Maidan 10 years after

BALTIC WORLDS

balticworlds.com

**Political repression and
the death of Alexei Navalny**

**Glorification of the Soviet
past in Russian TV-series**

**The Patriot Media Group
and amplified state narratives**

**The Mazepa myth in Russian
and Soviet imperial distortions**

Dictating
"the truth"

also in this issue

WILDFIRES IN UKRAINE / **MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN ESTONIA** / **SWEDES IN GULAG** / **POLISH EASTERN POLICY**

Illustration: Karin Zaric Sunvisson

sh.se | SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY | STOCKHOLM

Manipulating narratives

We begin this issue with a text on the death, or rather murder, of Navalny: A sad sign of the level of repression in Russia today. In her text, Lundblad-Janjić links the commemoration of Navalny in Russia with the pain of the Gulag past; it establishes "a sense of community with those who suffered before us".

In the propaganda of Russia today, however, the Soviet past is presented in rosy colors, writes Bubic in her essay. "Little is remembered about the Gulag, repressions, censorship, and poverty". She unpacks how the carefully curated Soviet theme is introduced to fill people with images of a glorified lost empire, and further discusses how the violence in the present system and in the war is normalized though different forms of narratives.

The Patriot Media Group (PMG), which amplified state narratives, was quickly shut down after Prigozhin's mutiny in June 2023. Brankova's essay describes the Patriot Media Group's structures, partnerships, and campaigns and explores how the closure was covered in Russian media. She shows "how precarious nationalist or 'patriotic' actors are only operating in an informational space of limited ideological plurality where the regime defines the boundaries of their activism and expressions".

IN THIS ISSUE of *Baltic Worlds* the repression and propaganda machinery of today's Russia and their emotions and effects are thus analyzed from different angles in a couple of articles.

In Kuplevatska's essay on Ivan Mazepa, she analyzes the contrasts between two recent stage versions of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Mazepa* opera produced by theatres in Kharkiv and Moscow. It shows "how the Ukrainian version updated the plot and liberated the Mazepa myth from Russian and Soviet imperial distortions, thereby connecting the opera's events with the contemporary struggle for a sovereign state. Meanwhile, underneath its modernist surface, the Russian version maintained the opera's age-old metropolitan view of Ukraine as an inferior colony."

Jonsson and Kutsovska, in a cluster of articles, return to the 2013–2014 Ukrainian revolution ten years later by analyzing artworks and cultural imaginaries created during the revolution and its aftermath, claiming that "Ukraine's revolutionary art from the winter of 2013–2014 offers a living record of the Ukrainian people in their effort to understand themselves, reinterpret their past, and reimagine their future".

ONE COULD ARGUE that Russia's war on Ukraine has evolved into a discursive battleground between Russia and the imaginary West, that the geopolitical power struggle in the region concerns a clash of fundamental values. The report from the roundtable "The cultural war and the actual war" explores the relation between controversies about gender, sexuality, reproduction – which can be labelled the "culture war" – and the actual military war.

The report from the roundtable "Universities at War" analyses how universities have been implicated and affected by wars and conflicts, as sites, agents, collaborators, and resisters.

As the voice of critical thinking academia is targeted by repression and restrained freedoms. As knowledge producer higher education is under pressure to join the propaganda machinery. Independent academia (as *Baltic Worlds*) therefore has a role to play in disclosing the repression and amplified narratives and to promote critical thinking. ❌

Ninna Mörner

ILLUSTRATION: KARIN ZARIC SUNVISSON

The content expresses the views of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of *Baltic Worlds*.

Alexei Navalny at one of the rallies in Moscow, 2011.

Protest in support of Navalny in St. Petersburg, January 23, 2021.

Alexei Navalny's grave.

Interior of the replica solitary confinement cell for Navalny, Geneva.

The death of Alexei Navalny and the eternal return of the Gulag

by **Josefina Lundblad-Janjić**

The funeral of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny on March 1, 2024 was well-attended by both mourners and militia. On the same day, the international branch of Memorial, the human rights organization founded in the Soviet Union in 1988 and forcibly shut down in the Russian Federation in 2022, made several posts on social media. One of them included the following observation of a funeral attendee:

> [...] a line of mourners stretched out onto the path. And suddenly, a column of military men approached. Above this column was the red coffin. We, stepping through the deep snow, pressed ourselves against the fences of the graves. Relatives followed behind the uniform hats and gray overcoats, then a company of soldiers with rifles [...][1]

Although evocative of other media coverage about Navalny's funeral, this observation was not about that particular event. It was about the funeral of Varlam Shalamov, Russian writer and survivor of almost twenty years in the Gulag. If militia outnumbered the approximately hundred brave mourners on that afternoon in 1982, some forty years later, we witnessed the reverse: law enforcement eventually ran out of fence as the line of those who wanted to pay their respects to the fallen opposition leader numbered

more than ten thousand. This difference notwithstanding, it seems that what happened to Navalny – from sentence, through prison, to death – has generated a renewed sense of historical continuity with the darkest legacy of the Soviet Union: the Gulag. In this essay, I explore how Russia today remembers as well as forgets the legacy of the Stalinist camps and how the events surrounding Navalny could come to change the future memory of this past.

Navalny died – or better said, was murdered – as a political prisoner serving a 19-year sentence in the men's maximum security corrective colony known as "Polar Wolf." This was where he was brought at the end of last year, to a prison founded on the site of a previous Gulag camp, built by the same camp's prisoners, located in the Arctic town of Kharp. The prisoners' forced labor was also used for one of Stalin's vanity projects: the transpolar railroad, now known as "the dead road." To move Navalny to a place where the Gulag is only a name change away, from a prison in Vladimir oblast where prominent dissidents served time during the Soviet Union's twilight years, seemed ominous to many but also mostly symbolic. After his death, the symbolic turned literal. Immediately and all over Russia, spontaneous commemoration of him began at monuments dedicated to the memory of victims of political repression in the Soviet Union.

> **"NAVALNY DIED – OR BETTER SAID, WAS MURDERED – AS A POLITICAL PRISONER SERVING A 19-YEAR SENTENCE IN THE MEN'S MAXIMUM SECURITY CORRECTIVE COLONY KNOWN AS 'POLAR WOLF.'"**

Monuments to victims of political repression are ubiquitous in the Russian Federation. These constructions of often generic design – usually made of stone and decorated with barbed wire – appeared during the first decade after the fall of the Soviet Union but have since then been either largely neglected or only considered virtue signaling. When Navalny died, these once gloomy memorials to the Gulag became center stage for civil conscience in twenty-first century Russia. In Moscow, people laid flowers at the Solovetsky Stone in front Lubyanka Prison and the Wall of Grief next to Sakharov Avenue. In the weeks that followed, almost two hundred impromptu shrines emerged all over the country – as well as in Russian-occupied Luhansk in Ukraine.

