliauetgrad and Nikolaev) soldiers are committing outrages. In the Tarnob provence estates are being destroyed! On the Riga front, near Timerman, the Germans started an offensive and some of our companies retreated. Today F.I. Prove has donated a golden star of Mitrid Bosporsky to the museum, a valuable gift. He told us that in Riga the Germans shot two regiments of the Russian soldiers who surrendered but they did honors to the officers who had been imprisoned by the soldiers. If it is true, it serves them right, our soldiers are rascals.

December 28, 1917
In the morning I went to the bank but it was closed. Some private banks are said to be occupied by soldiers. I saw two red guards near the Discount Bank. There are no newspapers.

July 19, 1918
I attended Mass in the church where the burial service L.I.B. was read. The Bolshevik newspapers (there are no newspapers now) write about the execution of the tsar in Suhkarev market; we have bought a good (Old Russian unit of weight, approx. 16,38 kg) but I don’t have any bread.

February 18, 1917
It’s cold in the flats. Firewood used to cost 10 rubles, now it costs 50 rubles. There is little food, we heard that there are groats in Suhkarev market; we have bought a good (Old Russian unit of weight, approx. 16,38 kg), but didn’t have any bread.

February 19, 1917
There is no bread, meat or oil in Moscow; cow’s milk – 2.5 rubles a pound; there is little grain; milk and vegetables are expensive. There is no supply of flour in Moscow; when they bring it, it is used for baking immediately. Three pounds of sugar is a monthly ration for one person. Today I was lucky; I had a cup of tea with sugar at the college. There is some meat in the buffet, but there is no bread and the buffet is a privileged one. On my way back I had a look at private bakeries – no bread. There is a line of 70–90 people in front of the two state bakeries. I stood in a line for 40 minutes but didn’t get anything. The basket of bread which was brought was enough for just 20 people. Soldiers don’t stand in a line and people are angry about it.

February 21, 1917
It’s getting worse and worse with food. Yesterday there were almost revolutionary speeches in the Duma. There are lines of 100–120 people in front of bakeries. I wish bread tickets were introduced. It seems that soldiers and nurses can’t skip the line any more to get food.

The state has had to buy food cheap and the food often goes bad. It’s unprofitable to produce it and that means we will have less of it next year.

Vera Sudeikina
December 25, 1888 – September 17, 1982
Actress of Kamerny Theatre and silent films artist.

July 20, 1917
I promised myself to be healthy from now on. Serezha suggested making a kitchen and did it well. He promised pictures. After lunch he was working on Casa Bella Donna and successfully put a violinist among the girls. I was tired after cleaning the house and tried to read Lord of the Flies. Lidia Nikitichna came for a coffee. While Serezha was sleeping, I went to Reinbot to buy some flowers. I bought a big bunch of flowers for 3 rubles. In the evening Lidia Mikhailovna and we were sitting in a newly-made kitchen. I was reading Night Owls aloud and Serezha started the picture he had promised of him and me in the Dutch 18th-century style.

Nicolay Scshapov
June 4, 1881 – May 28, 1960
Doctor of engineering, professor, historian, photographer.

Introduction.
Writing women’s history in times of illiberal revisionism

Throughout the past century, East-Central Europe has been the scene of numerous spectacular political upheavals and often violent political change: from the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Second World War, and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 to the 1956 revolution in Hungary and the Velvet Revolution of 1989, to Maidan protests of 2014 and the subsequent war in Ukraine. All these events have since been transformed into potent political myths, and their leaders serve as national or revolutionary heroes, myths, and their leaders serve as national or revolutionary heroes, their interpretations shape future political projects, and their commemorations define the values underlying contemporary collectives. Women played active roles in all of these watershed events, as feminist scholars have long pointed out. Their participation, however, has often been ignored by mainstream academic discourse. Hence the systemic omission of women and gender from written history and collective memory.

Stemming from this perceived absence of women and their political participation in official narratives about the past, the rationale for women’s history of wars, revolutions, and political upheavals seems to have been straightforward. First and foremost, it inscribed women back into the “blank spots” of official narratives about the past. In fact, from the 1970s onwards, women’s and gender history constituted itself as a vigorous field of study mostly in reaction to the absence of women and gender from written history and collective memory. Hence the systemic omission of women from history, called “the problem of invisibility” by the prominent feminist scholar Joan Wallach Scott, has long remained the foundational issue for women’s history. In consequence, the feminist perspective has largely functioned as a critical tool to uncover female figures active in the past, as well as to explore and document women’s contribution to society.

by a departure from viewing the past in the region, various women ‘worthies’ and ‘gender treasurers’ have recently witnessed what can be called the ‘herstorical turn’ — an attempt to forge and popularize mainstream accounts of political processes.

However, as the papers in this special issue alert us, absence and invisibility are not necessarily the key challenge and point of departure for feminist research on women and political upheavals in Eastern Europe. In fact, some countries in the region have recently witnessed what can be called the ‘herstorical turn’ — an outburst of interest in women as participants in historical events, accompanied by a departure from viewing the past in a ‘male stream’ framework. Even more telling is the fact that this shift has often been carried out, not by feminists, but by conservative historians. Among them have been right-wing authors engaged in herstory writing, neoclassical political geographers that use women as symbols of the national struggle, and revisionist national memory institutions that research and commemorate women as national heroes and martyrs. In this issue, the articles by Andrea Pető and Weronika Grzebalska reflect on the recent mainstreaming of women into history in a country caught in the ‘national herstory’ paradigm, and the role it plays to women’s emancipation. In line with this narrative, Undersecretary of State for Social Affairs, Lea Magdalena Gawn of the Polish Ministry of Culture of Poland’s framework of national historiography during the illiberal shift. She argues that women’s history narratives served the broader political function of delivering a cautionary tale against “excessive” liberation of women, so that female communists were often presented as being subordinated to the interests of men, and their radicalism was explained by pointing to the “domestic” sphere. Similarly, Nadezda Petrunsko argues how conservative historians from the early 20th century articulated notions of traditionalism and the role of conservative lifestyles in the historiography of early 20th century female terrorism in Russia, as well as in the historiography of early 20th century female terrorism in Hungary.

A few methodological notes, in Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, 1—15; see also Pető in this issue.

By revealing how a specific organization of the private sphere plays a crucial role in the production of meaning in representations of women and gender, this political and – many ostensibly private practices are, in fact, activities necessary for understanding the political process – and many ostensibly private practices are, in fact, activities necessary for understanding the political process.

References

1 For the state of the art, see the discussion of critical feminist historiographies of memory, war and in Asia Gyi Almy and Andrea Pető, eds., “Introduction: Uncomfortable Connections; Gender, Memory, War,” in Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations in War, Gender, and Political Violence, Routledge, 2016.

2 See Grzebalska in this issue.


5 A. Tuck, “Historicizing Revision and Revisionist Historiography,” Past and Present (Historical Revision in Central Europe, ed. Michal Kopcewicz (Budapest: CEU, 2008), 1–15; see also Pető in this issue.


7 Kadijevich, “The Female Terrorists: Political or Just Mad?” in Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, 1–15; see also Pető in this issue.

8 Dobrochna Kałwa, “Historia kobiet: kilka uwag metodologicznych” [Women’s history: a few methodological notes], in Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, 1–15; see also Pető in this issue.


10 Female terrorists: political or just mad? Conservative narratives in the historiography of early 20th century female terrorism in Russia, Nadezda Petrunsko

11 Between gender blindness and national herstory. The history of Polish women in WWI as the site of an anti-modernist revolution, Weronika Grzebalska

12 See e.g. canonical works on using gender as a category of political analysis, e.g. Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” American Historical Review, 98, no. 1 (December, 1993), 260–275, and the work of Susan Hekmati, “Women and memory in Iran’s recent history: from remembrance to forgetting,” Journal of Women’s History, 22, no. 3 (Fall, 2010), 133–151.

13 See Pető in this issue.

14 See also Pető in this issue.

Women in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution

The women of 1956 were presented in the frame of national terrorism, in which women’s actions were evaluated in terms of how useful they were for the national project. Women in 1956

Women and Political Violence

The history of Polish women in WWI as the site of an anti-modernist revolution, Weronika Grzebalska

Female terrorists: political or just mad? Conservative narratives in the historiography of early 20th century female terrorism in Russia, Nadezda Petrunsko

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1 For the state of the art, see the discussion of critical feminist historiographies of memory, war and in Asia Gyi Almy and Andrea Pető, eds., “Introduction: Uncomfortable Connections; Gender, Memory, War,” in Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations in War, Gender, and Political Violence, Routledge, 2016.

2 See Grzebalska in this issue.


5 A. Tuck, “Historicizing Revision and Revisionist Historiography,” Past and Present (Historical Revision in Central Europe, ed. Michal Kopcewicz (Budapest: CEU, 2008), 1–15; see also Pető in this issue.


7 Kadijevich, “The Female Terrorists: Political or Just Mad?” in Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, 1–15; see also Pető in this issue.

8 Dobrochna Kałwa, “Historia kobiet: kilka uwag metodologicznych” [Women’s history: a few methodological notes], in Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, 1–15; see also Pető in this issue.


10 Female terrorists: political or just mad? Conservative narratives in the historiography of early 20th century female terrorism in Russia, Nadezda Petrunsko

11 Between gender blindness and national herstory. The history of Polish women in WWI as the site of an anti-modernist revolution, Weronika Grzebalska

12 See e.g. canonical works on using gender as a category of political analysis, e.g. Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” American Historical Review, 98, no. 1 (December, 1993), 260–275, and the work of Susan Hekmati, “Women and memory in Iran’s recent history: from remembrance to forgetting,” Journal of Women’s History, 22, no. 3 (Fall, 2010), 133–151.

13 See Pető in this issue.

14 See also Pető in this issue.

Women in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution

The women of 1956 were presented in the frame of national terrorism, in which women’s actions were evaluated in terms of how useful they were for the national project. Women in 1956
Most studies on memories ignore their own audience, as Wulf Kansteiner warned us some years ago. Because stories matter and because memory can be assigned and attributed to certain social groups, there will necessarily be competing memory cultures. Kansteiner argued that collective memory is a result of complex processes of production and consumption that acknowledge different traditions, values, and interests. This is very true in the case of the memory politics of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which has recently been transformed and now includes a new focus on women's experiences and memories, perhaps a surprising development at first glance.

In discussing the gender history of 1956, the main question is whose stories are being told. This means that when discussing women's memories of 1956 we need to distinguish the producers and consumers of collective memory from the traditions of gendered memory and the appropriations of memory. Appropriation was used by Michel de Certeau in underlining that consumption is not a passive process. The producers of memory are building on their own meanings and values through the consumption of culture, which is at the same time a revisitation of culture.

Never has so much money been involved in commemorating the 1956 Revolution than for the commemorations in 2016. The Official Gazette announced the government decision 1728/2015 to commemorate 1956, which was backed by unprecedented -- and not very transparent -- public funding. There were 2,500 proposals submitted for grants from this fund, of which 1,600 were supported. In 650 villages and cities, a total of 1,430 events were held to commemorate the 1956 Revolution. The bloody foundation of a collaborationist state was laid after the Soviet occupation of Hungary that crushed the revolution on November 4, 1956, and imprisoned or executed many of its participants. Already from the beginning of the Soviet occupation of Hungary, different interpretations of the events have been written both in conflict and in dialogue with one another, and have constructed a divided collective memory. Before 1989, the history of the failed 1956 Revolution was already a target of meaning-making processes. Collaboration with the Kádár regime was at the center of these debates and became the basis of self-definition for different political actors after 1989. History writing has always been a process in which different groups in communication with each other produce new narratives and create discursive spaces, and this is why it is crucial to trace how women's memories are represented, constructed, and appropriated.

The absence of women in the historiography of the 1956 Revolution

The bloody foundation of a collaborationist state was laid after the Soviet occupation of Hungary that crushed the revolution on November 4, 1956, and imprisoned or executed many of its participants. Already from the beginning of the Soviet occupation of Hungary, different interpretations of the events have been written both in conflict and in dialogue with one another, and have constructed a divided collective memory. Before 1989, the history of the failed 1956 Revolution was already a target of meaning-making processes. Collaboration with the Kádár regime was at the center of these debates and became the basis of self-definition for different political actors after 1989. History writing has always been a process in which different groups in communication with each other produce new narratives and create discursive spaces, and this is why it is crucial to trace how women's memories are represented, constructed, and appropriated.

The history of 1956 was taboo before 1989 as the Kádár regime (1956—1989)
After 1989, the variability of the interpretation of past events also gave legitimacy to the 1956 Revolution. A remembered past is connected to identity formation, and omitting and ignoring the memory of women in the events of 1956 occurred in parallel with excluding women from political citizenship and the revival of stereotypical male and female images in the collective memory. Women’s memory of 1956 was missing from the historiography because it could hardly fit in the framework for constructing gendered political citizenship after 1989, and this for several reasons.

First, because the image of the armed female fighters was disturbing to the social order, there was also little discussion of women as leaders or as politicians. Women’s agency and autonomy were written out of the story of 1956. Meanwhile, the first 27 women were charged with criminal or economic offenses, so that they are missing from the statistics. Palásik also shows that gender inequality in women’s participation in political processes was a driving force of the 1989 transition, as far-right women were more often arrested for political or ideological questions because women were not only indicted for political offenses, but also often arrested for political reasons or charged with criminal or economic offenses and not with political offenses, so that they are missing from the statistics. Palásik also shows that gender inequality in women’s participation in political processes was a driving force of the 1989 transition.

Three other directions have been taken in researching women’s participation in the 1956 Revolution. The first was the book by Kricsy Molnár, which had been written by Mórozi, who introduced the concepts of silences and silencing in intergenerational memory. The book features testimonies of children about their mothers and how they coped while their fathers were in custody. She found that the second generation of children of political opponents was not presented in the form of an organized interview. Instead, it was presented in the form of a random selection of photographs and stories. The second generation of children of political opponents was not presented in the form of an organized interview. Instead, it was presented in the form of a random selection of photographs and stories. The second generation of children of political opponents was not presented in the form of an organized interview. Instead, it was presented in the form of a random selection of photographs and stories.
the process of using exact dates of canonical events and the pomp during the Revolution, the moral purity of the people, and the national feminist framework of victimhood and suffering.31 The first interviews as these interviews were recorded in 2003. The firstous style of narration were due to the timing and context of the commemoration of 1956 in 2016, which brought a number of events calculated in the press were staged in peaceful Austria for the westing. Some of the fighting and escape scenes that were widely cirulated in the press were staged in peaceful Austria for the western media who did not want to venture out for a risky journey to Hungary behind the Iron Curtain. It is no surprise that in 2016 the billboards appropriated these staged photos for their own purposes.38 The mediatization of the revolutionary events and personalities continued on the billboards as bodies were Photo-shopped out and rifles were added to maximize the effect.39

**THE SUDDEN PROMINENCE** of some women whose stories of 1956 had not been featured before (except Ilona Tóth) is due to the “women’s history turn” in history writing. This new school of history writing is a way for the illiberal state to appropriate the memory politics of historical events for its own purposes. The major traveling exhibition about women in 1956 was entitled “56 Teardrops – Women’s Destinies” and summarized the contents of this shift in memory politics:

In memoires and historical publications, very often instances when one was not allowed to return to the elementary school because her father had participated in the revolution. Others were fired from their jobs or imprisoned.44

Absence was replaced by the presence of women, but within a framework in which the history of women was written in terms of suffering, sacrifice, and victimhood, and not in terms of agency or subjectivity. During the celebrations in 2016, the women of 1956 were presented in the frame of “national feminism”, in which women’s actions were evaluated in terms of how useful they were for the national project. “National feminism” is emerging from revisiting the history of 1956, and it is reducing stories and testimonies to politically acceptable notions of patriotic feminism and setting them up as an example for present-day Hungarian women. In the case of the 1956 Revolution, female street fighters are only presented as victims of communist repression and not as women who decided to take part in an armed struggle. The sexual harassment and violence committed against street fighters by their fellow heroic fighters have also not been discussed publicly.

**Genesis of the memory politics of the illiberal state**

In 2010 and in 2014, FIDESZ – in coalition with the Christian Democratic Party – won the elections in Hungary and set up a new system of governance called: the System of National Coop- eration (NER). During the past years, FIDESZ has been under international pressure to comply with written laws and Euro- pean liberal values. And despite taking over all kinds of policy agencies, state institutions, and funding opportunities – FIDESZ has not encountered nor invited the formation of any effective political opposition. This proves that FIDESZ over the past years has set up a successful form of governance, which is not setting the stage for future electoral victories, but also indicating new paths for obviously successful governance. In recent years, political scientists and political analysts have been forced to re- consider not only their analytical toolkit, but also their concepts in order to try to understand this phenomenon – calling it “democratic authoritarianism”, “an illiberal state”, or a “mafia state”, just list few of the new terms. Along with the Polish sociologist Weronika Grzabańska, in comparing Hungary and Poland we argued in our previous work about a new form of governance stemming from the failures of globalized (neo)liberal democracy, which created states that are weak for the strong and strong for the weak.45 Based on its modus operandi, we call such a regime an “illiberal polytopian state” because it feeds on the vital resourc es of the previous political system while contributing to that sys- tem’s decay. Hungary, indeed, is an example.

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The play by András Szilágyl about Ilona Tóth in the Hungarian National Theater. **PHOTO: ANDRÁS SZILÁGY**
political thinking are processes of inclusion and exclusion. In the case of writing the history of 1956. National history and the post-structuralist turn in history writing after 1989 that un-

The recent turn of “herstory” writing in Central European countries has left feminist historians and secular human rights activists puzzled. However, the illiberal memory politics is not coming from nowhere. Gábor Gyárfás, the renowned Hungarian historian, mentioned two reasons for this when analyzing developments in the historiography of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in 2006. The first is the post-structuralist turn in history writing after 1989 that un-

The idea of not belonging to the canon creates a consciousness of absences and failures which could be described as a “negative consciousness”: negative in the sense that the consciousness is not defined by what the object is, but by what the subject is not, that is, the adoption of a perspective of self-exclusion. Therefore, writing women’s history means to function oneself as separate with the hope of filling in the void. Writing women’s history in Central Europe has a specific intel-

THE POLYPORE STATE

The polytropic state has a revisionist history because it undermined and/or revised the past based on visual sources, statues, testimonies, and ritu-

THE CANON OF women’s history writing its place in the national historiographies of Central Europe after 1989. As Liakos points out, “Writing history means to internalize the canon, and to be ascribed in a mental geography described by the canon.” At the same time women’s history was necessarily pushed towards a particular history, pointing out a void in prior historiography. This negative approach is aptly characterized by Liakos: “The idea of not belonging to the canon creates a consciousness of absences and failures which could be described as a ‘negative consciousness’: negative in the sense that the consciousness is not defined by what the object is, but by what the subject is not, that is, the adoption of a perspective of self-exclusion.” Therefore, writing women’s history means to function oneself as separate with the hope of filling in the void.

Writing women’s history in Central Europe has a specific intel-

of interpretations instead of a single canonized narrative. This narrative strategy offers a new path for generating history, but it is still supposed to fit in and refer to the “old canon”, and thus be but one of several narratives about nation and democracy. This plurality of discussion also influences the definition of what sources count as legitimate because the question is no longer “what happened”, but rather how to redefine the relationship to the past based on visual sources, statues, testimonies, and ritu-

power struggle, and the actors should understand how politics works and how people are mobilized for different struggles. Gabor Gyario also argued that the second cause is the fact that the post-modern turn was combined with the emerging importance of personal recollections about events (ego documents, oral histories, testimonies, diaries, etc.) as sources. Only personal recollections about events (ego documents, oral histories, testimonies, diaries, etc.) as sources. Only personal recollections about events (ego documents, oral histories, testimonies, diaries, etc.) as sources.

Representatives of “new history” argued that writing politi-

for itself, joining the stream of testimonies. The revision of the 1956 by members of the democratic opposition were also those missing from the official history of the events. Collecting women’s oral history collects information about the event and the meaning making process.” By telling our own story, we gain power over our lives, and therefore women’s testimonies also give importance to women’s actions. Representatives of “new history” argued that writing politi-

center of this narrative is the male citizen, who is fighting for the nation. Everybody else, including women and ethnic minorities, is on the margins. As Gianna Pomata has argued, gender history is analyzing national and universal history in terms of the roles that gendered characteristics and symbols have played in histori-

THE REASON why women suddenly came to the center of the cele-

In 1990 the political crisis of 1989 and the refugee crisis together with security problems contributed to the previously consensus neoliberal concept of Europe becoming multilayered and to the emergence of new actors. Alternative concepts of Europe have gained momentum, and different forms of illiberal governance have influenced, among other important institutions, the infrastructure of writing history. These characteristics of writing women’s history as a revisionist history were connected to “negative consciousness”, which made it extremely vulnerable to recontextualization during the second transition of the build-up of the polytropic illiberal states and the associated populist turn.

“ ORAL HISTORY BECAME A POPULAR METHOD OF COLLECTING STORIES OF HOW THE 20TH CENTURY HAS REALLY HAPPENED WITH THE AIM OF CREATING A COUNTER CANON TO COMMUNIST HISTORY WRITING.”

Europe (the EU) and the international framework has been weakening in recent years. The triple crises – the financial crisis of 2008 and the refugee crisis together with security problems – contributed to the previously consensus neoliberal concept of Europe becoming multilayered and to the emergence of new actors. Alternative concepts of Europe have gained momentum, and different forms of illiberal governance have influenced, among other important institutions, the infrastructure of writing history. These characteristics of writing women’s history as a revisionist history were connected to “negative consciousness”, which made it extremely vulnerable to recontextualization during the second transition of the build-up of the polytropic illiberal states and the associated populist turn.

According to Tucker’s typology, historical revisionism uses three strategies: significance-driven revisionism, that is, when there is a change in what historians find significant in history, evidence-driven revisions, when new evidence is discovered, and value-driven revisionism, when historical events and processes are re-evaluated because a new system of values becomes he-

“One of the main characteristics of the 1956 Revolution in Hungary has resulted in the opposite – including a marginalization of professional historians and an overwhelming description of personal experiences instead of theorizing, as well as marginalizing the experiences of certain groups while prioritizing those of others, such as women. The history of 1956 is mostly based on oral tradition. Because the Revolution lasted only 13 days and was followed by bloody repression and heavy censorship, documents were either produc-

Women’s demonstration on December 4, 1956, in Budapest.
The stories became an acknowledged subject after 1989. At the same time, the quickly emerging new historical canon integrated both the previously dominant truth framework and new truths, including women as the subjects of history writing.

The truth paradigm as a framework for history writing was necessarily strengthened in Central Europe after 1989. The idea was that the former “false history” was constructed by the same political community because political manipulation was no longer imposed on readers. Previously inaccessible archives were opened up for researchers, and this was the period of “archive fever” described by Jacques Derrida. “The belief is that the truth and its explanations are there in the archives and you just have to find it because, here is the chance for conspiracy theories, the archives were closed and hidden from you by unidentified powers, although these powers are mostly understood to be ‘the communists’.” Oral history became a popular method of collecting stories of “how the 20th century really happened” with the aim of creating a counter canvas to the communist history writing.60

Towards a new paradigm of gendered memory politics

The libelar history politics’ use of the women’s history paradigm is informed by the populist turn. Duncan Light pointed out, while analyzing the transition of 1989, that the various nations of Central Europe were moved “by the desire to construct new post-communist identities, characterized by a democratic, pluralist, capitalist and largely westward-looking orientation.”61

Now a deepening reversal is present—the identities are not democratic, not pluralist, not capitalist, and certainly not westward-looking. Instead, as I pointed out in my article on far right memorialization practices in Hungary, the community of jointly experienced suffering defines national difference. And experienced suffering itself is seen as anti-pluralist. The newly emerging and victorious anti-modernism, which from a social and spiritual point of view revives communitarian, anti-liberal, also turns history into an ideological weapon in order to reach its political aims and to offer a livable, real, and acceptable alternative future. This anti-modernism goes hand in hand with revisionist history writing (and “history politics”), which revisits the tendency writing to women’s history, methods are being used, and new sources are being discovered, all of which refers to the position of the narrator of the story. This narrative position, as Eric Hobsbawm wrote in The Guardian, comes down to “my truth is as valid as your truth.” This stance entails a general opposition to universalism in non-traditional history writing. This anti-universalism and the relative statute of personal narratives as legitimate history writing has replaced the statement of representatives of gendered memory politics. The revisionist history writing is fighting against communist history writing, while women’s history writing opposes the sanctification of social hierarchies.

The revisionism of “new history” together with the truth paradigm informed by anti-communism made the previous narrative about 1956 vulnerable when the populist turn brought in the “my truth is as valid as your truth” framework. As a result of the populist turn, the memory politics of the illiberal state is focusing on people, not on leaders—the “people” have spoken—and that are no longer political architects who themselves are parts of the political history. The commemoration of 1956 labeled the events as the revolution of the masses, as emphasized on the official website:

“We can say it out loud now, that this revolution did not have leaders, in this revolution and freedom, people raised their arms because their real leaders had been executed, forced to emigrate, or imprisoned, and those who replaced them were servants of foreign, Soviet occupying forces who betrayed them.”62

The paradigm shift as a major component of the polypolear state emphasizes women’s roles as caregivers, wives, and daughters. The roots of fascism go back to the 1956 Revolution and can be found in the historiography written by émigrés and members of the democratic opposition, together with the missing paradigm shift in 1989. The evidence for this is what has happened with the visual representations of those women who were selected to be on the billboards. The women on the billboards are represented as innocent and caring women with light makeup—while tough street fighters are presented as victims—and heavily Photoshopped. This type of history writing is based on the fetishization of complementary gender differences, just as we saw prior to 1989. And if it is not accompanied by a critical scrutiny of its production, it can be fraught with the same dire consequences as ignoring the power of women to shift the balance of power in society.

The emerging anti-gender discourses have had a major impact as far as the future of writing women’s history is concerned. The turn in women’s history writing is a Hegemonic fight, in the Gramscian sense, for control of the process of writing history. Revisionist history writing is successfully applying the same methods and theories used in women’s history writing, and by doing so, it has become another canon. As far as the politics of presence is concerned, there are women in history, but in a fundamentally different frame. The triple crises of 2008 also determined the challenges that women’s history writing faces as a form of revisionist history writing, while at the same time anti-gender movements are challenging the definition of gender.

The professional response to the institutionalized memory politics of the illiberal state remained in the frame of “negative consciousness.” At the major scientific conference in Eger titled “1956 and Socialism” held on September 9, 10, 2016, only six out of nearly 100 conference papers focused on the history of women in 1956. In all six papers, all published in a women’s studies journal, women were discussed as prostitutes, workers, wives, and as symbolic representations.

The group “Living Memorial”, which was founded to protest against the Monument of German Occupation in Liberty Square also participated in this resistance with a garri México.63

They set up a series of four panels entitled “Living ’56: The Non-announced Memory of the Revolution” in front of the controversial and highly popular House of Terror museums and show what was missing from the remembrance. All of the panels included a small inset with the text: “Did you know that this was also part of the 1956 Revolution? Do you agree that no one should appropriate history? These are a couple of things that are being left out of the official narrative.” The signs were then dedicated to the intellectuals and politicians, to the journalists and writers, to the Inner Nagy group, and to students and workers detailing the roles they played in the revolution. Needless to say that all were men.

The illusion of 1989—that un-politicized memory spaces are possible because there is a consensus on what the good fight is—is still present among historians. The illusion that the present backlash will be over at some point is still haunting the profession, which does not see that this is not an innocent omission but a socialization fight to hijack the memory of 1956. Unlike the case of Holocaust memorialization, the turn towards witnesses’ testimonies was not based on a consensus, but rather on conflicting hegemonic claims. The “new history” writing opened up space for an even “newer history” that is using the same revisionist methods. Only a rethinking of relationships to politics and to the political can change power relations in this hegemonic fight. The belief that the memory of 1956 is a living memory, and that it is possible to reintegrate the previously omitted social groups and personalities into the revised history of 1956, is a fight that was lost from the beginning.

Andrea Pétő, professor, Central European University

Note: Previous versions of this paper were read at the conference “1956 and Its International Environment” organized by the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies, Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade in Budapest, on December 9, 2016, and at the “Gender and Peace Conference” at Sabanci University of Gender in Istanbul on May 6, 2017. I also gave a previous version of this paper as a keynote lecture at the Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw, on May 29, 2017, and as a guest lecture at Androvol University in the lecture series “1956/2016” on October 13, 2016. I am grateful for questions and comments from the audiences and the commentators.

The Hungarian National Opera announcing 56 themed performances. PHOTO: ANDREAS PETO
For more about the three levels of neoliberalization, see Anikó Gregor.

Ibid., 30.


Zsuzsanna Rózsa, Ugyancsak a fővárosban: Újítású középhatarú média és a bevándorlási kézberakás [On the opposition after 1956, lived a crossed with my heart; fate of the children of 1956 prisoners], (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2000).

Support for the formation of a national opposition in Post-Communist States or the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (Kádár), 1956


Nicola King, Memory, Narrative, Identity. Remembering the Self in Post-Communist Europe” (2017), 354.


Nicola King, Memory, Narrative, Identity. Remembering the Self in Post-Communist Europe” (2017), 354.


Memories of communist women in contemporary Poland

Poland, as the rest of Eastern Europe, is a land where national identity was forged in the crucible of war, revolution, and subsequent totalitarian regimes. These events left their mark on the cultural landscape, including in the depiction of women's roles during these periods. The image of communist women has often been characterized by stereotypes and derogatory portrayals, as seen in various works of literature, film, and television.

By Agnieszka Mrozik

Abstract

I am examining recent works published on the Polish market aimed at popularizing historical knowledge, both non-fiction and fictional literature. I show that the Polish market is a combination of non-fictional literature (i.e. biographies, reports, interviews) and fictional literature (i.e. novels, short stories). Their authors (who are usually male) attempt to present communist women of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the “brave and pure girls” — Brystiger is depicted as a ferocious sexual deviant who takes an account that is as yet still unconfirmed by any other sources. It only addresses the account given by Brystiger’s alleged victim, which is her constant focus in the brutal questioning of suspects; third, she was known for her intractable beauty, which was purportedly appreciated by Picasso himself; fourth, she rumored to have remarkable sexual appetite; fifth, but not least, she was known for her constantly emphasized Jewish origins. The image of a “comrade Minister”, as constructed by these authors, encompasses all the possible impressions that are encoded in the stereotypical figures of “a beautiful Jewess” and a “Judeo-communist”: a demonic quality, sexual transgressions, and criminality: The accumulation of fears, obsessions, and fantasies that are associated with these figures is clearly visible in one scene from Łuszczyna’s book: in this scene, Brystiger is in a conversation with Primate Stefan Wyszyński, and is described as a “snake hissing in a corner of a chapel” — alternating between being seductive and being dangerous. In another scene — one that is frequently cited, although it only addresses the account given by Brystiger’s alleged victim, an account that is as yet still unconfirmed by any other sources — Brystiger is described as a ferocious sexual deviant whose women who transgress traditional gender roles and are typically described as “beasts”, “goddesses of evil”, “cold bitches”, or “lovers of the mighty” of this world. In Słowicki’s book, female communist portrayals are yet another link in the long chain of “evil women” in the history of humankind; they share the limelight with such infamous heroines as Luczenna Gorgio, Cathrine the Great, Magda Goebbels, and Ulrike Meinhof. Łuszczyna, in turn, opens his gallery of “Polish women who were called criminals”, “common felons”, and “psichopath” with the story of Julia Brystiger — one of the most demonized of all Polish communist women. Like Wolińska, Brystiger is a particularly useful object of attention among all the aforementioned authors for a number of reasons: first, in her role as director of the 3rd and 4th Departments of the Ministry of Public Security, she allegedly personally surveilled parties, political organizations, and religious groups; second, she was said to be particularly bent on the brutal questioning of suspects; third, she was known for her intractable beauty, which was purportedly appreciated by Picasso himself; fourth, she rumored to have remarkable sexual appetite; fifth, but not least, she was known for her constantly emphasized Jewish origins. The image of a “comrade Minister”, as constructed by these authors, encompasses all the possible impressions that are encoded in the stereotypical figures of “a beautiful Jewess” and a “Judeo-communist”: a demonic quality, sexual transgressions, and criminality: The accumulation of fears, obsessions, and fantasies that are associated with these figures is clearly visible in one scene from Łuszczyna’s book: in this scene, Brystiger is in a conversation with Primate Stefan Wyszyński, and is described as a “snake hissing in a corner of a chapel” — alternating between being seductive and being dangerous. In another scene — one that is frequently cited, although it only addresses the account given by Brystiger’s alleged victim, an account that is as yet still unconfirmed by any other sources — Brystiger is described as a ferocious sexual deviant whose

KEYWORDS: women’s rights, history writing, emancipation.

Wanda Wasilewska (1905–1964)

Polish writer, publicist, and politician. Before WW II, Waślewska was a member of the Polish Socialist Party, during the war, appointed by Stalin, she became the Chairperson of the Union of Polish Patriots and co-organizer of the Polish Army in the USSR. After the war, Waślewska settled in Kyiv as a member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and as a post-war peace movement activist.

Julia Brystiger (1902–1975)

Polish-Jewish social and political activist. Before the war, Brystiger was a member of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine. She was imprisoned for communist activity, which was illegal at the time in Poland. Between 1945 and 1956, she was the Director of the 3rd Department (responsible for countering the anti-communist underground) and of the 5th Department (responsible for the infiltration of churches and intelligentsia circles) of the Ministry of Public Security. Although Brystiger was accused of torturing prisoners, she was never formally charged or tried. After she finished her political career, she took up writing.

Helena Wolińska (1919–2008)

Polish-Jewish political activist, lawyer, judge, and academic. Before WW II, Wolińska belonged to the Polish Union of Communist Youth. During the war, she served in the People’s Guard and the People’s Army. Between 1949 and 1954, Wolińska was a military prosecutor in a post-war public trial. In the wake of the anti-Semitic purges of March 1968, Wolińska was fined; she then emigrated to Great Britain and worked as a nurse. Toward the end of the 1990s, the Polish authorities applied to the authorities in Great Britain for her extradition, accusing her of having aided in the execution of 24 Home Army soldiers in 1950–1953. In 2006, the British authorities rejected the request.

Beasts, demons, and cold bitches

by Agnieszka Mrozik

Images from the popular TV series Czas honoru (Time of Honor).
women: “transient field wives” (shortened to TFW). The authors states that Julia Brystiger (universally referred to as “Bloody example, Łuszczyna conducts an interview with a “renowned of these women’s personalities, based on rumors — that is, on the information that is not confirmed, but that is still suggestive. For example, Łuszczyna conducts an interview with a “renowned Polish seokologist” (amazing book), who authoritatively states that Julia BRYstrzyna (universally referred to as “Bloody Luna”), who purportedly was the owner of an ornamental drawer that she allegedly used to slam the genitals of young Home Army soldiers, was driven by a “desire for vengeance”: 

Imagine a sensitive, educated, intelligent, pathologically ambitious woman, who’s climbing up the career ladder at any cost, in awful times, through the beds of hideous schmucks, who most certainly did not smell of the inhumane’s equivalent of Franko’s which was purportedly BRYstrzygier’s favorite scum. — A.M. If you had been a TFW for a number of years, would you have any warm feelings left toward men? [...] She clenches her teeth and ignores the opinions about her. Yet she was harboring a sensation of harm and disgust toward herself, she was not able to shut down those emotions. [...] She got lost, directing all the hatred she felt toward herself and her career forastics among young, handsome guys whose love she had never known. — So, tearing off testicles of young Win soldiers’ was revenge for Berman and Mine. — And for men generally, because it was them as the species who were guilty of the fact that her career was never as she wished it to be, and at a price which she never accepted deep in her heart.

The misogynistic, pathologizing language of this conversation reveals not only the deep gender roles of “Polish femininity” — which comprise conservative norms of “Polish femininity” — which comprise a study of the (self-)humiliation of a woman who was allegedly tortured with enemy and burned down by communists, and were arrested and sentenced to prison or death. The members of this organization are now referred to as “Cursed soldiers” and are glorified by the Polish right. The National Day of Remembrance of the “Cursed soldiers” has been celebrated in Poland on March 1, since 2011.

M. Łuszczyna, Żeńs, 17.

Brystrzyn’s “black legend” is actually based on the unfounded account of her alleged victim — a man whom she apparently tortured with rites of efficacy by beating his penis, among other tortures, on the floor. This account purportedly died in the aftermath of her questioning. However, the most recent biography of Brystrzyn indicates that this alleged torture victim not only did not exist, but also did not become infertile (he became a father. See P. Bukalska, Arwen Lane (Warsaw: Wielka Litera, 2006).

Win (Włośnś Nachneii, Freedom and Independence) was a civil-military anti-communist organization that formed in 1943, and remained active into the early 1950s. Its purpose was to fight against the communist authorities, and it used acts that also involved civilians. The organization advocated the need to liberate Poland from Soviet domination, to return to war traditions, and to “cleanse” the country of Jews. Its members were hunted down by communists, and were arrested or imprisoned, and sentenced to prison or death. The members of this organization are now referred to as “Cursed soldiers” and are glorified by the Polish right. The National Day of Remembrance of the “Cursed soldiers” has been celebrated in Poland on March 1, since 2011.

M. Łuszczyna, Żeńs, 31–34.

S. Koper, Kobiet wybrykowej PRL, 159–160; S. Słowiński, Boginie XVIII, 123–133.

S. Koper, Kobiet wybrykowej PRL, 175–197.

T. M. Królikowski, Beżo, S. Koper, Kobiet wybrykowej PRL, 209–210; S. Słowiński, Boginie XVIII, 123–133.

Malgorzata Fidelska writes about emancipation policies in the People’s Poland in her book Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

Zaścib [Blindness] (2008) is a movie by the Polish director Ryszard Bugajski, materializes the persistent phantasm of a female communist as a “sinister woman” and a “predatory female.” [...] In the aftermath of March 1968, her trial started. The author of the trial stubbornly repeats the rumors that tell how Wlasiewska, Brystrzyn, and Fornalska became devout Catholics toward the end of their lives. This narrative teaches us that “women of power” always meet a sad end: they are lonely and heartbroken (e.g., Wlasiewska was married three times and was allegedly cheated on and abused by her last husband, the Ukrainian playwright Oleksandr Korzynskyj), they are marginalized or even spied on by their former comrades (e.g., the Security Services conducted a surveillance campaign dubbed “Egoist” against Brystrzyn; Wlasiewska emigrated to Canada (e.g., Wlasiewska stayed in Kiev after the war, while Wolskina moved to Britain in the aftermath of March 1968). Their road to redemption and their return to the fold of society can only occur through conversion to Catholicism, which is purportedly desired by them. Thus, despite an absence of proof, the author of these tales stubbornly repeats the rumors that tell how Wlasiewska, Brystrzyn, and Fornalska became devout Catholics toward the end of their lives, or even how these women financially supported the Catholic Church. “By means of their lives” (e.g., they allegedly gave their possessions to the Church of Jesus Christ) are ultimately characterized as being torn by their passions and using their sexuality to secure their positions, while continuously moving within the orbit of male influence. These women are brought down to the role of “private women”: rather than being depicted as “women with power”, they are shown as “women of power” — that is, as the daughters, wives, sisters, and lovers of influential men. Through these “decent women”, who are after easily pacified and tamed by being pushed into traditional roles, communism alternatingly reveals in monstrous, criminal face and appears grotesque and exaggerated. In this context, communism’s most serious crime is to upend the gender order. At the same time, the caricature-like quality of communism stems from the fact that this is just a specious upending, as the emancipation of women is specious too: in reality, women never obtained the “emancipation of women is specious too: in reality, women never obtained the” (e.g., Wasilewska stayed in Kiev after the war, while Wolskina moved to Britain in the aftermath of March 1968). Their road to redemption and their return to the fold of society can only occur through conversion to Catholicism, which is purportedly desired by them. 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Experiences of women at war

by Olesya Khromeychuk

Women's relationship to war is more complex than men's “because society with its traditional gender divisions of labor has assigned the official task of fighting to men,” argues Nicole Ann Dombrowski.1 This does not mean, of course, that women do not fight in wars. As Simone de Beauvoir puts it in her now classic text, historically “women were known to take part in bloody wars or vendettas; they showed as much courage and cruelty as males.”2 The problem of women's invisibility as actors of political violence, therefore, is not in their supposed inability to fight in wars. The problem is in societies' ongoing inability to see women in roles that do not fit traditional gender norms. Beauvoir herself and many scholars before and especially after her have tried to make women visible in all spheres of life, including warfare. Nevertheless, the dilemma of how to represent women in the context of war persists. If non-military (although not necessarily unmilitarized) women are usually fitted into categories of civilian victims and mothers-sisters-daughters-lovers-wives of military men, those who become members of the military are usually perceived as exceptional female warriors.3 Indeed, female members of the military are relatively rare, but, as Barbara Alpern Engel argues, they form “a substantial minority.”4 Ignoring them because of their numerical inferiority would mean neglecting war stories of thousands of individuals who can offer a narrative of war different to the customary heroic tale of male glory on the battlefield. However, emphasizing their participation in war carries the danger of hailing them precisely as extraordinary, thereby strengthening the assumption that “ordinary” women are inherently peaceful and that the job of fighting wars should be reserved for men whose gender predisposes them to soldiering. The ways in which these dilemmas are dealt with (or ignored) are indicative of the attitude of state and society towards its female citizens.

abstract
This paper examines women's contribution to war and the perceptions of that contribution by comparing experiences of women in the Red Army during the Second World War and in the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the conflict in the Donbas region. Through comparative analysis, the paper argues that in both cases structural gender discrimination was ingrained in the military, which accepted women's contribution as subsidiary, thereby distorting the reality of war as experienced by both women and men, and facilitates the instrumentalized militarization of women. There is a significant body of literature analyzing the participation of women in the Red Army. It is rich in detail about the types of roles women performed and the attitude the Soviet state adopted towards their recruitment.5 The literature on contemporary servicewomen in the Donbas is much scarcer, and I will rely on the few published sources available to date.6 In both cases, I will refer to interviews with the former servicewomen, which I collected in 2015–2016, and other sources such as published interviews and media material.
Servicewomen’s partial visibility in the two cases discussed here means that their exact numbers are not known. The Red Army estimates vary significantly. Oleg Rudzinski believes that the official Soviet state estimate and argues that “according to the Ministry of Defense, 490,235 women were called up by the army and the navy during the war.”10 Anna Krylova states that more than 900,000 women served in the Soviet Armed Forces during the Second World War.”