THE AUTHORITARIAN backlash was swift: some of those who laid flowers were pictured, some were arrested, some were given jail sentences, and a few of these even presented with military draft notices upon release from jail. All copies of the February 20th issue of *Sobesednik*, the only newspaper within Russia that published a report of Navalny's death with a picture of him smiling on the cover, were promptly confiscated. The reaction of the authorities felt like a return to Stalin times, which, although disconcerting, seemed strangely apt as the sentence and death of Navalny already signaled the eternal return of the Gulag.

This philosophical concept, in which identical events occur again and again in an identical way, is another way to conceptualize the historical comparison now being made by many between those who suffered and died in the Gulag and Navalny. His letters in 2023 to Natan Sharansky, a dissident who spent nine years in Soviet prisons during the 1970s and 1980s, were published as "Navalny's Letters from the Gulag."[2] In them, he reached out to Sharansky after reading his memoir *Fear No Evil: The Classic Memoir of One Man's Triumph over a Police State* (1988) in prison: "I was amused by the fact that neither the essence of the system nor the pattern of its acts has changed" (ibid.). Navalny ended his first letter to Sharansky with the expression used by the latter when he in 1978 was sentenced to 13 years in prison: "Next year in Jerusalem." Sharansky's reply stressed the hope this expression contains: "Today we are slaves – tomorrow, free people. Today we are here – next year, in Jerusalem" (ibid.) Sharansky was not the first Soviet prisoner to evoke the words spoken during Passover. The writer and university teacher Eugenia Ginzburg, who was sentenced in 1937 and ultimately came to serve 18 years in the Gulag, recalled in her memoir *Into the Whirlwind* (1967) how the same phrase sustained her in prison. It would be safe to say that Navalny will not be the last to write the same sentence from a Russian prison.

ALTHOUGH THE MOST internationally prominent political prisoner in Russia, he was not the only one. Many still remain behind bars: politician Vladimir Kara-Burza, for example, is currently serving the 25 year prison sentence he received in 2023. And he is far from alone. Photos of current political prisoners in Russia together with their sentences now appear regularly in social media posts made by Memorial, which despite being labelled as a "foreign agent" still compiles a continuously growing list of such prisoners on a separate website.[3]

It is tempting to consider the closure of Memorial, the central mission of which is to preserve the memory of the Gulag, as ultimate proof that Russia today only wants to forget this past. However, that is not the whole story. Indeed, the current regime has chosen to publicly remember specific parts of it. In 2017, 80 years after the height of the Great Terror in 1937, Putin opened "The Wall of Grief" in Moscow together with Patriarch Kirill. This new monument to the victims of political repression was presented with a speech by Putin in which neither Stalin's name nor the Gulag was mentioned. Subsequently, reception of "The Wall of Grief" presents a mixed bag: some consider it a hypocritical move by an increasingly oppressive government, whereas others hope it could still be a turning point toward a new era of national memory. The presence of Patriarch Kirill at the opening ceremony can also be seen as symptomatic of how the Russian Orthodox Church attempts to co-opt remembrance of Soviet repressions with a focus solely on those who suffered for their faith. The Butovo Firing Range outside Moscow, where Putin marked the 70th anniversary of the Great Terror in 2007, is not only owned by the Church, but the same Church has also canonized 330 of the 20,761 victims as saints. The new martyrs of Butovo thus outnumber by 30 the total sum of saints canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church up until 1988. While the Butovo Firing Range thrives as a memorial complex, Perm-36, the only museum in Russia located in a former Gulag camp, was forced to close in 2014.[4]

YET OFFICIAL REMEMBRANCE is not the only way to preserve the Gulag for future generations. In 2015, "The Immortal Barracks" project was initiated by the activist Andrei Shalaev as the Gulag's response to the commemoration of veterans from World War II in the government-endorsed civil event "The Immortal Regiment." The latter event, which culminates in a parade, took place for the first time immediately after the Moscow Victory Day Parade on 9 May 2015. During "The Immortal Regiment", the participants carry large posters with blown-up photos of their relatives who served in the Soviet Armed Forces during World War II. The result is a flood of enlarged faces in black and white floating over the heads of the crowd. The similarity with the portable icons used in traditional processions by the Orthodox Church seems intentional rather than coincidental. In 2015, Putin took part with a photo of his father, Vladimir Spiridonovich, a conscript in the Soviet Navy. Every year since, he has walked with "The Immortal Regiment" with the same photo, and in 2022, he walked first.

> **"WHEN NAVALNY DIED, THESE ONCE GLOOMY MEMORIALS TO THE GULAG BECAME CENTER STAGE FOR CIVIL CONSCIENCE IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY RUSSIA."**

"The Immortal Barracks" is not a parade in public, but a movement mainly online. Those who participate commemorate their relatives who suffered in the Gulag by sharing family stories, private photographs, archival documents, and oral histories by former prisoners. The emphasis of the project is on ordinary people and the subjective experience of history, as if in contrast not only to the official "The Immortal Regiment" but also to such larger-than-life survivors-turned-writers like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Shalamov, whose takes on the camps are already well-known. The project received a wide response: thousands of stories with photographs and documents were amassed already in the first month in 2015. These were later preserved on a website where the collection of recollections and the preservation of more names of those who perished in the Gulag continues even today. When the project began, Navalny emphasized in a conversation about Stalinist repressions the importance that such non-governmental initiatives like "The Immortal Barracks" have for the preservation of memory.[5]

"The Immortal Barracks" continues to live on on its website and in posts on social media and has, surprisingly enough, been left alone by the Russian authorities.[6] Unfortunately, the same is not true for its founder Shalaev. When he left the country in October 2023, after months of surveillance, those who followed him screamed that he was "an enemy of the people." That the mortal moniker given as a legal justification for the oppression of those whose names Shalaev tries to preserve should again be used seems to almost hyperbolize the eternal return of the Gulag in Russia.