The number that is usually quoted in literature about Red Army women is 800,000.11

In the Ukrainian case, there is no clear figure for the participation of women in what is officially known as the anti-terrorist operation (ATO). According to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, as of October 9, 2017, 6,282 women were called up by the army, but not in the Red Navy, as at 1 January 1945, 358,970 of these women were actually on the fighting front. If we compare these two states of facts, “civilian volunteers” (oboshchestrivivye oborony, aviatyosnymu i khimicheskomu stroitel’stvu, Union for Assistance with Defense, Aviation, and Chemical Construction) provided paramilitary training for civilians, and the Komsomol (Vsesoiuzniy leninskii kommunisticheskiy soiuz molodyzh, All-Union Leninist Young Communist League) “was charged with instilling political military thinking in the young.”12

Women took part in all of these. When the Soviet-German war broke out, many women of the generation who grew up persuaded by the state that the war was imminent and that all citizens had to prepare for it rushed to seek ways to contribute to the war effort. However, as Markwick and Charon-Cardona point out, “To the profound disappointment of most politically active young women, when the hour came to exercise their rights to bear arms alongside their menfolk, they were rebuffed.”13 In the USSR, gender equality was proclaimed in principle, but not implemented in practice. As Pennington states, “women were usually relegated to lower-ranking positions at work and filled many traditional women’s roles at work and at home.”14

The reality of the huge losses in the initial stages of the war, however, meant that recruitment of female combatants could no longer be ruled out. The leadership therefore decided to conduct covert recruitment of women into combat roles, and the first permission to form female military units was approved on October 8, 1941.15 The losses persisted, rapidly draining male resources, while at the same time there was no shortage of women willing to serve at the front. In fact, proved to be the mother of invention, and in 1942 militarization of women occurred on a mass scale. This stage of women’s recruitment, however, as Markwick and Charon-Cardona argue, “was not done with any fanfare,”16 and in 1942, a second, secret phase of women’s mobilization […] was launched by Soviet authorities, desperate to compensate for nearly 6.5 million, overwhelmingly male, casualties.17

The drive to militarize

women on the one hand, and the official rhetoric that continued to emphasize that women’s primary responsibility was maternal on the other, resulted in the “stubby official ambivalence towards women soldiers.”18 Women were thus encouraged to join the military, but their involvement in the army was not widely advertised and their position in the armed forces was often unclear. However, this did not prevent thousands of women from volunteering to enter the military and from going to the front.

Many saw their contribution to the war effort in the context of the defense of their motherland. What constituted the motherland, however, differed for many of them. Some understood it as their land, however, differed for many of them. Some understood it in ideological terms as propagated during the pre-war decades by the Komsomol; others were simply keen to defend their towns, villages, and homes from the occupying enemy. As Engel states, “Soviet citizens rallied to the defense of their homeland, because of their feelings about the government, the Communist party, and the leadership of Joseph Stalin, others despite their feelings.”19 There were also, however, women whose mobilization was not strictly voluntary: some Komsomol members simply delivered a draft notice to join the army. Feoktista Rabina from Novosibirsk was one of them.

I was summoned by the call of the Party. […] I came to work and they told me that a draft card was waiting for me. I was told: “Here is your referral to the city Party committee.” I took it and went there. They met me there and said: “You have to go to the frontline!” I thought: “How can I go to the frontline if I am not a nurse, don’t have medical education?” […] But I was a candidate for Party membership. […] So they sent me to work for the KGB.

Women went to the front not only out of patriotic duty or the call of the Party, but for a variety of other reasons. Markwick and Charon-Cardona argue that “some young women wanted revenge; some yearned for excitement; others were lonely or simply anxious to escape the appalling deprivation and drudgery of life on a half-starved home front.”10 Like men, women had no say in where they would be posted, but their gender meant that they were viewed not as soldiers in their own right, but as substitutes for men.

Recruitment of women to fight in the Donbas has also been characterized by chaos and lack of clear information. At the Maidan protests, which preceded the start of the hostilities in eastern Ukraine, women were often marginalized, encouraged to fulfill traditionally feminine roles as cooks and caregivers and presented as helpers of male revolutionaries, despite the fact that they took a very active part in the protests. As soon as the protests in central Kyiv had ended, the conflict in the Donbas began, and some of the most active participants of the protests departed for eastern Ukraine from the still upturned Independence Square, the main site of the protests. They formed the core of the volunteer battalions, and included women. Among them was Julia Tolopa, an 18-year-old Russian national and nationalist, who had come to Kyiv to see whether the portrayal of events in Ukraine by the media in her own country corresponded to reality.22 During the Maidan protests, her Russian nationalism evolved into Ukrainian nationalism, and she decided to fight on the side of the Ukrainian state and joined one of the buses heading to the ATO zone. She said that she got to Luhansk’s, a battalion commander decided who out of those who had already arrived on the bus should be accepted to serve in his battalion and who should be sent back. Tolopa passed the “test,” and she was given a rifle and started to fulfill combat duties.23 At first, Tolopa served as a “combat fighter” (strel’tsy) and later became an infant fighting vehicle commander.24

Another woman who went straight to the warzone from the Maidan was Andriana Susik. Like Tolopa, she joined a volunteer battalion. With the nom-de-guerre “Malysh” (“Kid”), she served as a shock trooper (shtrumoyub), but was officially registered as a seamstress.25 This peculiar situation can be explained by the fact that the recruitment of women into the armed forces in Ukraine is regulated by a restrictive list of occupations that are open to women.26 This meant that until June 2016, servicewomen were formally accepted into only a limited number of positions in the military, performing traditionally feminine tasks such as that of a
The high initial losses of the army, the widespread evasion from conscription, and a steady flow of female volunteers willing to go to the frontline meant that the commanders on the ground accepted women and gave them the tasks they were most suited for, disregarding their gender and the official regulations. Therefore, when it came to recruitment, the commanders in the Donbas, like those in the Red Army, were left to their own devices, improvising according to immediate circumstances. Women therefore ended up serving not only in “permitted” positions, but also as combat fighters, reconnaissance officers, snipers, etc. However, they either had no documentation at all, and thus were at the frontline illegally, or found themselves in a semi-legal position by being registered as office administrators, chefs, accountants, etc., while performing other duties. Two years into the conflict and following much pressure from female veterans, the list regulating women’s recruitment was expanded by 63 positions and included jobs such as sniper, driver, gunman, reconnaissance agent, and others, making it possible to legitimate some of the women who were already performing these tasks.

Nevertheless, as Tamara Martnynuk, Ganna Grytsenko, and Anna Kvit argue, “Two-thirds of all military positions remain inaccessible for women in Ukraine,” and the expansion does not apply to all branches of the armed forces or to positions at officer level.

As in the case of the Red Army, the women who have volunteered to fight in the Donbas have done so for different reasons. Motivations have ranged from feelings of guilt and helplessness to the idea of the defense of the motherland and its people (narod). In a situation where labor in the military is divided according to traditional perceptions of gender roles, a soldier of even the lowest rank is likely to have a higher standing than a woman, regardless of the nature of her actual involvement in the army. An assumption that participation in the military can grant marginalized groups, including women, a chance to acquire full citizenship, and, subsequently, a greater degree of equality has been criticized by scholars and refuted by numerous examples in history. The two cases discussed here demonstrate not only that “exceptional” women did not necessarily acquire full citizenship, but point to the fact that this very “exceptionality” sometimes prevented them from attaining the respect of a society guided by gender stereotypes. The labels that were applied to them also extended to the “ordinary” servicemen.

One of the popular tropes in stories of Red Army service-women is their supposed pro-miscuity. Red Army women have frequently suffered from the label of a “field wife” (polkovnaya-polovina, zhena, PPZh) and the assumption that they went to the frontline to find themselves a husband. Hanna Kolomiteva, who served during the Second World War as a wireless operator and air gunner, recounted that her father made her promise not to form any intimate relationships in the military: “When I was joining the army, my father told me, ‘You are my pure (chistaja) girl; I beg you to come back the same.’ I gave him my word. He said, ‘Don’t let anyone kiss you on the lips, only on your cheek.’ And that is what I did.”

The cases of the Red Army and of the Ukrainian Armed Forces confirm, albeit differently, the reluctance of military officials to reconcile the reality of servicewomen’s experiences with their official position in the military hierarchy. Enloe states that “to close the gap between myth and reality would require military officials to resolve their own ideological gender contradictions, something many are loathe to do.” Thus, in both cases, although women ended up fulfilling a great variety of roles, those in traditionally feminine jobs were perceived as helping the men to fight the war, while those performing combat duties were seen as male substitutes, engaging in those positions temporarily and only due to the circumstances, and their exceptionality was emphasized. In both cases, there was a degree of secrecy when it came to the recruitment of women; their contribution was accepted, but not widely advertised. Jean Bethke Elshtain states, “War is a structure of experience.”

We tell war stories in order to make sense of war experiences. These stories, in turn, perpetuate our understanding of war, including its gender order. Elshtain argues that although the accepted view of women is “the noncombatant many” — “embodysing values and virtues at odds with war’s destructiveness, representing home and hearth and the humble verities of everyday life” — there also exist tales of the “ferocious few,” that is, “women who reversed cultural expectations by donning warrior’s garb and doing battle.” However, as Elshtain points out, “their existence as fact and myth seems not to have put much of a dent in the overall edifice of the way war figures in the structure of male and female experience and reactions.” As both cases studied here demonstrate, fulfilling “masculine” duties does not guarantee being treated the same as men. In a situation where labor in the military is divided according to traditional perceptions of gender roles, a soldier of even the lowest rank is likely to have a higher standing than a woman, regardless of the nature of her actual involvement in the army. An assumption that participation in the military can grant marginalized groups, including women, a chance to acquire full citizenship, and, subsequently, a greater degree of equality has been criticized by scholars and refuted by numerous examples in history. The two cases discussed here demonstrate not only that “exceptional” women did not necessarily acquire full citizenship, but point to the fact that this very “exceptionality” sometimes prevented them from attaining the respect of a society guided by gender stereotypes. The labels that were applied to them also extended to the “ordinary” servicemen. One of the popular tropes in stories of Red Army service-women is their supposed pro-miscuity. Red Army women have frequently suffered from the label of a “field wife” (polkovnaya-polovina, zhena, PPZh) and the assumption that they went to the frontline to find themselves a husband. Hanna Kolomiteva, who served during the Second World War as a wireless operator and air gunner, recounted that her father made her promise not to form any intimate relationships in the military: “When I was joining the army, my father told me, ‘You are my pure (chistaja) girl; I beg you to come back the same.’ I gave him my word. He said, ‘Don’t let anyone kiss you on the lips, only on your cheek.’ And that is what I did.”

The practice of securing a “field wife” was widespread – for women, this often meant that one sexual partner, especially of a senior rank, would protect them from the sexual harassment of others; for men, especially in senior positions, it meant a feeling of entitlement to
Anna Bebykh, a searchlight operator during the Second World War, preferred to hide her military past. Karen Petrenko tells the story of Vera Malakhova, who also served as a nurse and even took part in the Battle of Stalingrad.

Her husband encouraged her to wear her medals to a May Day parade a few years after the war, saying “Put them on. You’re going to see me, you earned them. I know everything there is about you, and you earned them honestly.” Nevertheless, when her husband lagged behind, a man accosted her, saying “Here comes a frontline W[hole].”

As this story demonstrates, a woman needed a man, in this case her husband, to “guarantee” her adequacy as a soldier, though the guarantees did not fully protect her from the public perception.

While women in contemporary Ukraine can talk about their experiences in the military more openly, their stories still cause a certain degree of discomfort in a society that largely expects women to be at home rather than fighting in a war. Oksana Ivaniv, one of the makers of a documentary film about women who fought in the Donbas, says that women find it hard to return from the war zone for the fear of being rejected by society.

I heard stories about men who are ashamed to go to the train station to meet their wives who are coming back from the war, because they feel uncomfortable and do not know how to react. At the same time, we have completely opposite instances when men (returning from war) are welcomed as heroes.

The perception that women should not seem braver than men or be seen to take a leading role is internalized by servicewomen. Susak remembers when during one of the attacks she tried to encourage male recruits to come out from their hiding place.

During one of the assaults, paratroopers hid under the “Ural” [a large army truck], we were fired at, and I had to motivate two guys somehow. They were really young, twenty, twenty-two years of age. So, I come under this “Ural” and simply drag them out, saying: “Let’s go, there is no fire any more, let’s go, don’t worry!” And the enemy remained in that position, and then stood first in line, but the boys say, “Look, at least go to the back, please.” And I say, “Fine, you lead the way, it’s okay.”

Thus, even in times of danger and when the inadequacy of gender stereotypes is obvious, both men and women are prepared to perform traditional masculinity and femininity in order not to disturb the gender order prevalent in the war and dominant outside of the war zone.

Traditional gender norms are not disturbed with any lasting results even by the existence of celebrated servicewomen such as the Red Army sniper Ludmyla Pavlichenko or the Ukrainian pilot and veteran of the war in Donbas Nadia Savchuk. But women might have made women’s presence in the war zone more visible, but this did not translate into significant practical improvements for the majority of women in the military. Individual women who were hailed as heroines were used instrumentally by their respective states. Markwick and Charon Cardona argue: “Pavlichenko’s reputation as a lethal sniper was not just deployed on the battlefield or the home front. Rather, authorities clearly believed the ‘heroic’ role of women in general and her reputation in particular could sway international public opinion in support of the war against the ‘fascist hordes.’” She represented the USSR in the USA, Canada, and the UK, urging the Allies to open a second front in western Europe. The Sunday Mirror’s impression of Pavlichenko is very telling about the role she was supposed to fulfill as a soldier and as a woman. The 1945 article details the meeting between the “heroine of Russia’s [sic] front line” and “just a woman of Britain”:

“I am Mrs. Collett,” she said to this sturdy, upright woman the world respects as a soldier.

Then she bent down, placed the flowers in Lieutenant Pavlichenko’s hands, and opened her mouth to speak.

[...] No words came. She wanted to say so much, but instead, she placed her hand on the soldier’s woman’s shoulder and talked by looking into her eyes.

Yes, they both understood— the mother and the soldier. To both of them, that moment that one day their children would be free to walk the streets in peace. The ordinary working woman in Britain was saying to her counterpart in Russia: “Thank you for helping that day nearer.”

These two women, despite the fact that one of them had 300 kills as a sniperta figure the world respects as a woman, represented the peaceful future as women should.

The situation with Savchenko is similar. After she was captured in the Donbas, she was put on trial in Russia for allegedly沙漠ized in Ukraine. She is known as a “heroine” and an “embodiment of Ukraine itself: resilient and defiant, but in need of international support.”

The examples of Savchenko and Pavlichenko are indicative of a trend in which the roles women take on in the military have little influence on women’s wider emancipation. Both women served as role models for other women, but neither of them set herself the aim of ensuring gender equality in the army, and they mostly aimed to ensure that women were not left in the wider restrictions servicewomen faced. As Dombrowski argues, it would be naive “to insist that women can transform military culture without understanding how military culture transforms women.”

The perception of women as temporary helpers or substitutes for men can in fact necessarily lead to the reform of the patriarchal culture of the military and beyond. On the contrary, the presence of women in the military as temporary helpers or substitutes for men can in fact serve to reinforce the gender order that is already in place.

An acceptance of gender stereotypes is conducive to the celebration of traditional gender war roles, with the military man at the pinnacle of the hierarchy. Militarization of society, in turn, strengthens traditional gender order outside the war zone. This vicious circle produces a situation in which women’s entrance into the military can only be publicly visible on a symbolic level. It is difficult to imagine an exhibition telling the story of the USSR’s involvement in the Second World War without the famous 1945 poster by Arkadii Toymid. “Motherland is calling,” depicting a woman wrapped in red garb holding a piece of paper with the military oath on it. The army of loyal children is represented by the rifles behind the woman. While this symbolic image of a woman was omnipresent, the stories of real women were much harder to come by.

The portrayal of “woman” not only as a mother but as a mother warrior whose role is tied to the post-war years, when the Soviet population had to come to terms with its colossal losses, the cult of motherhood was renewed. Post-war society, which understood heroism as an ultimate value, awarded women and their children the title of “Heroine Mother”. Engels states that although in the post-war period “the state-controlled media continued to praise women for their accomplishments and sacrifices on the ‘front’,” it simultaneously preserved and reinforced a post-war image of the woman as working hero, army wife, a symbol of motherland, and a caregiver for young soldiers. The post-war culture was molded into one that was strongly supported by the political authorities and state institutions. The image of a woman was omnipresent, the stories of real women were much harder to come by.

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There even appeared a linguistic problem, as words such as tank operator, infantryman, and machine gunner had no feminine equivalent. 86 The UNF stresses that “the theme of the tragic and heroic women’s fate will also help to make connections with the participation of our female compatriots – the military, physical, psychological, and social support.” The exhibitions depict women with Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine, thus recognizing the parallels between the participation of women in the Second World War and in the ongoing military conflict. 87 However, the representation in the exhibition does not include positions within which women functioned in both cases. The parallels highlighted by the UNF emphasize the victimhood and/or heroism of the women, but not the ongoing inadequacy of the legal system, supplies, and even the language used to describe service-women’s experiences both now and seventy years ago. 88

The UNF continued to prepare exhibitions on the theme of war in military tradition, and in 2016 it presented a project called “Warriors: History of the Ukrainian Military.” 89 Two women were included among the twenty warriors displayed in the exhibition. One represented the women of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 90 and the other depicted an actual ATO veteran, Iryna Tsvila, who was described on the poster as a “warrior of the ‘Sich’ volunteer battalion.” 91 The word “warrior” (vojak) was used in its masculine form, thus highlighting the preference of the official institutions to avoid the feminization of military professions even in language. While the poster depicted a female warrior, it did not even mention the participation of women more broadly in the volunteer battles in the conflict in the Donbas. This partial visibility of women thus strengthens the overall image of them as a symbolic and supportive force and emphasizes the prevalent idea of gender roles in war.