DESPITE DRIVING its founder into exile, the authorities have not forced "The Immortal Barracks" to shut down. This ambivalence toward the project suggests a conundrum for the aspiring totalitarian state: on the one hand, the project interferes with attempts to minimize the meaning of the Gulag experience, but, on the other, it seemingly lacks any civil ambition beyond that of commemorating obscure individuals who left no other trace in the history books. While the latter aspect has thus far discouraged the government from interference, I would argue that in this lies the project's provocation and also its significance for the future of the past in Russia. "The Immortal Barracks" is a new way of remembering the Gulag: it tells not of the human being in history, but rather the history of one human being. Photos of the dead provided by their living relatives from private collections look at us, rather than we at them. They remind us that what was lost was not millions – a number too great to even cognitively appreciate – but this one person, this one life.

Commemoration in Russia of Navalny, also one person with one life, revealed historical continuity with the pain of the past, but perhaps more importantly established a sense of community with those who suffered before us. When the first flowers appeared in front of previously desolate memorials to victims of political oppression, grief mixed with hope to create an unexpected feeling of togetherness. We the living are together in this with the dead – no matter how long *this* lasts – because even the Gulag had an end date. And even if it comes back over and over again, it also inevitably must end every time.

"In our business, funerals are everything,"[7] said Shalamov, whose 1982 funeral was remembered by Memorial on the day of Navalny's funeral. What I think he meant by these words is that funerals are for the living: it is up to us to reject or embrace the legacy of those who came before us. And judging by the mountain of flowers still growing on top of Navalny's grave in Moscow, the future of Russia might contain many still unforeseen twists. ⊠

Josefina Lundblad-Janjić holds a PhD
in Russian Literature and is a Lecturer in Russian at
the Swedish Armed Forces School for Interpreters.

references

1   *The Free Press*. "Exclusive: Navalny's Letters from the Gulag." Anna Lyubarskaja and Rebekah Koffler, trans., February 19, 2024. Available at: https://www.thefp.com/p/navalnys-letters-from-the-gulag (accessed March 11 2024).

2   For more about this, see, for example, Hyldal Christensen, Karin. *The Making of The New Martyrs of Russia: Soviet Repression in Orthodox Memory*, (Routledge: London and New York, 2018).

3   See the official website in Russian: https://memopzk.org (accessed March 11, 2024).

4   See the official website in Russian: https://bessmertnybarak.ru/ (accessed March 11, 2024).

5   Medvedev, Sergei with Evgenia Lyozina, Aleksandra Polivanova, Aleksei Navalny. Roundtable on *TV Rain*, October 29 2015. Full transcript in Russian: https://www.levada.ru/2015/10/30/pochemu-vazhno-pomnit-o-stalinskih-repressiyah-i-vozmozhno-li-ih-povtorenie/ (accessed March 11 2024).

6   Translated from the post in Russian made on March 1 2024 by @topos.memorial: https://www.instagram.com/p/C3-kpY-igvS/?img_index=3 (accessed March 11 2024). All translations from Russian to English are my own.

7   From Shalamov's third notebook dated 1971: https://shalamov.ru/library/23/18.html (accessed March 11 2024).

The epidemic of broken compasses

Normalization of violence and Soviet propaganda in today's Russia

by **Olga Bubich** photo **Ben Sherman** (pseudonym)

Truth is not a mathematical concept that needs to be proved with equations. Its singleness demands an intact moral compass, with certainties about what is good or bad. [...] The *real* **truth is that time passes more easily when we busy ourselves playing in this sandpit, which has actually been built for us by the kings who want to go back to those times when they were the only ones allowed to shoot the deer.**

Ece Temelkuran, How to Lose a Country (2019)

Democratic citizenship requires a degree of empathy, insight, and kindness that demands a great deal of all of us. There are easier ways to live.

Jason Stanley, How Fascism Works (2018)

Many Russians' reaction to the ongoing war with Ukraine can be described as "what I turn a blind eye to ceases to exist". As if all the violence committed in Ukraine, and the Russian prisoners jailed for protesting against the war, is not an existing reality, but simply something one can shut off and make disappear.

Many Russians seems to choose to live their lives as if there had been no February 2022. A week after the invasion of Ukraine, I note for instance that some of my Russian acquaintances post large numbers of images of cute cats and keep doing it. Photos of cats are certainly much easier to see and share than those of dead bodies in the streets of Bucha or Izyum. Can the stream of cute-cats-images be a way to overshadow the images of war to suppress feelings of guilt or camouflage shame?

Soviet Union reloaded

To keep its citizens distracted from the harsh reality of war and growing casualties, the Russian state produces neutral "white noise" content – Soviet-themed entertaining films and patriotic

TOP LEFT: The ceremony of pioneer recruitment on Red Square in Moscow, May 21, 2023. Originally formed in 1922 as The Vladimir Lenin All-Union Pioneer Organization and dissolved with the collapse of the USSR, the organization was re-launched in today's Russia. On June 7, 2022, the State Duma approved in the first reading a bill on the creation of a public state all-Russia children and youth movement, "Big Change", introduced as a mass non-profit self-governing organization that "pursues the goals of promoting state policy in the interests of children and youth." The members of this organization have taken a lot from its predecessor: they wear the same red scarves and greet each other by raising the right hand in a pioneer salute.

BOTTOM LEFT: Members of the "Young Guard" youth movement take part in the "Zarnitsa" military-patriotic game in Lugansk region controlled by Russia, September 2022. "Zarnitsa" initially appeared as a massive children's war game organized within the Young Pioneers organization in the USSR to imitate military actions (reconnaissance, battles, etc.) The name literally means "heat lightning".

concerts now dominate the country's media space. Endless re-enactments of decades-old cartoons and fairy tales staged by aging actors or music "marathons" with singers once popular in the late 1990s bring its headliners big incomes – Russian BBC names sums of up to 10 million RU (99K Euro) paid for the participation in "Za Россию"/For Russia tour.[1] Georgi Gospodinov[2] was right. In Russia, his *Time Shelter* – a 2020 anti-utopia about world's countries voting for the epoch they would like to return to – became reality. Apparently, the homeland of Bulgakov, Chekhov and Dostoevsky has adopted the "back to the USSR" strategy.