The conflicts discussed here resulted in the militarization of Ukraine, and by the end of the Second World War, the USSR, militarization was total, with the economy and much of the population working exclusively for the military and the army and the front. 92 In Ukraine, the hostilities in the Donbas region, along with the attempted annexation of Crimea, increased the scale, also encouraged militarization and the militarization of many aspects of life. 93 In its contexts, the militarization of women was inevitable, and there were many women who fought. This is juxtaposed to the presence of women in the military, in both cases, was seen as a contingency measure, and for the duration of the conflict only. Pennington argues that “while women were at the front, in the Soviet instituted gender segregation in the educational systems and the exclusion of women from the newly created military cadet schools.” The contemporary gender blindness “in the part of society that was relevant to Soviet decision making about whether to allow women to remain in military service, and is strong evidence that during the postwar period, the Soviet government deliberately obscured women’s wartime achievements.” 94

The gender roles were also reinforced outside of the military with the heroization of motherhood and the strengthening of pro-natalist policies. In the case of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, it is too early to draw firm conclusions. There is evidence of some reforms, especially in the expansion of the criteria that allows women to join the service. Martynyk and Grytsenko point out that the Ministry of Defense has hired “an external gender expert, who works closely with the ministry representatives in different structures.” 95 The reforms, however, have been introduced as a reaction to the situations on the ground and to pressure from veterans and feminist activists, and they continue to be very limited. As in the case of the post-war USSR, much will depend on the general attitude to gender equality in Ukraine both among politicians in power and in society more widely, which at the time of writing leaves much to be desired. 96 The experience of women’s active participation in the Second World War, to some extent, shapes the understanding of women’s roles in war and provides role models for women who join the contemporary Ukrainian Armed Forces. At the same time, the instrumentalization of women’s militarization, the prejudices, and the gender norms prevalent seventy years ago continue to play a part today.

The cases discussed here point to the fact that militarization of women might not only fail in challenging gender stereotypes, but might even result in their consolidation. In both cases, the roles women occupied directly reflected the demands of the army, but their recruitment was chaotic and influenced by gender stereotypes. Women fought in the ranks of a state-sanctioned military and saw their contribution to warfare as part of the defense of the motherland. Their popular image, however, was more often perceived as the mother of the motherland rather than the warrior, even if they had defended it. Those women who challenged the stereotype of women as a supporting force did not escape being perceived as a symbol of war. This exceptionality was emphasized by their respective states and simply served to prove the rule. The study of service-women’s experiences of warfare juxtaposed with popular perceptions of them leaves a pessimistic impression of the potential of militarization for women’s emancipation and gender equality. Joshua S. Goldstein argues that “the gender-war connection is very complex” and “none of us knows that the ‘war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that the “war system is not set in stone, nor driven by any simple formula, but is alive, complex, and changeable.” 97 Understandably, that...


11 “Ukraine’s Female Military Personnel: More Women in Uniform”. In 2017, Ukraine’s official response of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine to author’s information request, October 5, 2017, author’s private archive.

12 As of November 2017, 54,629 women were employed by the Ukraine Armed Forces (around 2% of women soldiers). While many of these women hold civilian positions, 24,298 (almost 10 per cent of total military personnel) hold military positions. Almost 3,000 women are officers, but there are no female generals. See “Ukraine’s Invisible ‘Kiyevskiy Krovosudov’ via ‘koju lushtukh pravbru” (nicely, “shluchukh pravbru”)[nicely, “Povykhom SSSR” no. 99 (1989): 10–11]; “O nevydymih zhinkakh” (on invisible women), accessed June 10, 2017; “Ministr oborony Ukrainy, ‘[The army should recruit all women who are willing to serve – Minister of Defense of Ukraine],” skil’ky bazhaie, — ministr oborony Ukrainy, “[The number of Ukrainian conscripts/25352661.html, accessed June 14, 2017. See “Tymchasovyi perelik viis’kovo-oblikovykh spetsial’nostei riadovoho, serzhants’koho i starshyns’koho taryfy,” (Interim list of staff positions for privates, sergeants, and major officers, including those for which the appointment of female military personnel is permitted, and the corresponding ranks and wage categories), Ministrerstvo oborony Ukrainy, May 23, 2014, http://www.ukrmilitary.com/2017/11/female-personnel-on-battlefront-ukraine/ accessed June 14, 2017. See Decree No 237.

13 Although conscription was supposed to end in 2013, following the start of the war in eastern Ukraine, it was resumed. See “Ukrainian Parliament Recommends Resumption of Mandatory Conscription,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, April 12, 2014, http://www.rferl.org/a/ukrainian-parliament-recommends-resumption-of-mandatory-conscription-25265.html, accessed June 14, 2017. For the evasion of conscription is between two and five years’ imprisonment, but throughout the conflict, men all over Ukraine found semi-legal and illegal ways to avoid the draft. See “‘Ukhylyviysia vid mobilizatsii – vidpovidi po zakonu,” [Avoided mobilization – answer before the law], Ministery oborony Ukrainy, http://www.minoborony.gov.ua/article/5062, accessed June 14, 2017. See “Ukrainian Women on the Frontline was formed in the summer of 2014 as a military wing of the ‘Pravyi Sektor’ (Right Sector) nationalist organisation. Unlike the units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, volunteer battalions such as the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps were more flexible in their recruitment practices and thus more likely to accept women into their ranks. However, the nationalist ideology followed by this group affects recruitment, especially for its female members, in very specific ways. See Olesya Biliars’ka, “‘Zhyndy dobrodruzhchuma ukraïns’ko-koms’kogo ‘Pravoho sektora’,” [Women in the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps of the ‘Right Sector’], documentary film, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z4A83rWkUg(accessed January 16, 2018).


Between gender blindness and nationalism

The History of Polish women in WWII as the site of an anti-modernist revolution

abstract

This paper discusses the current “herstorical turn” in professional and popular historiography and memory of WWII in Poland, growing feminist interest in women's participation in political upheavals, and the distinctiveness of their wartime experiences. It focuses on one dominant strand of this “herstorical turn” – feminist historical interventions, which have been met with significant resistance. In contemporary Poland, however, this state of affairs in terms of popular interest in women’s participation in armed resistance has changed significantly. Both women’s historians and female combatants engaging in history writing critically acknowledged the invisibility of women in mainstream narratives about the war, and they sought in their works to make women visible as participants in armed resistance. In contemporary Poland, however, this state of affairs in terms of popular interest in women’s participation in armed resistance, and the distinctiveness of their wartime experiences, has changed significantly.

The second decade of the 2000s marks an important turning point for the visibility of women in history writing critically acknowledged the invisibility of women in mainstream narratives about the war, and they sought in their works to make women visible as participants in armed resistance. In contemporary Poland, however, this state of affairs in terms of popular interest in women’s participation in armed resistance, and the distinctiveness of their wartime experiences, has changed significantly.

Weronika Grzebalska

between gender blindness and nationalism

In the decades following 1945 in Poland, women’s history of WWII constituted itself as field of study predominantly in response to the absence of women and gender from the historiography and the collective memory of the period. Both women’s historians and female combatants engaging in history writing critically acknowledged the invisibility of women in mainstream narratives about the war, and they sought in their works to make women visible as participants in armed resistance. In contemporary Poland, however, this state of affairs in terms of popular interest in WWII history and memory, as well as the rationale for feminist historical interventions, have changed significantly.

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years, numerous books dedicated to women's participation in WWII have been published, along with documentaries, peer-reviewed articles, museum exhibitions, and political projects, social media initiatives, reenactment groups, and even t-shirts. In 2005 the Polish freedom fighter Elżbieta Zawacka observed critically that in the contemporary collective consciousness of the Polish WWII soldier of any armed organization is a man, but in 2014 the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising seemed to be all about women, with several books on the topic published and wide media coverage of the issue of women's participation taken seriously.

Yet, while these various herstory initiatives certainly made women visible as actors and questioned the false universality of wartime experience, they often also uncritically naturalized femininity and masculinity, reproduced traditionalist ideas about women’s place in WWII and its history, and used women’s history as a didactic resource to promote a gendered and militarized concept of citizenship and inclusion. In fact, the major challenge that stands before feminist historians and herstory practitioners in today’s Poland no longer seems to be the absence of women from historical narratives, but rather the mainstreaming of women into an illiberal, anti-modernist framework that fetishizes gender difference and reduces history writing to a tool for producing nationhood. The popularity of this nationalist herstory is of course part of a broader political shift that is currently ongoing in Central Europe. In this shift, a particular construction of WWII memory has become one of the discursive tools for the creation of an alternative illiberal mode of governance and community built on the rejection of liberal-leftism and modernism and centered on the notions of nation, family, and tradition.

My own work on the Warsaw Uprising’s 1944 has been entangled in this broader shift. In the years 2009–2013, I was conducting an oral history project devoted to the gender politics of the Warsaw Uprising. When I began my research, the myth of the Warsaw Uprising had been gaining ground, symbolically elevated and politically instrumentalized by the Right since 2004 as the origin story of the post-communist political shift that is currently ongoing in Central Europe. In this shift, a particular construction of WWII memory has become one of the discursive tools for the creation of an alternative illiberal mode of governance and community built on the rejection of liberal-leftism and modernism and centered on the notions of nation, family, and tradition.

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Lipinska analyzed three thousand publications on WWII and gave a speech in which she voiced concern that in the historical literature women usually lacked essential biographical information and often even surnames.25 In 2001, Brigadier General Elibetia Zawacka summarized women’s visibility in historical research on WWII on a similar note: “These issues are not reflected in research plans of academic institutions. It is very hard to find them in the abundant publications about the Polish underground during WWII. The existing literature is very limited in providing systematic knowledge about women’s wartime participation, its geographical and quantitative scope, and the types of service women were able to participate in.26 This disappointment with the omission of women from historical research pushed female activists to launch various initiatives aimed at archiving and disseminating knowledge about their participation in WWII, among them publishing journal volumes, organizing conferences, setting up historical archives, and erecting monuments. The official politics of history in a given period has of course shaped the general conditions for context for historical research and commemorative initiatives that led in 1970 to the official founding of the Commissioning and the Home Army, along with other formations.29 In turn, Zawacka observes, the breakthrough of 1978 initiated the period of recovering memory24 — the opening of the archives in Central Europe was accompanied by efforts to write the “true” history of WWII, countering the narratives from the communist period.30 On the wave of this revisionist turn, the Warsaw Uprising has gradually become elevated to the status of the founding myth of the post-1989 national collective. The sources of the symbolic potency and wide relevance of the event for the public cannot be reduced to a single political campaign, no matter how successful such a campaign may have been. However, with the erection of the Warsaw Uprising Museum on the initiative of the leader of the Law and Justice Party, Lech Kaczyński, it also became clear that the Right saw the event as a key building block of its counter-hegemonic narrative.31 While broader political shifts have provided an important context for historical research and commemorative initiatives dedicated to the uprising and to WWII in general, I would argue that traditional historical watersheds such as 1989 have not affected history writing as far as the visibility and position of women and gender in these works is concerned. The majority of publications on female insurgents published after 1989 were still personal recollections and joint volumes authored by female veterans, and the historiographical articles and books dedicated to women that came out after 1989 did not introduce new theoretical or methodological frameworks. In fact, women’s history works published before and after 1989 have more similarities than differences. What is more, this observation is true of the works written by conventional historians and of the writings of scholars associated with women’s history. As the Polish historian Natalia Jarka observes, the tendency in historical publications on women during the occupation in WWII is that they “do not go beyond factographic description and heroic narrative, not asking the question of gender. The narrative on this topic is often essentialist and anachronistic.32 One common feature of these works has been their methodological nationalism,33 which is the tendency to analyze women’s wartime participation solely in the national framework and to ignore critical socio-historical conditions that could undermine the explicit primacy of the nation such as the concept of “gender” or “militarism.” Another common characteristic has been what the Polish historian Dobrochna Kabwa called “methodological orthodoxy” — the concentration on establishing “historical facts” — dates, names, and numbers — rather than understanding the sociopolitical processes that shaped women’s wartime situation, as well as adhesion to methodological rules of classical historiography and hostility to new methodologies and theoretical approaches such as those springing from gender studies.34 Last but not least, what these works also share is that they treat “women” as a stable and essentialist category instead of reflecting on how such a category was created and mobilized in a given moment by various political actors.35 All of these characteristics contributed to the ghettoization of women’s history in WWII and the fact that their history has not been integrated with the broader history of the war and has resided on its margins, thus holding the status of a “female appendix” to the otherwise uncontested history of WWII rather than a category that could transform the way the war is conceptualized and narrated. Until today, the Warsaw Uprising has not been the object of much feminist analysis apart from my own work. While the situation is less bleak in the case of feminist literature dealing with other aspects of WWII in Poland, many of these works have been written by authors working outside of Polish academia and have not been translated into Polish. As argued by Natalia Jarka, the body of Polish historiography on WWII is so large that the war from a gender perspective is still in the process of being made.36

Feminist activists and popular writers, however, have been an important part of the post-1989 “heroical turn” that can be defined as a sudden increase in interest in women in history of WWII, accompanied by the departure from viewing the past in a universalist framework in favor of acknowledging the gendered diversification of historical experiences and their unequal representation in history writing. In 2008, the feminist writer Sylvia Chumitnick raised the topic of female civilian experience during the uprising in the book Kliczonskowy atlas lobiet [Pocket female atlas], followed by a Warsaw city guide dedicated to women’s history that also featured herstories from the Warsaw Uprising. In 2010, numerous screenings across the country of the documentary Uprising in a Floral Blouse,37 produced by the feminist NGO Feminoteka, popularized the topic of women in the Warsaw Uprising. Since its premiere, the 30-minute feature has been shown at almost 30 events, been the topic of various press articles and even university courses, and been watched almost 9,000 times on YouTube and Vimeo. In 2012, the feminist and Vice-Marshal of the Sejm Wanda Nowacka organized a conference in the parliament dedicated to women in the uprising. While it is too early to make an informed judgment about the influence of the feminist strand of the “heroical turn” on professional historiography, recent publications48 suggest that it could potentially play a positive role in influencing professional historians to study this topic in novel ways.

The anti-modernist memory boom and the securitization of memory

The growing emphasis on women as wartime actors that began in popular historiography and public memory in the second decade of the 21st century did not emerge out of the blue; on the contrary, it was preceded by a broader anti modernist WWII memory boom orchestrated in large part by right-wing political actors, as well as attempts to secure a particular version of collective memory. As James Mark argued, due to the absence of judicial reckoning with communist political elites, and to the brutal social costs of the neoliberal transition, 1989 was not broadly accepted as a heroic political transition; instead, the insecurity produced by the post-1989 era has been narrated by the Right as the “post-revolutionary”49 through the “nationalizing”50 Moreover, in the absence of convincing left-wing political alternatives, the insecure and disenchantment produced by the period have been channeled into identity conflicts.51 Since the 1990s, wars have been their key example. Memory scholars agree that in Poland the beginning of the era of what has been dubbed the “new politics of history”52 — the growing emphasis on the promotion of nationalist and national symbolic narratives about the past by the state and right-wing political actors — was symbolically marked by the erection of the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 2004. Our research on the commemorative politics of the Polish Parliament in the years 1989—2015 confirms this claim. As we observed, while an increase in the number of commemorative acts was visible even before 2005, the “memory boom” — the largest increase both in absolute and relative terms — occurred during the first Law and Justice government of 2005—2007. The subsequent governments led by the conservative Liberal Civic Platform continued to pass commemorative acts...
and Justice began orchestrating. This counter-revolution claims principles of the broader illiberal counter-revolution that Law to revive the memory of the Home Army and the Warsaw Uprising. This party largely abandoned these issues and turned to celebrating the Cursed Soldiers instead. This is arguably because the myth of the Cursed Soldiers worked better with the main principles of the broader illiberal counter-revolution that Law and Justice began orchestrating. This counter-revolution claims previous historical watersheds such as 1945 and 1989 should not be regarded as such because they brought the continuation of occupation and oppression rather than genuine change.

Cursed soldiers have been viewed better with this narrative because some of them stayed undercover in the forests after 1945 and did not accept the new post-war order. An underlying feature of this memory boom has been right-wing anti-modernism. Stories about the glorious past produced by the Right are therefore implicated in broader narratives of cultural and national decline as a result of the communist experiment and subsequent Europeanization. As the religious studies scholar Arthur Versluijs argued in defining anti-modernism, “[i]f the essence of ‘modernism’ is progress, a belief that technological development means socio-economic improvement, the heart of antimodernism is a realization that ‘progress’ has an underbelly—that technological industrial development has destructive consequences in three primary and intertwined areas: nature, culture, and religion.” With the illiberal turn in Central Europe, these anti-modernists narrative have found fertile ground. This is surfacer, providing community and meaning to those faced with the dire consequences of contemporary mass destruction.

As indicated by Polish parliamentary discussions, through the Warsaw Uprising is a recent occurrence, nationalist herstory as such is not a new phenomenon in Poland. The Polish historian Alicja Kusiak-Brownstein observed a similar proliferation of fighting women's autobiographies in the years of the formation of an independent Polish state after 1918. While these were written by themselves, the schematic character of these writings, including their entanglement with politically endorsed notions of patriotic femininity, and the careful selection of those that got published, led Kusiak-Brownstein to argue that in all these texts women “function as national metaphors of women’s loyalty to their fathers, husbands, brothers, as well as the social and political institutions they represented.” Given the importance of WWII memory in the broader anti-modernist political project and the fact that women function in nationalist politics as metaphors of the collective and as the bearers of its values, it is not surprising that women’s history once again has become the key battleground for the definition of the contemporary collective.

As mentioned above, few feminist activists, writers, and academics entered this political debate and the framing of alternative memory cultures at the turn of the century. Law and Justice worked actively serving the Fatherland. Every Polish woman who contributed to national defense [...] deserves respect.” Similarly, the author of Girls from the Uprising, Anna Herbich, explained in an interview the principles of the selection of female figures for her book: “If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to a woman. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be her.” This focus on the heroism of heroines and martyrs points to the overriding interest in women on the part of the Museum in the foreword to its book: “If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to a woman. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be her.” This focus on the heroism of heroines and martyrs points to the overriding interest in women on the part of the Museum in the foreword to its book: “If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to a woman. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be her.” This focus on the heroism of heroines and martyrs points to the overriding interest in women on the part of the Museum in the foreword to its book: “If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to a woman. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be her.” This focus on the heroism of heroines and martyrs points to the overriding interest in women on the part of the Museum in the foreword to its book: “If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to a woman. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be her.” This focus on the heroism of heroines and martyrs points to the overriding interest in women on the part of the Museum in the foreword to its book: “If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to a woman. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be her.” This focus on the heroism of heroines and martyrs points to the overriding interest in women on the part of the Museum in the foreword to its book: “If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to a woman. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be her.”
The nation-building function of this type of herstory writing is of course reliant on the production of a particular gender order because the life stories of women in WWII set a scope of propagated gendered attitudes and values for contemporary women. These propagandistic models draw on two politicized notions of patriotic femininity established in the Polish national canon over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries—the Matka Polka and the female soldier.70 In current memory politics, these two notions serve the goal of nation-building should not be read as multidimensional testimonies of women's experiences, but rather as a dimension of national martyrrology and the abstractness of general historiography because it takes everyday experiences of ordinary women as its starting point. This concentration on the microhistory of everyday lives, emotions, and relationships could indeed have the potential to transform the dominant historiography of the uprising that predominantly serves the function of producing a narrowly defined national identity. With this transformation, the feminizers of the feminist film Uprising in a Floral Blouse proclaimed on their website: “Monuments are many, and we do not intend to build another one. We want to know the women and their mothers who lived when they were our own.”71 Yet, while the move away from the nation-building orientation is promising, equating women's history with the private history of everyday life, and understanding women's lives as romantic narratives of motherhood, romance, and beauty, raises serious doubts. Especially if it is not followed by a similar interest in men's everyday practices. For instance, the all-female group DiSK, named after a WWII women's diversion and sabotage unit, concentrates primarily to the private or biological sphere.