With skillfully designed propaganda that presents the Soviet past in rosy colors only, little is remembered about the Gulag, repressions, censorship, and poverty. "People feel nostalgia for the taste of Soviet sausage," a critical acquaintance of mine born in the Belarusian Soviet Republic commented. "But no-one remembers that they ate it only once a month".
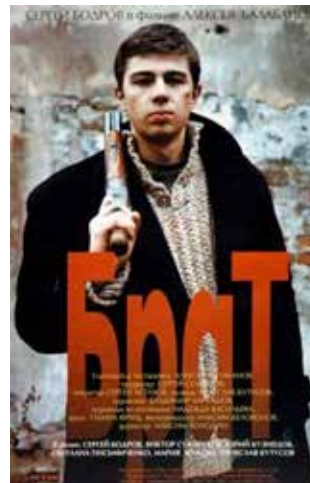
HOWEVER, THE CHOICE of the Soviet years as an object for nostalgia is not an accidental whim. The State Duma (the lower house of the Federal Assembly) is considering the removal from school curricula the books that "have not passed the test of time". For example, Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* is positioned as "discriminating Motherland Russia" and "semi-fiction".[3] The disturbing content is instead replaced with the patriotic *The Young Guard* by Alexander Fadeyev – a Soviet novel about an anti-German resistance organization operating in eastern Ukraine, now also re-made as a film.

The goal to turn people into dreamers longing for the magnetically unknown empire is also achieved by carefully curated Soviet-themed Instagram pages. One of them is *@CCCP.nostalgia[4]* – its 267K followers are regularly exposed to the romanticized posts celebrating the USSR as the first country to have universal suffrage and to enjoy "the highest respect of the entire world".[5]

Today's young generation of patriots are however often unaware that the past Putin's regime is guiding his people backwards into is a past that never actually existed. Those once glorified as the winners of WW2 are now doing what the Nazis did: occupying independent states and proclaiming

On the left – a Russian theatrical release poster of *Brother* (1997). Directed by Alexsei Balabanov. On the right – a poster of *The Boy's Word: Blood on the Asphalt* (2023). Directed by Zhora Kryzhovnikov.

> ## "TODAY'S YOUNG GENERATION OF PATRIOTS ARE HOWEVER OFTEN UNAWARE THAT THE PAST PUTIN'S REGIME IS GUIDING HIS PEOPLE BACKWARDS INTO IS A PAST THAT NEVER ACTUALLY EXISTED."

their regime there. "It's like in the 1940s – but now it is we who are fascists," a graffiti in Vologda fairly sums up.[6] One can only wonder how long this text will stay there before getting wiped off by the city's waste management administration. And how many will just close their eyes to reading it.

"While fascist politics fetishizes the past, it is never the actual past that is fetishized", writes Jason Stanley, Yale Professor and the author of *How Fascism Works*. "These invented histories also diminish or entirely extinguish the nation's past sins. […] it does not simply invent a past to weaponize the emotions of nostalgia; fascist politics cherry-picks the past, avoiding anything that would diminish unreflective adulation of the nation's glory", explains Stanley.[7]

ALONGSIDE WITH SHALLOW entertainment content and nostalgic fairy tales, violence appears to be another frequently used means introduced by the Russian repressive apparatus. Heavily criticized by political and culture activists of the 1990s, with the rise of Putin, lynching, gunfighting, bullying and other forms of frontier justice based on subjective interpretations of the law have become the norm and gained public approval. As promptly

TOP LEFT: A boy playing at the scene of the reconstruction of historical events of the beginning of "the Great Patriotic War" (a name for WW2 traditionally used both in the USSR and later, after its collapse, in the post-Soviet countries). Moscow, June 22, 2015.

BOTTOM LEFT: A man looking at the fragment of Lenin's dismantled monument at the school territory in Luhansk – an industrial city in Ukraine located in the Donbass region, which has been controlled by pro-Russian separatists since 2014. February 2022.

noticed by the Russian-American journalist and activist Masha Gessen in their book *The Man without a Face. The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin*,[8] the Russian leader himself was the first to introduce the "might before right" principle. During Putin's TV speech on September 24, 1999, at a press-conference in Astana, he commented the bombing of the Chechen capital of Grozny by the Russians saying, "We will hunt them down. Wherever we find them, we will destroy them. Even if we find them in the toilet. We will rub them out in the outhouse". The threat was addressed to anonymous "Chechen terrorists" who Putin claimed were responsible for a series of apartment bombings earlier that month and, as Gessen notes, the rhetoric he used was markedly different from Yeltsin's.:

"He was not promising to bring terrorists to justice. Nor was he expressing compassion for the hundreds of victims of the explosions. This was the language of a leader who was planning to rule with his fist. These sort of vulgar statements, often spiced with below-the-belt humor, would become Putin's signature oratorical device. His popularity began to soar," the journalist summarizes in the acclaimed book.[9]

Might goes before right

Screen heroes romanticizing violence diligently inspire teenagers to follow their example. One such hero is a "good-boy-gone-bad" of the recently premiered TV series *The Boy's Word: Blood on the Asphalt* – a crime drama about youth gangs in 1980s Kazan (the capital in the Republic of Tatarstan). It was made with the financial support of the Internet Development Institute, IRI, a Russian non-profit organization in charge of the state competition for the creation of the youth-focused online content. The series has gained popularity among Russian-speaking viewers and has already been named as the country's biggest breakthrough. Violence is the only natural response in any conflict, the film message suggests. And, in accordance with that, brutal clashes between district gangs based on the city's territorial division are depicted as glorious deeds; deaths and rapes as unfortunate side-effects.

Concerns about the danger of teenagers' exposure to such amounts of unmotivated violence were expressed by some critics – for example, by ombudswoman for Children's Rights in Tatarstan Irina Volynets who described the series as "romanticizing banditry" and "shaping a false perception of the criminal world in youth".[10] However, *The Boy's Word*'s popularity continues to grow – also supported by Instagram memes, games, and other light-minded entertaining online content aimed at the youngest social strata.[11]

"Let's go, sister," – a veteran of the Afghan war tells his brother's 15-year-old girlfriend who has been kidnapped and raped by an enemy gang, as he shoots three of its members without even pretending to aim. His actions are presented as an act of heroism in rescuing the victim and violence – as a "noble" act of street justice, with no screen time allocated to the analysis of the

"SCREEN HEROES ROMANTICIZING VIOLENCE DILIGENTLY INSPIRE TEENAGERS TO FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE."

hero's actions or emotions of those involved. Neither is there an attempt to trace the root causes of aggression or call for responsibility; all problems are solved with the immediate use of force. *Might goes before right* is an old Russian saying, still popular now. But the "legitimate" violence application has taken a much wider scope and is affecting millions.

Might is in the truth. This is a literal slogan of another crime drama of the 1990s – the cult movie *Brother* that centers on a veteran of another war also framed as an act of liberation, the war in Chechnya. In the film, the public is exposed to numerous scenes of beatings and murders committed by the charismatic hero, whose perception of law and justice appears to be distorted by his untreated military trauma. According to the moral of the film, no subjective truth can replace the rule of law; there is no place for frontier justice in a civil world. However, thirty years later, the Russian president uses exactly the same formula to comment on the benefits of unlawful occupation of another independent state's territories, consciously twisting the initial message of the film director Aleksei Balabanov, an Afghan war veteran himself.

"Russia has gained more strength because we are together! We have the truth, and it is in our power to decide where the truth is! We will win!",[12] Putin said this during a concert held on September 30, 2022, to celebrate the annexation of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions of the Russian Federation. If you believe you have power, you can do anything – including promoting false memories, should it be necessary for your goals. And Putin has power.

Domestic violence as a social norm

Aggression appears to permeate all levels of Russia under Putin. In the environment of a state-sponsored culture of machismo, domestic violence has been actually legitimized, as a result of the changes introduced into the Criminal Code in 2017. In accordance with a new version of its Article 116, if domestic violence leads to actions "that inflicted physical pain, but did not cause consequences",[13] the assailant is not made accountable for the attack. It is only when violence in the family results in severe injuries and the victim ends up in hospital that it can be classified as a crime.

Moreover, since the same year, domestic violence cases have been categorized as "private prosecution" cases, which means that the victim, without any help from the police or the prosecutor, is supposed to collect her own forensic evidence of the violence committed against her, apply for expert examination, file a lawsuit, and then bring the case to court – all by herself. How many assaulted women would eventually be able to follow all these humiliating steps? 10% is a figure provided by independent researchers in Human Rights Watch report of 2018.[14] But out of those 10% who do go to the police, only three ever make it to court, according to the same report.

A bill on the decriminalization of domestic violence was in-

Members of "Yunarmiya" perform on stage during the 7th anniversary of their organization in Moscow, 2022. "Yunarmiya" is a shortened form for "Young Army" – the All-Russia National Military Patriotic Social Movement established in October 2015 to train personnel for the uniformed services by instilling patriotic feelings about national and military history and memories of past military campaigns. The organization is said to have more than one million teenagers among its members.

troduced into the State Duma by Senator Elena Mizulina, who claimed that criminal prosecution of relatives inflicting pain could cause "irreparable harm to family relationships."[15] Thus, it is not the violence that destroys families, but the attempt to attribute responsibility for inflicting it.

Closing its eyes to the catastrophic social and moral climate, the state positions aggression as an indispensable part of life. Violence seems being "normalized" in all the spheres of life: in the family, at schools, in interpersonal contacts, but also as a strategy used in the country's relations with its neighbor states. Putin is keeping his 1999 promise: Russia is actually ruled by the fist. And very few critical voices are heard against it.

Crisis of emotional intelligence

Parents boast of a new purchase – a car bought with the so-called "coffin money" they got from the state for their son's death in the war with Ukraine. "White. It is exactly this color that Alexey wanted!" the 31-year-old man's father comments for a Russian "Vesti Nedeli" [News of the Week] episode shown in June 2022.[16] Now the couple can drive when visiting the cemetery – the latter shown only briefly because of the ban on photographing or filming graveyards to downplay the casualty data. It is on the new car that the news piece focuses – nothing is said either of the death circumstances in the "heroic" fight (for what?), nor about the family's grief.

Another worrying tendency observed in Russia and illustrated

in this example is the erosion of emotional intelligence – the ability to perceive, use, understand and handle emotions. In the full range of human emotions, no place is found for empathy, compassion, guilt, or shame with the priority rather given to the inculcation of anger and fear towards imaginary enemies that propaganda sees in Ukrainian nationalists, the NATO, the USA, and similar.

FEAR AND ANGER – exactly these two emotions are identified by Jason Stanley as traditionally cultivated by fascist regimes in their citizens, because a fascist state is not interested in raising free-thinking individuals – what it needs is obedience. Fear is a method used to force people to blindly love and follow their leader, who, in his turn, promises to protect them.

Moreover, fear is an emotion not new to the Russians. It also has to do with their collective memories about life under Stalin, whose regime is estimated to have affected more than 11 million people.[17] Historian Galina Ivanova calls this period "de facto, a long undeclared civil war the [communist] party and state were leading against the peaceful citizens of their own country".[18] However, despite these horrific facts, with these memories silenced and critical narratives banned, 70 years later 67% of Russians actually feel sorry about the collapse of the USSR and 56% fully or partly agree with the statement that Stalin was a great leader.[19]

Processing trauma on such a scale takes a lot of determination and effort, invested both at individual and state level. It re-

quires openness of archives, information transparency, and the articulation of extremely painful narratives – it needs memory mobilization. Something that in Russia not only failed, but also got banned. In 2021, Memorial – the only large-scale organization that works on the collection and systematization of the data of the Stalin Terror period – was liquidated. Two years later, its staff still face prosecution, their houses are raided, and new criminal cases are started against them on absurd charges of "the justification of Nazism".[20] What the Vologda graffiti said appears to have several dimensions.

In today's Russia, a fascist is not someone who starts a senseless war against a peaceful neighboring state, but someone who questions the romantic image of their country's bloody past and refuses to adopt violence as a norm.

Conclusion

Facing harsh reality instead of shifting responsibility to the imaginary enemy is not such an easy thing to do. Admitting that your country is an aggressor and your president a tyrant who promotes misremembering, forbids his people to demand accountability for the loss of repressed grandparents, and normalizes violence, is uncomfortable. Posting a funny Instagram image when several hundred kilometers from your island of stability the innocent are killed and residential blocks just like yours are blown up seems a safer option.

But Russia is not the only state to be leading its people into "the brave old world". Neofascism, with its tactics of weaponization of nostalgia, repression of social emotions, removal of objective vocabulary, and the promotion of a patriarchal model based on the criminalization of everyone who doesn't fit the newly coined "norm", is gradually gaining power in different parts of the world. The number of broken moral compasses seems to be taking the scale of an epidemic.

As long as moral compasses stay unfixed and violence and hatred are promoted as society's building clay, "the banality of evil" will continue transforming into the evil of banality. And the past is doomed to find its place in the future, as long as *not knowing* is chosen as a selfish strategy that prioritizes personal comfort over the injustice and suffering of others. ❌

Olga Bubich is a Belarusian freelance journalist, photographer and memory researcher temporarily based in Berlin as an ICORN Fellow.