The sheer number of recently published works dedicated to women who participated in important events of the past, as well as the total sales figures of these books, clearly shows that nationalist herstory has faltered on fertile ground in 21st century Poland. The re-emergence of nationalist herstory as a dominant way of mainstreaming women into history in 21st century Poland challenges both the rationale for, and the ways of doing, feminist historiography, making it increasingly harder for professional historians and public historians alike to conduct and promote their research the way they used to. As right-wing circles celebrate female fighters and mothers of fighters, it is no longer credible to assert that feminist scholars are the only ones revisiting history for the sake of women and working towards advancing women’s position in society and its culture of remembrance. As feminist scholarship in the region is being delegitimized and attacked by anti-modernists, it is increasingly harder to find institutional support and financial resources to conduct and disseminate academic research to counter the anti-modernist narrative. As discussions about women's history are brought by right-wing actors out of academia and into the public sphere in the form of books, exhibitions, remembrances, and TV series, it is no longer a priority for democrats to restrict their activity to academia either. Moreover, as women's history is turned by the Right into a platform for the promotion of a nationalist, anti-modernist model of society, some activists argue that women's history has been lost to the nationalist narrative and should abandon it altogether. Yet, as a politically institutionalized history of WWII once again fires the imagination of the people in a way that right-wing parties have not been able to as a building block of a new illiberal and militarized model of citizenship,75 the danger of having a single story of war and a single story of female empowerment is all the more serious. Therefore, the critical and deconstructive potential of gender as a category of analysis is more important than ever because it can show how things that are considered natural, normal, and inevitable are actually constructed and mobilized.76 However, in the case of WWII the deconstruction of the militarized and nationalist master narrative is not enough. There is a need to complicate this politically-endorsed single narrative with more stories that...
show different experiences, values, and goals. Here the role of feminist historians as discoverers and facilitators of alternative narratives.

Moreover, instead of a simple rejection of nationalistic herstory of wartime women, I believe we need to do better at understanding the sources of the popularity of these narratives and the empowerment aspects of national narratives in general. Despite its tendency to de politicize and fetishize gender difference and subordinate women's life stories to the nation-building goal, it would be a mistake to view national historiography as purely regressive and oppressive for women. In fact, there is much to suggest that women can experience these narratives as beneficial and empowering. Back in 2009–2010, when I interviewed female participants of the Warsaw Uprising, a few of them mentioned to me the role that stories of women who had actively engaged in national struggles – like the French Joan of Arc of the Polish tradition – played in their personal development, their understanding of female citizenship, and their decision to engage in resistance. I have since found similar tropes in several interviews with female members of contemporary Polish paramilitary organizations who pointed out how they had enjoyed nationalist wartime herstory prior to joining the largely masculinized paramilitary movement. Yet the empowering potential of national historiography goes beyond inspiring some to challenge the dominant gender order. In fact, for some women it is not the gender transgression, but rather conforming to politically regressive and oppressive for women. In fact, there is much to suggest that women can experience these narratives as beneficial and empowering. Back in 2009–2010, when I interviewed female participants of the Warsaw Uprising, a few of them mentioned to me the role that stories of women who had actively engaged in national struggles – like the French Joan of Arc of the Polish tradition – played in their personal development, their understanding of female citizenship, and their decision to engage in resistance. 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Natalia Klimova was a member of a terrorist group that took part in preparations for the famous explosion in the dacha of Prime Minister Petr Stolygin in August 1906. She was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1908. She later escaped prison and fled the country.

Female terrorists: political or just mad?

Conservative narratives in the historiography of early 20th century female terrorism in Russia

abstract

Most historians writing about revolutionary terrorism in Russia in the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century have long treated this as the history of a righteous fight against the autocratic regime, which is the way the terrorists themselves represented their activity. However, conservative contemporaries of the terrorists, with a pro-governmental perspective on revolutionary terrorism have until recently not been taken into account. This article discusses the main employed by conservatives at the beginning of the 20th century to explain the political violence committed by women, and it shows how these narratives have been employed the scholarly analysis of the topic. The article provides an answer to the question why conservative governmental views on the female terrorists and terrorism in prerevolutionary Russia have never been influential in the historiography.

KEYWORDS: terrorism, Russia, women, conservative narratives, historiography, conservative trend.
lack of interest in female terrorism in Russia in contemporary conservative historiography, however, cannot be explained by the absence of the topic from the historical record. Before 1957 and even after that, conservative contemporaries of terrorist women wrote at length about female participation in political violence.

The purpose of the present article, then, is to show why the conservative narratives have never become influential in the historiography of female participation in political terrorism. It will focus particularly on the conservative narratives and historiography of female terrorists from the beginning of the 20th century, which were the second generation of Russian terrorists and who received much attention from both scholars and laymen. In order to answer the central question of the article, I will first introduce conservative views on women in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Second, I will identify the typical narratives that appeared in pre-revolutionary accounts of female terrorism, written by conservative authors. Third, I will show what role these narratives have played in the professional historiography of female participation in political terrorism in Russia. In the final section, I will present the way contemporary conservative historians and laymen have approached this question.

Conservative perspective on women

During the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, the Russian authorities were seriously challenged by systematic political terrorism, which was used as a means of political struggle by many left-wing political groups. Members of these groups saw the tsarist regime as autocratic, and having no legal way to change the situation in the country they considered political terrorism as the only powerful means to resist tyranny. Women had even fewer legal rights than men in Russia at that time, and many of them joined terrorist units where they could enjoy the freedom and equality with men that were otherwise denied to them.

Members of these groups saw the tsarist regime as autocratic, and having no legal way to change the situation in the country they considered political terrorism as the only powerful means to resist tyranny. Women had even fewer legal rights than men in Russia at that time, and many of them joined terrorist units where they could enjoy the freedom and equality with men that were otherwise denied to them. Conservative narratives of female political violence

The terrorist regime, whose most hated representatives were the targets of political terrorism, and the conservatives, who supported that regime, saw women who participated in political terrorism first of all as law breakers. As a result, the attitude towards them was more or less similar to the attitude towards criminal women in prerevolutionary Russia. That attitude was based on Cesare Lombroso’s criminal anthropology, according to which female criminals were seen as unnatural and unnatural.

Women who committed violent crimes were seen as the worst kind of criminals because they contradicted the existing gender expectations about women as “naturally” peaceful. Their participation in violence was often attributed to extreme emotional, which was considered to be a “typical” feminine feature at that time. As a result, female violence was attributed to emotional reactions like conservatism, or revenge.

However, political violence perpetrated by women could not be easily portrayed as stemming from such emotions. As a result, in order to explain female participation in political terrorism, the conservatives suggested particular narratives. In the following paragraphs, I will introduce the conservative narratives that would have important implications for future historical works, and I will illustrate them with examples of conservative writing on some of the female terrorists in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century.

First of all, female terrorists were seen by conservatives as unnatural women, which was very much in line with the existing criminological perspective. Their participation in political terrorism, therefore, was attributed to their failure to be “natural” women. Such a narrative was used, for example, by the philosopher Vasily Rozanov, an ardent advocate of patriar- chal domesticity, in his article on Fruma Frumkina in Novoe vremya, New Time, in 1897, and a local conservative newspaper, Fruma Mordukhova Frumkina (1871—1907) was a midwife born into a better-off Jewish family. She was denounced by the Party of Socialist Revolutionary- ies (PSR), the biggest socialist party in Russia, at that time, on February 19, 1906, while in custody, she tried to cut the throat of the head of the Kiev gendarmerie General G.D. Novitsky, who was particularly notorious for his repressions of revolutionaries. On April 30, 1907, while in Moscow’s Bu- tyrsky prison, Frumkina made an un- successful attempt to kill the prison guard Bagretsov. She justified that attempt by Bagretsov’s cruel treatment of political prisoners. On April 18, 1907, Rozanov contrasts her profession of midwife to her participation in political terrorism. He writes that giving life and easing suffering, the “typical” duties of a “natural” woman and the basics of the midwife’s profession, were rejected by Frumkina in favor of tak- ing lives and creating suffering. In this way, Rozanov represents Frumkina as a deviant woman who consciously rejected her “natural” duties in favor of activities considered as “unnatural” for a “good” woman.

Another way of approaching female violence for the con- servatives was to see the perpetrator as insane. The narrative of madness was one of the first reactions to the political as- sassination committed by Maria Spiridonova. On January 26, 1906, Maria Alexandrovna Spiridonova (1884—1945), a member of the PSR, born into the family of a nonhereditary Tambov noble, fatally wounded the provincial government councilor G.N. Luzhenovsky who had ordered the brutal police suppres- sion of a peasant uprising.

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Conservative narratives in historical works on terrorism in Russia

The conservative narratives discussed in the previous section did not find their way into works on political terrorism in Russia written by professional historians, but they have never been dominant there. In this section, I will explain what place these narratives have had in historical works on the topic.

The first research work on political terrorism in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century was written by a conservative progressive author. It was Alexandr Spiridovich, a major general of the Russian gendarmes, who in 1916 wrote a book on the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia, which was meant to be a textbook for the Secret Police. The book is written from the criminological perspective of that time as discussed above, and the revolutionary terrorists are represented there not as political activists, but first of all as people who broke the law. Female terrorists are mentioned in the book only as examples. Spiridovich does not take up the problem of women’s participa- tion in political terrorism, and he represents terrorist women similarly to terrorist men. Some of individual terrorist women, including Natalia Klimova and Fruma Frumkina, are mentioned in the book in connection with their participation in political violence, but the author tries to maintain an objective tone in his book by avoiding any judgmental representations. Spiridovich writes about crimes committed by these women without dis- cussing the reasons for their participation in political terrorism. As a result, the conservative narratives of female participation in political terrorism were not considered in Russian historiography. The work on political terrorism in Russia written by a conservative from the beginning of the 20th century.

When it comes to professional historiography, the perspec- tive that has dominated it from the beginning is not the conser- vative one. Oliver H. Radkey, the author of the first comprehen- sive book on terrorism in the PSR, used as his main sources interviews with émigré leaders of the party whom he met in the 1930s. Radkey was also influenced by numerous works of Rus- sian radicals who lived abroad and glorified the terrorists. As a result, the perspective of the conservatives is not at all present.
Maria Spiridonova was introduced as a character in both of these works. In Budnitsky’s novel there is a character named Sashenka Spirova, whose appearance, biography, as well as the surname, resemble Spiridonova. Spirova is a member of a terrorist group of the PSR, and in Budnitsky’s book she does not represent her as a devoted revolutionary. First of all, Spirova is introduced as a young woman, with promiscuous and sexual morals and as an “empty minx”, who was interested more in opportunities to meet men than in participation in revolutionary activity. Budnitsky does not consider her a terrorist of the first order, but as someone who was attracted to the revolutionary cause by desire for adventure, glamour, attraction of possible action, and just a desire to be in the center of events. Budnitsky attributes to her by the Bolsheviks the attribution of “promiscuous” and “hysterical” state of mind, which he does not support. Budnitsky interprets Spirova’s way of talking as hysterical and characterizes her on one occasion as somewhat insane. Budnitsky’s representation of Spirova was the direct continuation of the characterizations of the Komsomol girl by the author of his previous book, which he worked on the history of political terrorism in Russia. Although Budnitsky’s book was praised by many historians and critics for its thorough research and use of primary sources, some critics have noted that Budnitsky’s work was not as comprehensive as it could have been. In his book, besides that, under the influence of his mainly male informants, Radley does not pay attention to the problem of female participation in political terrorism.

Radley’s work has become the starting point of almost all Western historiography on terrorism in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, where the terrorists, including the women, were represented with sympathy as fighters against the autocratic regime. Russian historians who started writing in the late 1980s and early 1990s about female terrorists in prerevolutionary Russia followed the majority of their Western colleagues in representing revolutionary terrorists as fighters against the autocracy. The reason for this was partly the influence of the Western historiography that emerged much earlier, and partly Russian scholars’ focus on the sources created by the terrorists themselves. Thus, the mainstream historiography of female participation in political terrorism in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century has been dominated both in this country and in the West by the narratives created by the terrorists and their sympathizers. The narratives of female participation in political terrorism created by the conservatives before the revolution, however, re-emerged first in the Soviet Union. Soviet historiography did not consider the political terrorism of the political parties that operated alongside the Bolsheviks in Russia prior to the revolution as an important research area. As a result, nothing was written about the female terrorists by professional historians. The conservative narratives of female participation in political violence, however, can be found in some works of fiction published in the 1990s, where female terrorists from the beginning of the 20th century were introduced as characters. As it will be shown later, the conservative narratives employed in these works influenced some later works on the topic. Particularly interesting for this article are Nikolay Vitura’s novel Evening Bells (Vechernyye zvonki) and Mikhail Shatrov’s play The Sixth of July (Shestoe iulya).
peer-reviewed article

professional historical community but had worked in different positions in Russia’s Home Ministry for many years. 43 Although Bakaev does not touch upon the problem of female participation in political terrorism specifically, he expresses criticism towards apologetic biographies of Russian terrorists written by Russian historians. Following Bakaev’s interpretation, the controversy is reminiscent of the reasoning offered by conservative authors at the beginning of the 20th century who represent female terrorists as unnatural women who failed to fulfill their “natural” womanly duties. Oleg Budinskii has written a review of Bakaev’s dissertation in which he discusses Bakaev’s interpretations of the reasons behind female participation in political terrorism, his general evaluation of the dissertation shows that the conservative progovernmental views on terrorism are not accepted by historians working in the research field. Other Russian conservative historians, as mentioned above, do not focus on the topic of female participation in political terrorism in Russia as interesting for their research.

Conclusions

This article has discussed the reasons for why conservative historians, besides their general lack of interest towards women’s roles in history, do not have at hand any historiographical tradition of approaching female participation in terrorism at the beginning of the 20th century from a progovernmental perspective. The only historical work of that kind, the doctoral dissertation of Anatoly Bakaev, was rejected by the professional community of historians working within the research field and thus could hardly lead to further attempts in that area. The view of female terrorists as “unnatural” women who preferred political activism to their “natural” destiny of motherhood, which corresponds to the prevailing contemporary view on women’s roles in Russia, is present only in the works of laymen who do not have the look for the approval of the professional historical community. 1

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References


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3  Ibid, 34.
4  See, for example, Laura Frugé, The Key to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
The butterfly effect in history-making

Conservative subjectivities of women in the anti-communist discourse in Slovakia

by Zuzana Maďarová

“My name did not belong to me any more. People pronounced it stammeringly, artificially and heavily. A substantive reason to feel out of place. And my way of speaking in a new language was suspiciously awkward. Every time I made a mistake, a hole opened up. And the locals liked smooth relations and fixed holes. My teacher tried to convince me: ‘Adapt. Just imagine that you walk down the street and everybody thinks you’re a local.’ But I knew that my face, shaped like a full moon, would betray me.”

In the novel Die un Dankbare Fremde (“The ungrateful stranger” or “country”), the Swiss author Irena Brežná, who emigrated with her family from Czechoslovakia in 1968, reflects upon the place of a woman immigrant in a new language and a new society. As she suggests, one can try, learn, struggle, challenge, and conform, but the language resists, as does the society that creates it. The main character strikes back and looks for her own ways of speaking and living. The author examines a power game between a newcomer and a new country, as well as the story of their expectations, inclusion, and resistance. Readers may ask along with the protagonist: to what extent does a person need to integrate to become a part of the collective story; how much can one resist; to what extent can one create one’s own place in an appropriated language?

In the collective memory in Slovakia, women are still treated as strangers in the male-dominated mainstream discourse. While a few “women worthies” are publicly commemorated, they are usually not a part of the country’s modern history and very rarely challenge dominant historical narratives. Placing women in history, as Gerda Lerner puts it, or placing major historical events in the life stories of female individuals, thus causes tension like that experienced by an immigrant in a new country. It invites women to search for language that would enable them to articulate their life stories while admitting that neither life nor a story can precede its articulation. This tension provides an opportunity to explore the ways women remember, and it also underlines the role of social context in the process of recollection and history production. Edna Lomsky-Feder argues that society frames and channels the way subjects create and represent their memories. She writes that personal memory is “embedded within, designed by, and derives its meaning from a memory field that offers different interpretations” of a given event. The remembering subject cannot freely choose an interpretation of an event (at least, not without consequences) as the memory field is not an open space. Rather, there are distributive criteria that frame and channel a subject’s recollection and interpretation. These criteria may be particularly strict in a situation when memory fields are very limited for women.

This article is guided by two major assumptions: every account of experience is an interpretation and needs an interpretation and every historical interpretation is in need of exploration. In the context of women’s overall limited participation in the articulation of history in Slovakia, I explore some aspects of life stories of women embedded in the anticommunist discourse. I ask what types of subjectivity and...
femininity these stories present and how they are embedded within a broader anti-communist discourse. The recontextualization of this research project is twofold: rather than building upon feminist historiography projects developed in academia and civil society in Slovakia in previous years, the oral histories of women analyzed here are embedded in the conservative discourse in Slovakia. Since the oral histories present gained political and media attention and involve schools from all around the country, the subjectivities they construct and that the Secret Church and the Catholic dissent played a key role in activities challenging state socialism in the mainstream media, including the newspaper which presents itself as center-left, revised stories of some personalities presented by “The Inconspicuous History of the Conservatism”.

To a certain extent, the oral history projects do help to diversify public discussion about different historical events and to shed more light on “the small histories”. It is also necessary to stress the ascension on the political agenda should be applied to the experiences of women during socialism,” Kícková explains.

A search for tools that would enable women to express their experiences in socialism — different from the experiences of men — caused by the fact that the researchers used their own social criteria and experience, often very different from ours, and they trace the ways in which there are some of the necessary ethical concerns of oral history. The fact that the researcher is in a position of power should be reflected in the research process, and the relationship between the researcher and the participant ought to be a part of the interpretation. “Transparent research processes which do not silence women participants and a clearly reflected researcher’s position are some of the necessary ethical concerns of oral history.”

In recent years, Slovakia has witnessed a burst of oral history projects. Personal stories have been recorded and archived by a number of actors, ranging from the Nation’s Memory Institute, the House of Terror in Budapest and the Hungarian Historical Institute, to a variety of nongovernmental organizations. Although they have the potential to diversify or challenge the dominant narrative, the oral history projects have been presented in a way that supports the mainstream historical construction of a nation of suffering. For instance, the most extensive project of the Nation’s Memory Institute is called Witnesses of the Oppression Period and contains more than 350 stories. As presented by the Institute’s website, the structure of the database covers three main historical periods: Slovakia in the years 1939–1945; the transitional period from 1945–1989; and the communist totalitarian regime of 1989–1990, which is the most extensive part of the collection with a more detailed structure. Regardless of the period, suffering and repression are the key topics. According to the key topics. According to the Institute’s main activities is the oral history project “The Inconspicuous Heroes in the Fight against Communism” has received substantial political and cultural support. For instance, the annual conference at which the chosen students’ stories are presented has been held twice under the patronage of the president, and that this is also the home of the current head of the NGO Inconspicuous Heroes, who also works for the Nation’s Memory Institute. This limited representation of women’s subjectivity has not been published or challenged by the political and cultural elites, who often present themselves as liberal, and the project “Women’s History” of the conservative newspaper “The Inconspicuous History of the Conservatism.”

Every year, the project is chronologically framed by two anniversaries: the Candle Demonstration, which was the biggest mass demonstration against state socialism in Slovakia before 1989, and which was organized by Catholic dissidents; and the Velvet Revolution which led to a democratic change after 1989. Thus the key topics of the project is activities in March and the best stories are published in November.