Ben Sherman (pseudonym) is a photographer that for safety reasons wants to be anonymous.

references

1   Ksenia Churmanova, "Кремлевские эксперты и шоу-бизнес зарабатывают на концертах 'Za Россию'" [Kremlin experts and show business earn money from "For Russia" concerts] *BBC Russian Service,* May 11, 2022. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-61401033

2   Georgi Gospodinov, Времеубежище [Time Shelter], (Bulgaria: Janet 45, 2020) English transl. Angela Rodel (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2022.

3   Kirill Kukhmar, "В Думе призвали убрать из школьной программы не выдержавшие 'испытания временем' книги" [The Duma calls to remove from school curriculum the books that did not stand 'test of time'. January 22, 2023. Available at https://tass.ru/obschestvo/16855257

4   See posts at Instagram *CCCPnostalgia* (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) Available at: https://www.instagram.com/cccp.nostalgia/?hl=en

5   Quote used in the infographics posted at @CCCP.nostalgia on July 6, 2022. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CfqRPVoMZsb/?hl=en

6   Alla Konstantinova, "'Everything is just like in the 1940s, but this time we're the fascists.' How Russians answer to war propaganda with street art", *Mediazona*, October 31, 2023. Available at: https://en.zona.media/article/2023/10/27/graffiti.

7   Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works. The Politics of Us and Them* (New York: Random House, 2018).

8   Masha Gessen, *The Man without a Face. The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin* (Riverhead books. 2013).

9   Ibid., 26–27.

10 A copy of Irina Volynets' letter addressed to the Children's Rights Committee in Tatarstan was posted in open access on a Telegram channel Кровавая барыня [Bloody Barynja] November 28, 2023. Available at: https://t.me/bloodysx/32140?single

11 Ibid.

12 "Путин заявил, что сила в правде. Путин: 'Россия стала сильнее, а сила в правде'" [Putin said that there is might is in the truth. Putin: Russia has become stronger, and might is in the truth] *iz.ru*, September 30, 2022. Available at: https://iz.ru/1403854/2022-09-30/putin-zaiavil-chto-sila-v-pravde

13 Путин подписал закон о декриминализации побоев в семье [Putin signed a law decriminalizing domestic violence] February 7, 2017, *rbc.ru*. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/politics/07/02/2017/5899de8e9a79479489b2cd98

14 Rebecca Hendin, "I Could Kill You and No One Would Stop Me" Weak State Response to Domestic Violence in Russia", *Human Right Watch Report 2018*. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/25/i-could-kill-you-and-no-one-would-stop-me/weak-state-response-domestic-violence?ref=hir.harvard.edu

15 Putin signed a law.

16 В память о сыне купили новенькую машину» В «Вестях недели» рассказали, как семья погибшего в Украине танкиста потратила компенсацию. В сюжете деньги назвали «гробовыми' " [We bought a brand new car in memory of our son." Vesti Nedeli told how the family of a tanker who died in Ukraine spent compensation. In the story, the money was called "coffin money"] *Meduza*, July 18, 2022. Available at: https://meduza.io/feature/2022/07/18/v-pamyat-o-syne-kupili-novenkuyu-mashinu

17 Масштаб советских репрессий и количество пострадавших от них [The scale of Soviet repressions and the number of their victims] *Meduza*, July 18, 2022. Available at: https://gulag.online/articles/6bf33d45-ff29-4f64-b308-efd1ede1124b?locale=ru

18 Nikolay Epplee, *An inconvenient past: the memory of state crimes in Russia and other countries*, (Moscow: New Literary Review, 2020).

19 Alaiza Pashkevich, *Back to the USSR? Memory Wars in the South Caucasus, Kremlin narratives have co-opted history and propagated a distorted memory of the Soviet past*, Institute for War and Peace Researching, May 10, 2023. Available at: https://iwpr.net/global-voices/back-ussr-memory-wars-south-caucasus

20 Rachel Denber, Russia Opens New Case against Memorial: Authorities are Using Distortions of History to Criminalize Dissent, *Human Rights Watch,* March 21, 2023. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/21/russia-opens-new-case-against-memorial

Yevgeny Prigozhin.

A former office of Prigozhin's Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg.

PRIGOZHIN'S PATRIOT MEDIA GROUP
JUST LIKE A NESTING DOLL

by **Alexandra Brankova**

abstract

Alongside the private military company Wagner and his notorious Internet Research Agency (IRA), Yevgeny Prigozhin was associated with the Patriot Media Group (PMG) which amplified state narratives through its webpages and was registered by *Roskomnadzor*, the federal agency for supervision of Russian media. The Patriot Media Group was shut down after the mutiny, June 23, 2023, while most of its channels were removed or remain inactive currently. The essay provides a brief account of the Patriot Media Group's structures, partnerships, and campaigns based on digital ethnographic observations of their web channels. The news coverage from predominantly Russian language news outlets sheds light on how the Group operated and what happened after Prigozhin's mutiny. The essay concludes with some directions for future research on a complex and murky media production facility.

KEYWORDS: Patriot Media Group, Yevgeni Prigozhin, Russian media, nationalism, digital media, digital propaganda.

Yevgeny Prigozhin's name hit the headlines throughout 2023. His criticism of the Russian Ministry of Defense, the minister of defense Sergei Shoigu, and General Valery Gerasimov[1] over a lack of ammunition went viral on Telegram just before May 9 when Prigozhin threatened to leave Bakhmut with his forces. The Wagner Group mutiny on June 23, Prigozhin's consequent move to Belarus, and his death in an airplane crash alongside another key figure of PMC Wagner, Dmitry Utkin, were among the key political developments in 2023. Putin's address to Russian citizens on June 24, 2023, classified Wagner's uprising as actions splitting the nation, "a betrayal", "a knife in the back of our country and our people."[2] From being regarded by Putin as a partner, Prigozhin quickly turned into being classified as a traitor. The Patriot Media Group and its outlets associated with Prigozhin disappeared from the online scene as their webpages were shut down shortly after the mutiny. There has not been so much written and known about the Patriot Media Group and its associated channels. In addition

to Wagner's paramilitary operations, Prigozhin's media activity has been associated with the notorious Internet Research Agency (IRA) which is involved in spreading disinformation and digital propaganda.[3]