In 2016, the topic of the project was “Girls and Women against Totalitarianism”, calling on students “to pay attention to women, girls, social, economic, political and personal experience of women during the communist regime and totalitarianism.” While oral history projects in general – and this one in particular – have led to increased numbers of women who recollect the past publicly, the subjectivity they present is quite limited and very specific. This contributes to the construction of a narrow memory field for women who recall their pasts and narrow discursive spaces within which girls and women can create their own subjectivities. These initiatives do not build on previous activities which examined history from a feminist and gender perspective, but rather present a conservative image of female women, men, mothers, and daughters who were willing to sacrifice themselves for the nation and their faith. This symbolic representation is not that surprising considering that the Museum of Communism was originally initiated by the Forum of Christian Organizations, an umbrella for around 50 Christian organizations, and that this is also the home organization of the current head of the NGO Inconspicuous Heroes, who also works for the Nation’s Memory Institute.
of women’s anticommunist subjectivity as constructed by the canonical dissenting authors.39

The structure of the story of Františka Muziková reveals some inner tensions. While the participation in the religious group is a reason for her arrest, faith in God is not mentioned later. It is rather work that forms the background of life. Nonetheless, the story is given a religious framing by the title. Like the first story, the life of Františka Muziková is presented as suffering as a means to a better life, represented by her new family. The picture of two sides in a struggle – one which destroys people’s lives and one which suffers – is the background against which the life story takes place. The fundamentalist presentation of truth, heroes, and devils is not only the resource on which the story draws, but it is its message. The story thus does not challenge or examine the moral values it is embedded in, but rather religious truth is its only resource.

Women’s life stories in a broader discursive field of anticommunism

The stories of The Inconspicuous Heroes are constructed in a frame of national suffering which allows them to create the space of identification. The fundamentalist narratives construct two sides in the conflict, and the reader is supposed to choose one. The stories of the main characters are presented as suffering as a means to a better life, represented by their new families. This is also the case with the story of Františka Muziková.

The stories of The Inconspicuous Heroes are built on the idea that the suffering of the main character is not only due to being a political prisoner but also due to being a woman. The story of Františka Muziková is a good example of this. Her suffering is constructed as suffering as a means to a better life, represented by her new family.

The story of Františka Muziková is a good example of the way in which the suffering of the main character is constructed as a means to a better life. The story is presented as a struggle between good and evil, and the main character is represented as a good, exceptional person. Her work as a nurse, which was punished as a political crime, is presented as suffering as a means to a better life, represented by her new family.

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The life stories present women as silent subjects, in style, purpose, quality of writing, and complexity of inner dynamics. But are obedient towards their husbands and fathers and offer women very clear remedies through or after their suffering. The paradox of strong women who resist the authoritarian regime but are obedient towards their husbands and fathers reveals the patriarchal order. Matonoha claims that this paradox is a risky part of the texts that have high social capital and set of values and, concurrently, on the grounds of [a] voluntaristic, marginalizing and unreflected patriarchal notion of gender roles." As Matonoha argues, the ethos of dissent and counteraction against the oppressive regime intensifies the intertextual component of these ideologies. His analysis illustrates that, although they appear nonconformist, heroic, and almost martyr-like, they employ traditional gender stereotypes. As a result of this paradox, the intertextual images, such as motherhood, partnership, and resistance to the political regime, and the discursive places where they occur may have a stronger effect on readers than the usual value attributes (physical beauty or social status, personal and social success, or personal prestige) presented by the mainstream culture.

The subjectivities of women in the stories analyzed share some aspects of these characteristics. They present women with a strong positive image: they are brave and resistant towards the oppressive regime; they fight against injustice or sacrifice themselves for others. By appealing to the asymmetry of physical power and the power of being a woman, hero, or victim, a female resistance makes for her to be mythical warriors and role models for young girls. However, as in Matonoha’s analysis of dissident literary texts, ambivalence can be found under the strong positive image.

The paradox of strong women who resist the authoritarian regime but are obedient towards their husbands and fathers extends the complex reality and can also be seen in the narratives of women’s antimilitarist subjectivities. These two sets of texts, the literary texts and the life stories, are different in style, purpose, quality of writing, and complexity of inner structures, but they share the ideals of women and reinforce patriarchal values. The life stories present women as silent sufferers, heroes, and women who forgive and forget to those who impose oppression. They resist the oppressive political regime but are obedient towards and reinforce the conservative gender regime. The subjectivities they represent are embedded within the patriarchal order with obvious or hidden but indispensible, unchangeable hierarchies between the masculine and the feminine. However, these limited and limiting constructions of female identities seem familiar to the antimilitarist discourse that accepts, welcomes, and reinforce them. This phenomenon can be partially explained by the relation with the canonical literary texts written by dissidents, exilists, and alternative scene authors from the 1948–1989 period, which reproduce and reaffirm the patriarchal order and injure the identities of women. While operating with extensive social capital, these texts have contributed to the silence on the issue of gender after 1989, and to a broader deficiency in understanding that over looks inequalities related to gender and other dimensions. The conservative antimilitarist subjectivities of women are embodied in the dichotomous discourse of heroism and suffering that does not allow a proper reflection of the presented stories. The readers have entered the field of absolute values where the symbol “woman” and “victim” almost coexist so far, looking at the political context and seeing neighboring Eastern European countries where the conservative representation of women’s identities is part of the ongoing historical revisionism raises some questions. Coming to the butterfly effect, one can at least ask what societal repercussions these seemingly small scale conservative activities in history-making will have in future.

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11 A continuous misunderstanding between the concepts of “love” and “marriage” as a unique relationship between one man and one woman and stated that the Slovak Republic protects and promotes heterosexual marriage has had a major impact on the public and political discussion of the queerness. It was followed by a referendum which, under the mask of the protection of the traditional family, tried to restrict the human rights of certain social groups, including LGBTQ people. The referendum aimed at preventing nonheterosexual couples from forming a marriage or any legal union including adoption of children, and at presenting children from participating in sex education at schools. Although the turnout did not exceed 50% of voters, the referendum was approved, almost one million people. Moreover, the campaign left society divided and desensitized to hate speech and harmful expressions. The campaign was preceded and followed by other attacks on human rights and gender equality, etc., campaigns against the Istvan Csontvari and the National Strategy for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the Dignity of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community 1990–2011. These interventions have helped open the doors of higher politics to the far right and neoconservative political parties which were elected to the parliament in 2016. See M. G. Zuzana Kocková, “Slovakia as an ‘Other’ in the Politics of Gender Equality in Slovakia,” in Anti-Gender Movements on the Rise: Strategizing for Gender Equality in Central and Eastern Europe (Berlin: Heimith Bill Schilling, 2016), 13–41.
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22. Oral history sources are always socially constructed, variable and partial. Like other historical sources, they never are objective. Moreover, as feminist oral history has been often related with the project of “unlearning,” there are risks of treating women’s voices as unanswerable, internally uncontrolled and categorically different from men’s. For more limitations and risks of oral history projects, see e.g. Alejandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different?” in The Oral History Reader, ed. Robert Perks and Alan Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 65–7; Ayşe Gür Allmann and Andrea Pető, “Uncomfortable Connections: Gender, Memory, War,” in Gendered Wars, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 21.

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24. Besides those mentioned in the text, the organisation Post Bellum has spread its activities in Slovakia under the umbrella of the international project Memory of Nations, translated on its website into Slovak as Pamäť na krize, which shifts the meaning “to Memory of the Nation.” See http://www.memoryofnations.eu/. The stories collected by the project are published regularly by the daily Denník N, and thus have an opportunity to influence the public discourse.


27. The story was published in the journal of the project Memory of Nations, translated on its website into Slovak as Pamäť na krize, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).


29. The museum is located in Bratislava and is currently open one day a week.


32. Pető, “Revisionist History, Future Memories.”


34. The materials analyzed include audio and visual representations of the „generation of reactors is becoming obsolete. Regardless of shifts in political views on nuclear power and ongoing new construction, 100 have already been taken out of use. In the near future, many more will be closed down, as the first generation of reactors is becoming obsolete. Regardless of shifting political views on nuclear power and ongoing new construction in several countries, humanity has entered an era in which post-nuclear sites exist in large numbers. Furthermore, the current methods of control of radioactive material and sites, and the current experiences of those possessing the privileged high status that comes with the vulnerable “nuclear way of living” and of those who don’t, are marked by a striking asymmetry of power between different groups of actors and between different hierarchies of value.” This expanding landscape, with its inherent tensions, calls for a similarly expanding scholarly attention.

35. Public interest in nuclear legacies has often centered on nuclear weapons in a Cold War context. In this conference, however, the focus shifted to less spectacular commercial nuclear power production and its legacy. This is a legacy that knits together regions, nations, and continents; professional and lay men; center and periphery; nature and culture; and past, present, and future.

A GLIMPSE AT THE CONFERENCE

The decommissioning processes of different nuclear power plants were examined from different angles: from the debates that take place before a decision to close (e.g., discursive argumentation for or against the closure of the Fessenheim nuclear

T he conference Nuclear Legacies: Community, Memory, Waste, and Nature took place from September 14 to 16, 2017, at Södertörn University. It gathered about forty scholars engaged in nuclear issues, coming from twelve different countries and representing many different disciplines. The conference was one of the concluding events of the research project titled “Nuclear Legacies: Negotiation radioactivity in France, Russia, and Sweden” (funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies); a basic rationale for both the project and the conference was the expanding landscape of closed-down nuclear reactors confronting us today.

More than 300 commercial nuclear reactors in existence around the world, 100 have already been taken out of use. In the near future, many more will be closed down, as the first generation of reactors is becoming obsolete. Regardless of shifting political views on nuclear power and ongoing new construction in several countries, humanity has entered an era in which post-nuclear sites exist in large numbers. Furthermore, the current methods of control of radioactive material and sites, and the current experiences of those possessing the privileged high status that comes with the vulnerable “nuclear way of living” and of those who don’t, are marked by a striking asymmetry of power between different groups of actors and between different hierarchies of value.” This expanding landscape, with its inherent tensions, calls for a similarly expanding scholarly attention.

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A GLIMPSE AT THE CONFERENCE

Paper presentations revealed subjects such as radioactive gardening, nuclear professional improvisation, and desires to show and to hide. The specific character of this nuclear legacy and the particularities of dwelling and working on a nuclearized site were common topics in the presentations. Bengt G. Karlsson, whose works deal with intimacy and estrangement at three nuclear sites in Sweden, notably approached the topic of the nuclear way of living in a nuclearized town. The scientific communities working with nuclear issues also drew much scholarly attention: Anna Veronika Wendt engaged with the development of the social and professional identities of the nuclear workers at Rivne in Ukraine in order to challenge current writing on nuclear history by offering a bottom-up perspective; Susan Molyneux-Hodgson addressed the creation of radiological knowledge by exploring the practices of scientific communities in nuclear-waste contexts; Sneja Schmid reported on her work with engineers at nuclear power plants as she trains them to improvise in order to prepare them for the unexpected—that is, accidents “exceeding the design basis”; and Ekaterina Tarasova approached the topic of anti-nuclear activist communities by reflecting on the invisibility of anti-nuclear movements and the professionalization of environmental NGOs in our time of “nuclear renaissance.”
The participants visited the underground site of Sweden’s first nuclear reactor (R1).

**Nuclear Heritage – What to Do with It?** Public panel discussion.

Atomic gardening was a thing of the 1960s, but is now more or less forgotten.

### Power plant in France by Florence Fröhlig

How communities in nuclear towns are affected by such a decommissioning (e.g., Leila Dawney and Kristina Slavate examined how the community in the vicinity of the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania was adjusting to decommissioning and to the accompanying long periods of uncertainty). Several scholars were studying the decommissioning processes and future of the Sellafield nuclear power plant in the UK. For example, Sarah May (who is part of the research network Heritage Futures) engaged with the issue of waste at Sellafield and opened a discussion on transgenerational equity and heritage future-making. Penelope Harvey, Peta Tjinisk, and Damast D’Othohey drew attention to the fact that it is not only nuclear buildings that represent a legacy; safety itself is part of the legacy of Sellafield.

The lates of nuclear sites and their heritagization processes were notably addressed by Trinidad Ríos, who is currently engaged in writing the history of the Huelan atomic site in Patagonia, Argentina. The writing of this site’s story is however jeopardized due to the scarce and dispersed nature of its material, such that information had to be obtained by collecting alternative sources, especially rumors attached to the island. In contrast to Trinidad Ríos, who addressed a perceived “heritage of falseness” of the nuclear project, Kaja Jæger reported on the preservation of heritage presentation through the 2005 removal of a 2,300 m³ nuclear block in Barcelona, Spain, as way of transforming a fascist legacy into a “non-legacy.”

**WHILE RICO AND VALENTINÉS-ÁLVAREZ presented unnamed claims**, Kasia Keeley examined how the nuclear heritage of the Hanford project in the United States was integrated into the Manhattan Project. Per Högselius proposed a revision of nuclear energy history that would put water at the center of the narratives, since water is crucial to the production of nuclear energy; this proposal thus challenges existing national narratives on nuclear energy production. For example, Roman Khandozhko addressed the “sacralization” of places of atomic physics by studying the history of the Huemel atomic site in Panama. Like Sellafield in the UK, the nuclear site of Obninsk drew much scholarly attention: Gallia Orlova engaged with the nuclear topology of the site – that is, the spatial concentration of nuclear-related research institutes at Obninsk; Aleksandra Kasaite analyzed the stories of the nuclear project that have been constructed into different truths in France and Germany. Roman Khandozhko addressed the sacralization of the community past in current discussions related to the organization of a world museum of nuclear energy in Obninsk, Russia. The sacralization of the atom, however, is not a new phenomenon, as illustrated by Ilia Kalmim, who presented the utopia of nuclear energy in Soviet discourses of the 1920s. Like Sellafield in the UK, the nuclear site of Obninsk drew much scholarly attention: Gallia Orlova engaged with the nuclear topology of the site – that is, the spatial concentration of nuclear-related research institutes at Obninsk; Aleksandra Kasaite addressed the stories of the nuclear project that have been constructed into different truths in France and Germany.

**Alison Boyd** addressed the official nuclear discourse in British museums by examining object biographies: she explored the public culture of the physics by analyzing the material artifacts displayed in British museums. Vanessa Cirkel Bartel reflected further on the British atomic legacy by addressing the issue of atomic gardening and radioactive breeding, and their disappearance from public and historical concerns after the 1960s. A physicist and radiation protection officer, Alan Flowers, drew attention to the curation of radiation hazards in contemporary museum exhibitions; such hazards range from radium emulators to the uranium compounds in vintage green colored glass items or timepieces (i.e., radium dials and numerals). Flowers addressed the need to reflect on the holding and displaying of radioactive materials in museums, and urged everyone to identify all radioactive materials in their collections and to undertake contamination checks of all radioactive objects, in order to determine whether the exhibit poses significant risk, or is too hazardous to be shown. The curator Eile Carpenter also engaged with the issue of radium, but did so from an artists perspective: she addressed the exhibition “Perpetual Uncertainty,” in which artists concerned with temporality, materiality, and aesthetics materialized their radiological desires and fears, covering topics from naturally occurring uranium to radioactive waste. The appropriation of the nuclear legacy by popular literature was examined by Karena Kalmim, who used two fictional books to show how politics has influenced different representations of the Chernobyl catastrophe, and how the disaster has been constructed into different truths in France and Germany.

**Anna Storm** drew attention to the monitoring of fish upstream and downstream of nuclear energy production, and suggested how different imaginaries are attached to the monitoring of nuclear fish. Tatiana Kasperski and Andrei Stsiapanau addressed another very visible legacy of nuclear production: radioactive waste. Kasperski examined the politics of nuclear waste in contemporary Russia and addressed the controversy that is embedded in definitions of wastefulness and nuclearity, while Andrei Stsiapanau more specifically explored how the issues of nuclearity and radioactive waste are negotiated and re-negotiated at the Sosnovy Bor nuclear power plant located near St. Petersburg. One was not engaged with the issue of nuclear waste but more holistic way by drawing attention to the temporality of the current solution of geological nuclear waste repositories; he emphasized the need for people to predict how groundbreaking the existing nuclear waste will view nuclear waste. Thus, cultural heritage is conceptualized differently through time: “To each future, its own future!”

Other scholars discussed the role of nature as a protector and sacrificial role in nuclear power conservation, and Kate Brown demonstrated the continuing impact of the Chernobyl catastrophe on the surrounding landscape 30 years later, from the deformity of pines’ thorns to radioactive berries. Given the significance of nature in the production of nuclear energy, Per Högström proposed a revision of nuclear energy history that would emphasize the role of the narrativeness of the nuclear project. He demonstrated that the various countries under scrutiny had different cultural approaches to nuclear legacies. While some countries are tempted to erase all memories when decommissioning a nuclear site, others struggle to preserve either the clear legacy or the narratives. He also demonstrated that the structure of the nuclear legacy that transcends national states’ memorialization of this saga of modernity is the range of non-human agents involved in the nuclear legacy. As presented in this conference, these agents included water, rocks, berries, mushrooms, trees, fish, and layers of clay. It is clear that the challenges connected to the nuclear legacy of the world cannot be solved only through a technical issue; they are – perhaps primarily – an issue of biological, social, and cultural concern.

**Florence Fröhlig** Postdoctoral researcher and project researcher, Södertörn University.

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E. Rindzēvičiūtė analyzed the creation of nuclear cultural heritage in Russia over time, and showed that, although the military use of the atom was downplayed during the Soviet period, the atom bomb is now at the center of current exhibitions.

Kasperski examined the politics of nuclear waste in contemporary Russia and addressed the controversy that is embedded in definitions of wastefulness and nuclearity, while Andrei Stsiapanau more specifically explored how the issues of nuclearity and radioactive waste are negotiated and re-negotiated at the Sosnovy Bor nuclear power plant located near St. Petersburg. One was not engaged with the issue of nuclear waste but more holistic way by drawing attention to the temporality of the current solution of geological nuclear waste repositories; he emphasized the need for people to predict how groundbreaking the existing nuclear waste will view nuclear waste. Thus, cultural heritage is conceptualized differently through time: “To each future, its own future!”

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The conference attested to the tremendous impact nuclear energy has had on human society in the past century. However, even if scholars were to agree that the legacy that is passed on, whether we like it or not, whereas “heritage” is something we choose to pass on, there is no consensus about which story should be passed on. Whose version of the story is to be heard? Who is legitimately to narrate the story? The different papers that were presented during the conference clearly demonstrated that the various countries under scrutiny had very different cultural approaches to nuclear legacies. While some countries are tempted to erase all memories when decommissioning a nuclear site, others struggle to preserve either the clear legacy or the narratives. He also demonstrated that the structure of the nuclear legacy that transcends national states’ memorialization of this saga of modernity is the range of non-human agents involved in the nuclear legacy. As presented in this conference, these agents included water, rocks, berries, mushrooms, trees, fish, and layers of clay. It is clear that the challenges connected to the nuclear legacy of the world cannot be solved only through a technical issue; they are – perhaps primarily – an issue of biological, social, and cultural concern.

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**SHOULD A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT BE PRESERVED AS AN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE SITE, OR AS A SITE FOR DARK TOURISM?**
NORD STREAM, MEDIATION, AND THE COUNCIL OF BALTIC SEA STATES

by Levke Aduda & Stefan Ewert

ABSTRACT

The Russian–German gas pipeline project Nord Stream is still high on the agenda of regional politics in the Baltic Sea Region. Recent discussions on expanding Nord Stream highlight the fact that this unilateral effort by Russia and Germany has stirred further unrest among the other littoral states. Furthermore, an expansion of Nord Stream seems off limits due to EU regulations. Nevertheless, it is continuously pursued by Russia and Germany out of national interests. We argue that the EU, which has been repeatedly proposed as a mediator of the conflict, is unsuitable because its claim of direct legislative competence strongly affects the conflict. Based on existing mediation research, we suggest that regional political organizations, such as the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), are more likely to be accepted as mediators, and more likely to be successful in that role. Their perceived weakness is a strategic advantage because the parties involved in the conflict do not have to fear being overruled by the CBSS. Furthermore, the CBSS can remain engaged for an extended time.

KEYWORDS: Nord Stream, mediation, CBSS, credibility leverage, regional mediator.

Around 10 years ago, the Russian–German gas pipeline project Nord Stream triggered a public and academic debate in the Baltic Sea Region. The discussion had at least four dimensions. In addition to political and security concerns, economic, legal, and ecological aspects were referred to. The public debate reopened in 2015, when the Russian company Gazprom, together with several West European partners, decided to found the consortium Nord Stream 2. Under the framework of Nord Stream 2, two more gas pipelines are supposed to be built across the bottom of the Baltic Sea. Controversial discussions on the project have split the region. The governments of Germany and Russia are in favor of Nord Stream 2. The German government supports the project, in spite of some critical arguments in particular by the Green Party. It is mainly the Social Democrats who advocate Nord Stream 2 and have pushed the German government to build an alliance with Gazprom and Russia. The remaining Baltic Sea littorals oppose the project. To date, the question how to govern the conflict over Nord Stream 2 remains unresolved even though construction is supposed to start in February 2018. Meanwhile, the importance of regional cooperation is even more pronounced in light of recent events such as the Ukraine crisis and Russia’s involvement in Syria, which indicate tensions in the international system that are likely to have an influence on the Baltic Sea Region. Particularly in times like these, regional cooperation is crucial because it contributes to regional stability. To encourage flawless cooperation, conflict management on Nord Stream 2 is necessary. This paper examines the question how the conflict on Nord Stream 2 can be successfully addressed.

To answer the question, we first summarize the debate on Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2. Second, we introduce different conflict management tools with a focus on mediation. Drawing on the literature on international mediation, we seek to highlight the benefits of comparably weak mediators who can credibly promise to act as mediators without using sticks and carrots to pressure the conflict parties towards an agreement. Hence, the conflict parties remain in control of both the mediation outcome.
and the mediation process. Moreover, we discuss the benefits of regional mediators who hold crucial insider information on the conflict parties. Third, we propose the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as a mediator. We argue that it can make use of its relative weakness, and thus act as the type of third party that can bring the conflict parties to the mediation table. As a regional actor, it is likely to stay engaged for an extended period and thus not rush towards an agreement, but, through persistence and endurance, broker a lasting agreement.

The public and scientific discourse on Nord Stream

In 2005, the Russian energy company Gazprom and the German energy companies E.On Ruhrgas and RASPB/ Wintershall founded the consortium North European Gas Pipeline Company, renamed Nord Stream AG in 2006. The purpose of this consortium was to create an offshore natural gas pipeline from Russia to Ger-

many. Unlike other offshore gas pipeline projects, such as the Langeled pipeline from Norway to the UK, Nord Stream was subject to controversy and debate from the very beginning.1 The project was promoted by Russia’s president Vladimir Putin and Germany’s former chancellor Gerhard Schröder, while several Baltic Sea littoral states opposed it for different reasons. The arguments of the opponents of the project are outlined below. Despite the voices against Nord Stream, the pipeline from Vyborg, Northwestern Russia, to Lubmin, Northeastern Germany, has been inaugurated in 2011. From an economics point of view, the project of the West Europe, and especially in Germany, argued that the pipeline ensures the gas supply to Europe. They referred to the crucial role of natural gas in the Western European energy mix and its status as a bridging technology for a climate-friendly energy supply in the future. Ecologically, the construction and operation of the pipeline will influence the marine environment only marginally, and it will substantially contribute to reductions in CO2 emissions. More-

over, by enhancing the dependency between Russia and Eu-

tropic countries if it so chooses.8 The offshore project allows

as political leverage on neighboring countries including the

the Baltic Sea,21 and security of
doing business.

Ralf Dichtl

For Nord Stream 2: Highly controversial again

Highly controversial again.

After the October 2011 Nord Stream 2, the debate calmed

In August 2017, the US issued sanctions related directly to the Nord Stream 2 project and thereby took an active part in the conflict. The US Congress has authorized the president to im-

which will undermine the expansion of renewable

energies.15

ON THE LEGAL LEVEL, the Nord Stream 2 consortium and the Ger-

man Bundesnetzagentur (Federal Network Agency for Electricity, Gas, Telecommunications, Post, and Railways) on the one hand and the EU Commission on the other have debated the question of who will have jurisdiction over the project. This dispute marks a crucial stumbling block for the project’s execution due to the strong

requirements, outlined in EU regulations on transparency, for other firms’ access to the project and for the separation of gas production and supply. While the

EU Commission insists on the implementa-

tion of EU law as the regulatory framework, the Nord Stream 2 coal-

tion and the Bundesnetzagentur argue that the offshore project between an EU member state and a non member state is not governed by the

European Single Energy Market Package.26 In order to ensure a coherent European energy policy, the European Commis-

sion for the Energy Union, Maroš Šefčovič, called for a leading role of the Commission in the pipeline

negotiations with Russia.27 However, the Legal Service of the

European Council published an opinion in September 2017 and rejected the Commission’s intention to engage in negotiations with Russia because the pipeline comes from a third country and therefore falls under EU jurisdiction.28 Hence, this expert opinion denied a direct role of the EU Commission as a negoti-

ating partner in the dispute.

Finally, critics have complained of a lack of transparency in the project and the personal connections behind it. Analysts have viewed the friendship between Putin and Schröder as a “key explanation behind the Nord Stream project”.29 The lack of transparency raised suspicions with regard to the underlying aims and dangers behind the given economic rationales, and the registration of the Nord Stream Corporation in Switzerland heightened these suspicions.

Which conflict management tool to choose?

There are various successful conflict management tools available.

In August 2017, the US issued sanctions related directly to the Nord Stream 2 project and thereby took an active part in the conflict. The US Congress has authorized the president to impose sanctions on personal firms involved in Russian energy export pipeline projects.30 In fact, the “Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act” allows the president to restrict the access of individuals or companies involved in the Nord Stream 2 project to US financial institutions and to prohibit procurement contracts between the sanctioned parties and the US government. Germany’s foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel accused the US of using sanction policy to promote its own gas export interests to Europe.31 So far, these sanctions have not had a 따라 otherwise.32 So far, states often refrain from engaging in legal forms of dispute resolution, particularly when their national security is at stake, because they lose control over the outcome.33 Especially because the disputes in the conflict on Nord Stream 2 do not agree on which legal measures apply to both, the European Commission’s position seems relatively high. In keeping with the EU Commission’s position, most Baltic littoral states claim the project falls under EU jurisdiction, while Germany applies its national jurisdiction.34 Nevertheless, the European Court of Justic-

in its perspective, the pipeline undermines the aims of Europe’s energy policy, the European Commis-

settle the dispute.35 Both negotiations and mediation have been suggested as tools by different actors.

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long-lasting settlements on contentious issues”.37 However, often a mix of strategies is most suitable for the effective resolution, particularly when their national security is at stake, because they lose control over the outcome.38 Especially because the disputes in the conflict on Nord Stream 2 do not agree on which legal measures apply to both, the European Commission’s position seems relatively high. In keeping with the EU Commission’s position, most Baltic littoral states claim the project falls under EU jurisdiction, while Germany applies its national jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the European Court of Justice has been suggested as an institution that should address the conflict.39

The European Commission has shown a strong interest in bilateral negotiations with Russia. However, not only did the Legal Service of the European Council reject the European Commis-

sion’s decision to engage in negotiations with Russia, but Russia also stated that it does not want to negotiate Nord Stream 2 with the EU because it does not fall within EU jurisdiction.40 Hence, bilateral negotiations between the two parties is a crucial. In the following, we briefly introduce a range of conflict management tools before proposing mediation as the most suitable tool for managing the conflict over Nord Stream 2.41

Which conflict management tool to choose?

There are various successful conflict management tools available. Listed in Article 33 of the UN Charter are tools such as “negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, or any other peaceful means of their [the conflict parties] own choice”. In the conflict on Nord Stream 2, different tools can be considered as viable options. Sanctions have already been issued,42 while demands have been made to have the European Court of Justice
can jeopardize talks, and can allow conflict parties to pursue "devious objectives," it offers security to the conflict parties. Because there is no clarity on whether EU or national jurisdiction is applicable in the case at hand, mediation might be the key to addressing the conflict. Some political analysts have suggested EU mediation, but we believe that the Commission's willingness to act as a mediator in the conflict. In the following, we argue that mediation is a viable conflict management tool for addressing the conflict on Nord Stream 2. However, due to the EU's involvement in the conflict, and its claim to jurisdictional authority, we propose that another third party – the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) – mediate the conflict instead of the EU. Before we outline our proposal on CBSS mediation, we introduce some key notions on mediation in the following section.

**On mediation**

Mediation is a voluntary process. Thus, the conflict parties have the right to agree to mediation for it to take place. This is particularly true when the conflict parties are unable to solve a conflict unilaterally, i.e., by one side forcing the other to concede, and a continuation of the conflict becomes too costly but no way out seems apparent. In the conflict at hand, the costs are increasing as the conflict continues. With the scheduled starting date of the construction of Nord Stream 2 fast approaching, the pressure on Germany and Russia to have certainty that the project to be stopped, mainly due to the concerns outlined above. Nevertheless, not only Germany and the other Baltic Sea littorals but also the other Baltic Sea littorals and the EU are likely to be interested in a solution to the problem because this would reduce political tensions in the area.

**MEDICATION IS A RELATIVELY COST-EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TOOL**

That can be employed ad hoc. This is crucial to note, especially in the case of the conflict parties. By offering to mediate, the politician not only acknowledges the importance of mediation but also can set the agenda of what happens to the conflict.

**In their dire need, the conflict parties are likely to accept a mediation offer and that a well-conceived mediation process is also likely to be lastingly successful.**

**“IN THEIR STRIVING FOR MEDIATION SUCCESS, THIRD PARTIES EMPLOY DIFFERENT MEDIATION STRATEGIES. THESE ARE DEPENDENT ON THE MEDIATOR’S LEVERAGE.”**

**OVERVIEW OF MEDIATION STRATEGIES**

Mediation is a process where a third party actively seeks to resolve a conflict by facilitating communication between the parties and helping them to reach an agreement. The mediator has no authority over the parties and their decision-making power. The mediator's role is to assist the parties in finding a mutually agreed solution that is acceptable to both sides. The mediator's effectiveness depends on their ability to build trust with both parties and to facilitate effective communication.

Weak mediators may have less leverage, particularly when they come from within the conflict community. They may not extend the bargaining range through sticks and carrots, and even in the absence of the mediator, the agreements reached often endure. Moreover, because insider mediators come from within a community, they cannot easily withdraw from the process. Therefore, they have strong incentives to be honest and are unlikely to push for agreements that do not match the capability distribution between the conflict parties.

However, mediation is not limited to weak mediators. In some cases, mediators with strong positions and influence can use their leverage to achieve a resolution. For example, the mediator in the case of the Nord Stream 2 project, the CBSS, has the power to influence the outcome of the conflict. The mediator can use their leverage, such as deploying political pressure or economic sanctions, to encourage the parties to reach a settlement. The mediator can also act as a neutral party, providing a platform for dialogue and helping the parties to identify common interests.

Furthermore, mediators with cultural or historical ties often have a crucial impact on the conflict parties. In fact, although regional mediators often do not hold as much "capability leverage" as, for example, the EU or the UN, they hold "credibility leverage" in the form of crucial content knowledge. They often have cultural or historical ties to at least one of the conflict parties, and therefore they are able to credibly share information. Besides, they usually have a genuine interest in conflict resolution. The agreements brokered by mediators with credibility leverage are likely to last because these mediators draft settlements that usually lie within the natural bargaining range of the conflict parties. Thus, the mediator does not overextend the bargaining range of the conflict parties, and even in the absence of the mediator, the agreements reached often endure. Moreover, because insider mediators come from within a community, they cannot easily withdraw from the process. Therefore, they have strong incentives to be honest and are unlikely to push for agreements that do not match the capability distribution between the conflict parties.

Moreover, strong mediators can credibly promise not to push the conflict parties in a direction they do not want to go. Through the numerous tactics available to them, weak third parties are likely to implement. Thus, weak mediators with credibility leverage hold crucial power over strong mediators – especially in low-intensity conflicts.

**THE STRENGTH OF WEAK, INSIDER MEDIATORS**

As a third party, the third party’s identity is crucial for mediation onset and mediation success. While strong third parties are often more successful in the short term, weak third parties are more likely to promote lasting agreements due to increased ownership of the conflict parties.

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As a third party, the third party’s identity is crucial for mediation onset and mediation success. While strong third parties are often more successful in the short term, weak third parties are more likely to promote lasting agreements. Moreover, they are able to credibly promise “pure” mediation, that is, communication facilitation, or, at a maximum, procedural mediation. Hence, weak mediators can credibly promise not to push the conflict parties in a direction they do not want to go. Thus, the mediator does not extend the bargaining range through sticks and carrots, and even in the absence of the mediator, the agreements reached often endure. Moreover, because insider mediators come from within a community, they cannot easily withdraw from the process. Therefore, they have strong incentives to be honest and are unlikely to push for agreements that do not match the capability distribution between the conflict parties.
Commission is an opponent of the Nord Stream 2 project in the ongoing dispute and it holds a strong position in the question of the project's jurisdiction. While the EU argues that the project falls under EU regulations, Germany claims that it falls under national jurisdictions — just as Nord Stream did. Moreover, EU Commissioner Gordana Svilanovic has stated repeatedly that, according to the Commission, “Nord Stream 2 does not contribute to the Energy Union’s objectives.”

**WHILE SOME MIGHT argue that the EU would be a suitable mediator because it is a strong organization in the region and because it is an established and internationally renowned and recognized organization that has gathered experience in mediating conflicts — including conflicts of higher intensity — we argue that the EU is not the most suitable third party to mediate the conflict on Nord Stream 2; it plays an active role in the conflict by claiming authority over the project's jurisdiction.**

In the previous section, we discussed the role the EU has taken on in the conflict, and in particular the different standpoints the conflict parties have on whether EU or national jurisdiction applies, we argue that EU mediation is unlikely to work. Being perceived as a rather weak third party, the CBSS can make use of its insider knowledge and turn its weakness into a strength. Because the CBSS is reliable and able to share private information, the conflict parties can be expected to trust its ability to mediate. Hence, eventually, they are likely to share the information necessary for reaching agreements that both sides can commit to. Thus, the CBSS is not only likely to be accepted as a mediator, but also to broker a lasting agreement.

**THE QUESTION REMAINS, though, which organ of the CBSS should take on the role of mediator. While the permanent secretary of the CBSS would be one option, we propose that the Committee of Senior Officials, which is appointed by the Council of Foreign Ministers, should appoint a Special Ambassador of the CBSS to mediate the conflict. Although political considerations are highly likely to influence the appointment, we strongly support the appointment of a mediator who is experienced because this will reinforce the mediation process's credibility.**

The CBSS is likely to stay engaged for an extended time, thus allowing the conflict parties to own the process and broker a lasting agreement. In a next step, the CBSS should discuss the option of whether to engage as a mediator. We propose that the Committee of Senior Officials appoint a Special Ambassador, who ideally would have prior mediation experience. Because mediation can be an uphill fight, it could get stuck, which is crucial considering that the conflict has been simmering for several years now, the next date for construction is fast approaching, and recent instabilities in the international system have led to a demand for greater regional stability.

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**References**


Call for multi-ethnic citizenship in Poland

In communist Poland, everyday life could require searching and waiting for basic necessities. It seems fair to say that Poland was a relatively bearable society at that time, with less unemployment and a rich cultural and religious life. This no longer is the case in some parts of the country, which has long since ceased to be the communist country it once was. To some people, these changes are a cause of disillusionment, and are often associated with the growing presence of non-Polish people. As Focus Migration data suggests, in the first year following the introduction of the EU mandatory visas, over a million visas were issued at Polish embassies – 600,000 in Ukraine, 300,000 in Belarus, and 300,000 in Kaliningrad. In the same way, many Polish people have benefitted from the freedom of movement, employment, and residence in other EU countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Importantly, the underlying drive of the EU is to ensure that all its member states benefit from mutual developments and positive ideologies. These shared developments and ideologies are particularly evident between Poland and the United Kingdom, as many Poles now consider the United Kingdom as an adopted country. Although Poles have now adopted the United Kingdom as an adoptive country, many have returned to their country of birth to practice some forms of acculturation, such as integration and multiculturalism. The purpose of the EU’s freedom of movement is not just to visit and trade freely within the EU countries; it is aimed at promoting an awareness of multiple cultures within the EU.

However, as Poles and migrants from the Middle East and Africa often experience restrictive immigration policies, widespread resistance from the public due to fears of globalization and terrorism, and an increasing visibility of chauvinistic right-wing organizations. As a result, “the commitment to values that many believed to be universal, humanity, a minimum of tolerance and respect for constitutional rights – turned out to be rather thin.”

On the one hand, this seems to be an inexorable sign of modernity; on the other hand, it is an indication of ethnic diversity, due to waves of migration and especially of asylum seekers from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Today, many Polish people share their public services, public spaces, and welfare with citizens of other countries, who may have similar or different cultures, traditions, and religions. This situation seems to be a concern that results in continuous disagreement.

In what follows, I draw on key concerns that usually generate controversy in many European societies: immigration and asylum, the welfare state, and culture and religion. I argue that in many progressive societies, most people believe to different exclusive and typically small groups of people with a shared interest – whether a family, profession, class, locality, or nation – and that it is their ability to move between these groups that determines their survival. The idea of “Polish-ness” should go a long way to ameliorate the tension between solidarity and diversity. At the same time, I recognize that diversity is not without conflict, and may lead to ill-founded fears of an out-group. I conclude that neither ethnic homogeneity nor religious attachment can take away fear of the Other; however, good relations with people from different backgrounds and good education about those backgrounds would go a long way towards improving relations between Polish and non-Polish people in Poland.

The rise in asylum applications, which has been exacerbated by Polish journalistic accounts and by the public, puts immigration at the top of the list for many Polish voters who are concerned about the presence of Muslims in their country. This concern is escalated by the recent March of Independence (Marsz Niepodległości), where there was encouragement for the expression of conservative views, strong anti-Muslim sentiment, and calls for “white Europe” and “pure blood”.

The history of immigration elsewhere has proved that xenophobic fears are ill-founded and are not based on reliable evidence. The post-war United Kingdom is a good example of a liberal society coming to terms with issues of immigration, integration, and diversity, and a relatively positive one, as the United Kingdom and France pioneered the European approach to immigration. Both countries had huge immigration during the post-war period, which included the end of the colonies. Post-colonial relationships led to the immigration of people from the West Indies, South Asia, South, Asia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to the United Kingdom in the 1950s and 1960s. It was immigration on this scale that preceded the 1958 Notting Hill race riots and to Enoch Powell’s 1958 “Rivers of Blood” speech in Birmingham. However, the UK government managed this fear fairly well with the enactment of the Race Relations Act of 1965, which was quickly followed by the Race Relations Act 1968, and then repealed by the Race Relations Act 1976. These laws were mainly created to address racial discrimination in the United Kingdom, and were similar to the civil rights laws in the United States.

With globalization in the 1980s, migration from Africa, Asia, and China accounted for new patterns of British migration which the anthropologist Steven Vertovec described as “super-diversity” – multiple origins, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade.” Suzanne Hall talked about an intensely multi-ethnic street in Peckham, South London, which was occupied by independent proprietors coming from over twenty countries of origin: Afghanistan, England, Eritrea, Ghana, India, Ireland, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Pakistan, Kashmir, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, and Yemen. Similarly, the Greater London Authority used the description of a “world in one city” when examining the presence of people from 127 nations within the capital. The only other city with a similarly diverse population is New York.

Let us fast-forward to 1992, and to the enactment of the Maastricht Treaty. The completion of the idea of European citizenship and the Treaty of Accession in 2003 created a new wave of European migrants from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia. This shift allowed citizens of these former communist countries to benefit from freedom of movement, employment, and residency in other EU countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Despite strong opposition from far-right political organizations in the West, the EU insisted on its Lisbon Treaty, which guarantees freedom of movement for citizens of its member states. This treaty enshrines the principles of human rights, and emphasizes that everybody, irrespective of color, gender, ethnicity, and nationality, has the right to a better life. As a result, it has established a good family life in Germany, France, or the United Kingdom. These migrants have contributed greatly to the economies of their adopted countries, and now consider German, French, or English to be their second language.

The purpose of this demographic history is to demonstrate that since the 1950s and 1960s in the United Kingdom, immigrants are seen as desirable but in many cases also as undesirable. Regardless of national identities, people who are given opportunities may in the long run become contributing citizens.

The point I wish to emphasize here is that population, if used cleverly, could be turned into wealth, as the people seen as “Others” today could become tomorrow’s doctors, lawyers, chefs, and teachers, thereby creating opportunities and working towards the betterment of their adopted country.