The closure of the Patriot Media Group and its coverage in Russian media

Russian news outlets extensively discussed the Group's sudden disappearance from the Russian media space after the loss of state support. Both RBK (RosBiznesConsulting) and the independent *Meduza* (among others) reported on June 30 that Yevgeni Prigozhin himself personally announced the shutdown of the Patriot Media Holding.[4] The state-owned TASS also reported the developments after the mutiny and got confirmation of the closure from the RIA-FAN (one of the Patriot Media outlets) chief editor Kristina Masenkova (see image). The Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media (Roskomnadzor) already started blocking the media network's resources on June 24 in order to avoid "the spread of calls to participate in the military rebellion", writes RBK.[5] Prior to this, *Roskomnadzor* provided approval for some of the Patriot Media outlets (such as RIA-FAN) to be registered as a news agency which boosted its visibility on *Yandex News* due to the legislation "On News Aggregators".[6] RIA-FAN was pointed out as an example of how state-aligned organizations establish themselves in online spaces through optimization of intermediaries (such as search engines or news aggregators) and pronounced alignment with strategic state narratives to be amplified in digital media.[7]

The independent medium *Novaya Gazeta Evropa* provides some further details from anonymous insiders. The employees of the Patriot Media Group were asked to write letters of resignation as they "will be paid their full salary for June [...] no benefits or bonuses".[8] Interestingly, the *Novaya Gazeta Evropa* article mentioned two rumors: that RIA-FAN as one of the key outlets of the group was to be "asked to move somewhere else in small groups" and that the media holding was to be taken over by the National Media Group (NMG) and the Kovalchuks.[9] Yuri Kovalchuk has close long-term ties with Vladimir Putin and leads the National Media Group.[10] The National Media Group owns REN TV, First Channel, Fifth Channel, the online news service *Izvestiya*, *Delovoy Peterburg*, and streaming services such as More.tv and Wink.ru, among others.[11] Andrey Krasnobayev, chief editor of *Nevskiye Novosti,* an outlet of the PMG, commented to the *Financial Times* and *Kommersant* that he hoped for the resumption of work but did not provide further details.[12]

Novaya Gazeta also explains that the Patriot Media Group consisted of two parts: registered media outlets united under the group's name and paid commentators (trolls). Despite the closure of the Patriot Group and its websites, the troll accounts remain active on social media platforms as they can be assigned to another actor close to the Kremlin.[13] RBK news labels the Patriot Media Group as "a media factory" resulting from the merger of several outlets linked with Prigozhin who later "headed the group's board of trustees".[14] This position was taken by Abbas Djuma as Prigozhin resigned a month before the mutiny.[15] Djuma was a correspondent for the international side of RIA-FAN and was invited to comment on some of the Russian state-owned media such as *Sputnik Radio, Argumenti i Fakty,* and *REN.* Djuma has recently commented on the situation in Yemen on the NMG-owned online *Izvestiya*[16] and has joined the board of trustees of the "SVOIM" Foundation.[17] The case of Djuma appearing on the NMG-owned web platform is not sufficient evidence to indicate a merger with the NMG but he is one of the very few individuals related to the Patriot Media Group who has re-activated their public appearances after the mutiny and on state-aligned media groups. The same cannot be said about the head of RIA-FAN Yevgeny Zubarev, RIA-FAN editor Kristina Masenkova, or the former head of the Patriot Media Group, Nikolai Stolyarchuk, whose profiles have remained inactive ever since the mutiny up to the time this article was written (January 2024).

A REGIONAL MEDIA outlet of Radio Freedom, *Sever Realii* provides further details about the recruitment process, conditions of work at the Patriot Media Group, and the role of editors, based on interviews with former employees.[18] The employees were paid their salaries in cash for tax evasion purposes without having formal contracts, signing only a non-disclosure agreement and an agreement for limited access to the building.[19] In addition, recruitment measures were tightened after February 24, 2022, and potential recruits of the Group had to pass a lie detector test.[20] Some of the interview questions included stands on political issues and political affiliations, attitudes towards the war, participation in rallies, and family or property abroad.[21] The Group's surveillance of their own staff members was common knowledge among employees who were supervised or fined by editors (for certain activity on work computers, informal conversations, or access).[22] Employees lacked job security in the Group but still remained there without questioning the toxic work practices or incompliance with labor legislation.

The sudden disappearance of the Patriot Media Group demonstrates that even media that serve to amplify and propagate Russian state narratives and ideological campaigns exist in uncertainty and can easily disappear from Russian mediascape. Loss of financial support from the state appears key for the operations of such websites. The tax evasion practices of the Group and its leading figures (heads of outlets or editors) may potentially be yet another reason for the indefinite closure of these structures. The rumors about a potential merger of the Group

> **"RUSSIAN NEWS OUTLETS EXTENSIVELY DISCUSSED THE GROUP'S SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE RUSSIAN MEDIA SPACE AFTER THE LOSS OF STATE SUPPORT."**
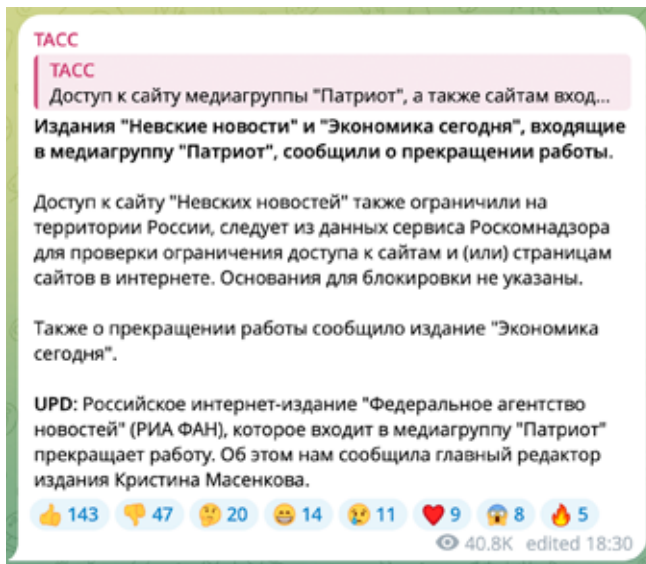
The state-owned TASS Telegram channel reporting about the Patriot Media Group closure. Screenshot taken by the author from Telegram.

Vladimir Putin tours Yevgeny Prigozhin's Concord food catering factory in 2010.　PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

with the NMG remain unconfirmed as of now but it is important to keep an eye on the migration of key names from the Patriot Group to other outlets or media groups. The registered websites of the Group would bring little value to other state-owned news platforms as part of the Russia Today Group (*Rossiya Sevodnya*) or the NMG, since they publish similar content and lack experienced personnel. The grey area services of content amplification and online trolling provided by the group might be integrated within other existing media structures or newly formed smaller organizations; this requires further investigation.