Imad Alarnab was once seen as an undesirable Syrian migrant from the Middle East. He walked, ran, cycled, and toiled through Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Hungary, Austria, and Germany, camping in Calais before being granted asylum by the government of the United Kingdom in 2013. Today, Imad is a chef launching a restaurant in East London.

Similarly, many left-wing Polish politicians are no doubt proud of their association with Poland’s election of its first black MP, and see it as a step toward diversity in Poland. However, some Polish states have been impossible without positive immigration and a trust that many immigrants would go on to become, not just citizens, but highly successful citizens.
Society would be better served if we trust that among today’s asylum seekers, there are many potential citizens who will contribute immensely to the development of a future Poland.

The German open border policy that allowed millions of war-fleeing and economic migrants from outside Europe to travel to Germany was seen as a criticism of mobility. The reaction to this policy has fuelled the rise of nationalism: “Indeed, from west to east, north to south, nationalist movements seeking to exclude migrants or trigger the break-up of the European Union are growing in popularity. Nationalism’s exclusionary, xenophobic and racist articulation was a key feature of the UK’s Brexit campaign and the subsequent reaction to the referendum result. In France, Marine Le Pen is on the rise, articulating her party’s project in terms of securing France against Muslims, and holding their own referendum on EU membership.”

Although Poland may not be a favorable destination for many people seeking asylum, Arab, Ukrainian, and African asylum seekers are not welcome in Poland. The state should be encouraged to become Polish and to hold on to the core aspects of their own culture as well as aligning with Polish social institutions. A return for embracing Polish culture, securing a job, and paying taxes, asylum seekers necessarily must be given an opportunity to become virtuous citizens. It is mainly through this process that Poland can genuinely compete on an economic level with ranking nations such as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany.

In encouraging this process, the Polish government needs to reassure its citizens of a robust immigration and asylum system that will not eventually disadvantage the “in-group,” as doing so could strengthen the ties in further division, poor political participation, and consequently a poor welfare state.

The welfare state is a powerful theoretical tool of racialization. If Poland’s economy remains stagnant and its political as convulsus as they are at present, conflicts over the allocation of public and other resources could be inflamed by the presence of migrants in the country. However, once Poland has managed to achieve at least a sustainable welfare state, it is understandable that such a state may be unpolar in combination with an open immigration policy, as many in the United Kingdom would argue that “Eastern Europeans” are mainly attracted to the benefit system. In fact, the vast majority of so-called economic migrants work harder than native citizens, pay taxes, and take less from the state’s wallet. This process of sharing has allowed many Polish workers to earn good wages, while the state benefits from the taxes contributed by these immigrants. A similar system is easily applicable in many countries, including Poland. The essence of this argument is that we are serious about reducing the global North-South divide and the gap between the rich and the poor, we must be prepared to share our resources. This means that the rich cannot continue to ignore the poor, the in-group cannot ignore the out-group, Poles cannot ignore Syrian asylum seekers, and, importantly, the Polish public needs constant reassurance from the government that their money is being spent thoughtfully and carefully. The Polish welfare rules must be transparent and blind to ethnicity, religion, and race.

In order to make the system more robust, citizens need to hold their politicians accountable. In many countries, people view power as a concrete mechanism that is always situated in the hands of religious leaders, politicians, and academics. Indeed, people are correct in viewing power from this perspective, as this was the way the mechanism of power was originally sold to common people. However, Michel Foucault has shown that “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere.” This implies that power is not a one-way mechanism; it is not static, and it is not situated at any particular point. Reconstructing power as a two-way mechanism implies that people should have the ability to tell the state what it can and cannot do. A very successful way of doing so is the recent Black Protest in Poland against the planned abortion law, which forced the government to make a complete U-turn from its plan to erroneously criminalize women involved in abortion. This indicates that power is not a one-way mechanism. A multi-ethnic citizenship in Polish schools will be a welcome step, as too many children have no sense of this broad aspect of Polish national history. It is my view that a multi-ethnic citizenship would give any out groups who wish to settle in Poland a sense of direction and inclusion. Importantly, people tend to favor their own families, communities, and sometimes blood associations, and in the hands of Polish women and girls who correctly stood up to the state over the control of their bodies.

If Poland was once a vibrant cultural center of Europe, and was composed of a colorful combination of different cultures and faiths—mainly through this process that Poland was once a vibrant cultural center of Europe, and was composed of a colorful combination of different cultures and faiths—including Calvinism, Lutheranism, Judaism, Uniat, Judaism, Monophysitism, and Islam—while also retaining the core features of Polish life. This rich aspect of the Serenissima Poloniae would never become a cultural center of Europe. European Union is growing in popularity. Nationalism’s exclusionary, xenophobic and racist articulation was a key feature of the UK’s Brexit campaign and the subsequent reaction to the referendum result. In France, Marine Le Pen is on the rise, articulating her party’s project in terms of securing France against Muslims, and holding their own referendum on EU membership.”

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They need external enemies and quick victorious wars. And they need internal enemies.

In recent years, the lack of resources is important reforms due to the risks of losing the GDP of Russia ten years ago. Right now Russia's GDP is comparable with years, the economy has been shrinking as a result of reforms pursued by my government, referring to fifteen years ago, when, as a period by 25%! Or expenditures for health, education, and social programmes have been affected along with those for the most important areas, the most important responsibility of the government, like expenditures for education, which were reduced over a three-year period by 25%. Or expenditures for health, which were reduced over the same period by 25%, while military expenditures have grown to be 5% of the GDP.

KASYANOVA also recognized that the sanctions imposed by Russia on Western businesses in response to aggression against Ukraine indeed have contributed to the country's economic depression, but at the same time he noted that these sanctions have never been targeted against private companies or the Russian people. As a whole: there are no sanctions on private businesses. Sanctions were imposed on state corporations, the personalities who were involved in 'wrong-doing' for the benefit of state corporations, the personalities on state corporations, the personalities who were involved in 'wrong-doing' for the benefit of state corporations. The problem, however, is that Putin's economic policy has led to the dominance of state or state-tied companies. The Russian authorities have been using methods that are typical for dictators: "They need external enemies and quick victorious wars, and they need internal enemies". This "graduation" of foes is not hard to illustrate with respect to Russia – the internal enemies are different, independent NGOs, and human rights activists, while the external enemies are the United States, NATO, and the European Union. Kasyanov cites the example of the imprisonment of some activists from his party after their participation in opposition demonstrations and the hard pressure that is being put on other activists and their families by the Federal Security Service (FSB). "The justifiability of this worldview and the entire popularity of Vladimir Putin are maintained through intensive television propaganda that seems to be effective due to the fact that the central television stations are still in control."

Kasyanov is skeptical about that. "But I do believe in the word 'peacekeeper'. I think, Mr. Putin would invite the West into negotiations so as to silence the issue during preparation for the presidential elections and thus avoid any harsh statements on Putin and his activities. I think that this is just a smokescreen and is not intended to truly resolve these problems.

WHAT DOES KASYANOVA think about future Western policies towards Russia? At the very least, he suggests considering Putin and the Russian people as two different entities. This would be a ground for dividing the policy into two parts. The first part is the interaction with the Russian government that should be focused on finding solutions in the interests of Ukraine and Russia. For that, the West must continue sticking "to our principles, to re-confirm that Crimea is an integral an nexumest, Russia and Ukraine maintain their integrity" of Ukraine with the purpose of showing that "there are no weak links that can be used to divide Europe and to try to destroy trans-Atlantic unity". The second part should comprise interactions with civil society in Russia and promote its development. Much has to be invested in the enlightenment of the new generation of Russians and in the guidance and construction of a civil society, specifically to "invite more young people to universities here in Europe, to give them an education and to show them what a civil culture is, to show them a different view of the world”, to show them a different view of the world, to show them a different view of the world.

Supporting the initiatives of those who would promote democratic modernization in the world's largest country is as crucial as supporting those who advocate for the destiny of Russia itself. This is especially important in the face of scaremongering and the rise of right-wing populism in some Western and Eastern European countries, with a huge number of similarities to Vladimir Putin's governance style.

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References
1. The FSB (Federal Security Service, in Russian "Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti") is a Russian authority responsible for state security and protection of constitutional order. It is often referred to as the successor of the KGB.
2. As per the poll in December 5, 2017, conducted by the Very Levada Polling Center, Vladimir Putin would have gotten 66% of the votes. The participants of the survey were asked directly: "Who would you vote for if the elections were held today?" https://www. levada.ru/2017/12/05/
3. The gathering of the Lands was the idea to reunify the Russian principalities with the center in Moscow in order to overcome the Mongol invasion and the feudal disunity of the 14th century.
4. Beside his the other known accomplishments of Boris Nemtsov was his campaign for the PARNAS party in the last years before his assassination in the center of Moscow in February 2015.
The avant-gardist Ivan Aksionov. A life marked by ruptures and paradoxes

Vid avantgardistens korsvägar. Om Ivan Aksionov och den ryska modernismen. [At the cross roads of the avant-garde. On Ivan Aksionov and Russian modernism]


This book by Lars Kleberg, professor emeritus of Russian literature at Södertörn University, is a well-written, pioneering biography of the until recently — little-known avant-garde writer Ivan Aksionov (1884—1935). Through Aksionov, Kleberg explores the ups and downs of the Russian avant-garde in the 1910s and ’20s. Even if Aksionov was not a Russian philosopher Niko- lai Berdyaev. He admired the Eiffel Tower and discovered the French 19th century poet Comte de LaFrecourt, whose Les chants du Malheur are well used by Kleberg as openings to each chapter.

When the war broke out, Aksionov — unlike most cultural figures — was called up as an officer to serve behind the Western front, but he spent much time writing and corresponding with the poet Sergei Bobrov, who had a futurist publishing house called Tsentrifuga. He supported its activities with money from his estate and published works, letters, scattered information in newspapers, memoirs, and research. Kleberg also builds on papers from the first international symposium on Aksionov, which he organized near Uppsala in 2008, and an edition of Aksionov’s collected works that came out in Russia in the same year. Kleberg focuses on ruptures and paradoxes in Aksionov’s life, stressing that Aksionov was secretive and that much remains to be found out.

As a son of a Russian nobleman and officer, Aksionov grew up on an estate in eastern Ukraine, but Kleberg apparently found little information on relations with his family. Aksionov was trained as an officer in the engineering troops. When the Tsar dissolved the Duma in 1907, he participated in an army revolt in Kiev, was arrested, and was sent to a post in Siberia for two years. Aksionov spent his time there studying languages and literature, and on his return to Kiev started to mingle in its prominent cultural circles. He was noted for his immaculate dress, always in white shirt and a monocle, and for his arrogant and aggressive behavior. In 1911, Aksionov made his début as a translator with French poetry, and the year after as an art critic with an insightful analysis of the symbolist artist Mikhail Yubilev. He became a name in Moscow in 1913 where, speaking after Vladimir Mayakovsky at a spectacular debate, he provided a provocative assessment of contemporary Russian art and its future. Kleberg here surmises inspiration from philosopher Lev Shostov, also from Kiev, who — inspired by Nietzsche — allegedly wanted to undermine modernism spring from its all forms. Most of all, however, Shostov rejected the belief in reason.1

In 1914 Aksionov, like many others, went to Paris, the world's cultural capital at the time, and became acquainted with cubism and Pablo Picasso, about whom he started to write a book in polemics with the Russian philosopher Niko- lai Berdyaev. He admired the Eiffel Tower and discovered the French 19th century poet Comte de LaFrecourt, whose Les chants du Malheur are well used by Kleberg as openings to each chapter.

In the mid-1920s, when the avant-garde lost its cultural influence to proletarian authors who wanted to use 19th-century art forms to spread Communist ideology to the masses, Aksionov stood without friends, positions, or money from his estate. He earned his living as a lecturer and wrote a history of Meyerhold’s theater, which was not published. He criticized the new photo- realist art and in a right-wing journal attacked Mayakovsky for adopting the style of capitalist advertisement, an act which his avant-garde colleagues viewed as treachery. In 1930 he suddenly left Moscow to teach physics to engineers at a hydroelectric station in Ukraine. On his return he was invited by the philosopher

On “The Liquidation of Futurism”, argued that its victory in 1917 with poems like Velimir Khlebnikov and Vladimir Mayakovskyr was pronounced its decline. However, Kleberg shows that Aksionov was not really a Marxist. In another essay, “On the Disorder of the Day”, Aksionov attacked Osip Brik, spokesman for an alliance between the avant-garde and socialist society, by dismissing utopian art and its union with industrial production. He emphasized that the mission of art is to satisfy aesthetic needs, and that aesthetics is a science. As a former playwright, Kleberg then devotes a chapter to Aksionov’s association with Vsevolod Meyerhold’s famous theater, especially the production of Ferdinand Crommelynck’s tragic farce The Magnificent Cuckold in 1922, which, according to Kleberg, became a milestone in theater history with its biomechanical acting and constructivist scenography by Liubov Popova. Aksionov provided the translation and engaged Popova; he became the director of Meyerhold’s theater school, dramaturg and translator of plays such as Alfred Jarry’s King Ubu. He was also chairman of the Union of Poets and headed its popular café Domino. Instead of joining the Moscow center for avant-garde art (LEF) led by Mayakovskyr and Brj, in 1924 he joined a group of constructivist young poets, publishing a long treatise on the frequency of consonants in Russian poetry in its first anthology. Kleberg has now also done a great deal to increase our knowledge of Aksionov and his time. Deservedly, an English translation of this book is planned.

Ingmar Oldberg, Associate of the Swedish Institute of Foreign Affairs
Utopoideness in the Polish-German Borderlands. The meaning of the transformation revised

Dystopia’s Provocateurs: Peasants, State and Informality in the Polish-German Borderlands


“Toward the end of World War II, the Soviet Union’s annexation of eastern Poland and Poland’s annexation of the remaining Germans precipitated one of the largest demographic upheavals in European history. The Soviet-backed Polish government expelled millions of Germans west of the new Polish-German border and replaced them with millions of ethnic Poles from south and central Poland, along with ‘repatriated Poles’, a group comprising Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Kazakhstanis, Jewish Holocaust survivors, and other ethnic minorities from Poland’s lost east and newly acquired German lands. The Polish government called this new western frontier the ‘Recovered Territories’ (Ziemie Odzyskane) – a Polish komenclatura they had lost to German colonialism for a millennium. What these Slavic settlers would ‘recover’, however, was unclear.”

The beginning of Edyta Materka’s book on the narratives of settlers and “remainders” in the territories annexed by Poland in the postwar Polish Treaty already hints at a critical attitude to official historiography. She is searching for the memories of the daily chores, restrictions, and possibilities in a situation of uprootedness and societalладщения. She is a daughter of the area, now returning with the gaze of a trained ethnologist after a lucky draw that brought the family to “Ameryka”. Her maternal village, called “Ameryka”, is situated along 100 kilometers west of Gdańsk. Upon returning after many years she finds that the village street is paved with German gravestones, soon covered with concrete in order to conceal history.

Her principal interest is the local people’s use of kombinacja, defined as the improvising process of reworking economic, political, and cultural norms for personal gain. Materka asks: How is kombinacja reproduced, and how does it migrate to new sites? What does it mean to transform into a kombinator, and how does this transformation occur?

The concept was a strange history of semantic and spatial transmission from British late 19th-century legislation against combination, the forming of workers’ unions for better wages and working conditions. The resistance against oppression was adopted by the intelligentsia of Congress Poland through the writings of John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx, as a grassroots nation-building against Russification, an “underground republic of the imagination”. In its resurgent interwar Poland, kombinacja changed character, developing into the “be-

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Continued.

Uprootedness in the Polish-German Borderlands

In the last chapter, Border Memories, Materiaka accompanies an old German American woman across the border into Polish Silesia to trace her roots in the former German territory. The old woman is unpeeling in her disdain for the “unpolishable Pole”. But Silesia is described as a more successful mixture of German and Polish influences than Materiaka’s Pomeranian Heimat. The establishment of the state border between Poland and its western “Socialist brother” became a definite hindrance to local contacts. The socially more important boundary was the one between the areas occupied by Nazi Germany in 1939 and areas of ethnic cleansing and settlement.

By concentrating on the local strategies of combination in the areas of uprootedness, Materiaka has made an interesting and valuable contribution to our knowledge of human behavior. References and the use of Polish words for important nouns are exemplary. From a social science point of view I would have welcomed a more theoretical discussion of kombinacja. Materiaka mentions Bourdieu’s Habitus concept, the tendency to follow a traditional pattern of action, but kombinacja also borders on path dependency, Lindgren’s muddling through, Hagerström’s and Ostrom’s tragedy of the commons. But her collection of narratives provides food for thought on the relation between formal regulation and human ingenuity.

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The print journal is distributed in 50 countries. It is also published open access on the web.
Academic freedom is under attack. One example of mobilizing in order to protect academic freedom is the roundtable that was organized in connection with 2017 CBEES Annual conference Competing Futures: From Rupture to Re-articulation, at Södertörn University November 30 to December 1.

Teresa Kulawik of Södertörn University moderated the session, and began by stressing that, although academic freedom is threatened in the Baltic Sea area, Eastern Europe, and the post-socialist countries, this is not peculiar to the region, but rather a general trend that happens to find expression in the region. Attending the panel were Alexander Kondakov, European University, St. Petersburg; Balazs Trencsenyi, Central European University Budapest; and Elzbieta Korolczuk, Södertörn University and the University of Warsaw.

The contributions of the panelists made it clear that the methods of controlling, limiting, and influencing research and education can change. An indirect and thus perhaps less noticed approach is to use bureaucratic rules to indirectly close university programs and make activity more difficult when it does not square with what particular decision-makers or regimes want. For example, requirements about how the premises are maintained can, if repeated and insisted upon regularly, diminish or destroy an entire sphere of university work. It is precisely this which Alexander Kondakov depicted in his talk, explaining how authorities repeatedly came up with new involving bureaucratic rules — cases where a swimming pool was obligatory in a house designated for cultural activities, yet the house could not be rebuilt; where a door was one centimeter too narrow; where there was no room for evacuation in the event of fire.

Kondakov expressed his resignation: “Due to such constant complaints, European University has not been able to obtain its certification for several semesters now and, if nothing happens, will be forced to close.” He added that, in 2008, universities were subjected to restrictions when it was decided they would be classified as foreign agents if they continued to receive EU support for the organization of courses on subjects such as queer theory. The law on foreign agency had profound effects, and was similar to what CEU now faces, Kondakov said.

Balazs Trencsenyi of Central European University, Budapest, sees the efforts of the Hungarian leadership to control CEU and restrict academic activities as a warning to the whole region. Introducing new legislation is an obvious, aggressive attack, even if it is done under the pretext of protecting national interests, taking security concerns into account, and so on. In practice, such amended legislation means that funds are restricted to designated universities and colleges.

He pointed out that the radical right-wing forces headed by Orbán saw themselves as trendsetters and exemplars rather than as marginalized by the European community, which of course is founded on the ideals of freedom and rights: “Before, populism was antisystematic, but now what we see is a systematic populism that works within the system. I would call it neoconservative rather than neoliberal. It is for this reason that what is happening in Hungary concerns not just Hungary, but the whole region”, Trencsenyi stressed.

Restrictions on academic freedom make it difficult for individual academics, as well as certain disciplines, and even the entire university to conduct their activities. Elzbieta Korolczuk described the situation in Poland, where gender studies in particular are under attack and the entire discipline, as well as individual academics in the field, are now being watched. (See the interview with Korolczuk and Agnieszka Graff, page 4.)

During the panel discussion, other types of threats to academic freedom were also cited: neoliberal values permit monitoring and control, the flipside of which is that the researcher not only has to spend more time on activities that generate prestige and funds for the university. The effect is once again a violation of academic freedom. A discussion was also conducted about the financial incentives to take over knowledge production, much like a totalitarian regime’s attacks on research and education, for precisely the reason that it contributes to critical thinking.

Teresa Kulawik emphasized that, however varied the methods used to limit academic freedom might be, and however unclear the ultimate goal is, one obvious result of the restrictions is that fear is spreading: a fear that can give rise to self-imposed restrictions among academics and universities, as well as to actual alterations and “corrections” in the work produced. Yet, there is, as the panel debate proved, a powerful resistance to all forms of attempts to limit academic freedom.