Campaigns, partnerships, and common agenda setting

The groups' actors and strategic campaigns

The Patriot Media Group expanded during the period 2019–2020 but its history demonstrates much longer-term connections with Prigozhin's Internet Research Agency (IRA) and its strategic mobilization in times of events with a key importance for the regime. According to their official website, the Patriot Media Group was established on the October 1, 2019, with the following outlets being part of the group: Federal News Agency (*Federalnoe Agentstvo Novostei*, RIA-FAN), People's News (*Narodniye Novosti*), Economics Today (*Ekonomika Sevodnya*), and Politics Today (*Politika Sevodnya*). By June 2023, additional websites such as *Slovo & Delo*, *Jurnalisticheskaya Pravda*, *PolitEkspert*, *InfoReaktor*, *NewInform*, *PolitRossiya*, and *Nevskiye Novosti* were listed as part of Patriot Media Group. Each of these web portals had a constellations of social media channels attached to it and assigned editors. The group had a larger focus on Russia-specific social media platforms such as Odnoklassniki, VK, or Telegram while some outlets had the Yandex Zen and Yandex News. Some of the Group's outlets such as *Nevskiye Novosti* which was targeting audiences in Saint Petersburg with local news, used to have Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube channels which got de-platformed.

RIA-FAN AND PATRIOT MEDIA were located at the same address as Prigozhin's Internet Research Agency (IRA) and the outlets shared similar advertising IDs or IP addresses with a nexus of Ukrainian websites active during the 2014 Maidan Revolution.[23] These earlier activities of the Group dating long before 2019, and its foundational links with Yevgeni Prigozhin, were stated by Evgeny Zubarev, the general director of RIA-FAN, when announcing the closure of the Group on social media and reflecting on its history and development (image next page). During the announcement Zubarev also revealed more about the activities and campaigns of the Group which were strategically aligned with events of key importance to the Russian regime.

Zubarev claimed that the first sites of the media appeared in 2009 when "20 commentators were located in the village of Northern Versailles […] as Prigozhin completed work on the (office) complex where the bloggers worked". Zubarev's statement revealed links with Prigozhin at the early stages, long before the stated inauguration dates of the Patriot Media Network. Their employees worked on specific campaigns. Zubarev mentioned two key strategic directions of their content amplification campaigns: 1) active work against the Russian liberal opposition and their leader Alexey Navalny and 2) activation of posting during Russian election campaigns in favor of the United Russia party and Vladimir Putin. In Zubarev's address, it can be noticed that the borderlines between the two parts of the Patriot Media Group (the news websites and paid commentators) are blurred and unclear: the "work with the state" continued in 2011 as their "commentators", "bloggers", or "columnists" worked against

Evgeny Zubarev announcing the closure of the Patriot Media Group. Screenshot taken by the author from RIA-FAN Telegram Page.
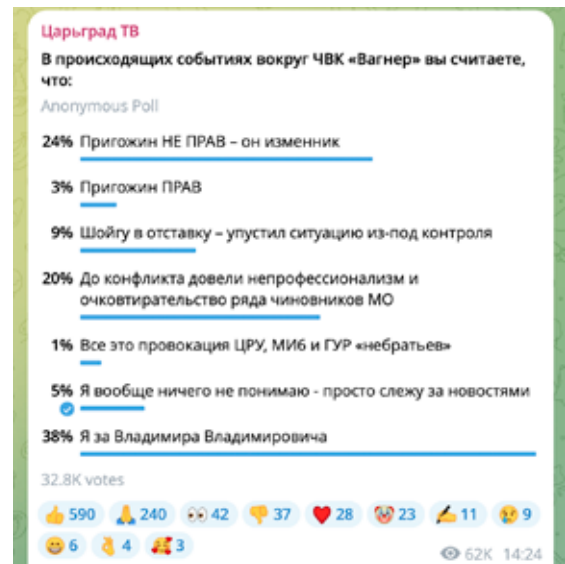
A poll on Tsargrad TV's Telegram channel about the attitudes towards Prigozhin's mutiny. Screenshot taken by the author.

the opposition. The opposition was framed by Zubarev through negative depictions and crisis discursive strategy as aiming "to destroy the country" or "rock the state". Before Vladimir Putin's election, Patriot Media was working "with maximum intensity" ("*maksimal'no intensivno*"), stated Zubarev. The Group's page started with the lofty statement: "Patriotism is love for one's country, respect for its culture and traditions. We share these views […]". On the website of *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya*, Stolyarchuk discusses the common denominator for partnerships with the group: "All of them are united by a patriotic agenda and are ready to support their country with information". Zubarev also emphasized the growing traffic towards the outlets of the Group and the increasing number of partnerships united by "patriotic" agenda setting ("from 40 to 600").

Partnerships

The Group's partners were listed on the Patriot Media Group webpage and their numbers expanded between 2020 and 2023. The first two permanent partners listed were *Tsargrad TV* (funded by Konstantin Malofeev) and *Telekanal 360* (with Alexey Kaklyugin as a general director). Indeed, *Tsargrad TV* cites both RIA-FAN and *Telekanal 360* as sources of information or reporting of events in their written publications and hyperlinks to their webpages. In addition, *Tsargrad TV* broadcast live events during Prigozhin's mutiny depicting both PMC Wagner's and the

> **"THE SYMBOLISM OF THE NESTING DOLL WITH ITS HIDDEN LAYERS IS AN ALLEGORICAL REPRESENTATION FOR THE GROUP ITSELF, ITS OPERATIONS, AND ITS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE STRUCTURES."**

states' side, while emphasizing the internal division it was creating. *Tsargrad TV* and Malofeev took a stand during the mutiny, posting on Telegram the following: "We do not have the right to betray Putin […] Namely, he brought us to the state when we can answer the humiliations we underwent in 1991[…]We must support Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin". *Tsargrad TV* also published an anonymous poll among their audiences exploring their attitudes towards the mutiny (see above). The top three categories selected were: "Prigozhin is not right – he is a traitor"; "I am for Vladimir Vladimirovich"; and "The conflict was brought about by unprofessionalism and fraud (eyewash) of a number of officials from the Ministry of Defense". In this context, media partnerships were quick to change and their loyalty towards the regime prevailed. The discursive lines accentuated by Tsargrad's broadcasts during the mutiny were two-fold. They emphasized the key role of Putin in re-establishing Russia on the world political stage while also acknowledging that the Russian war against Ukraine faces a lot of challenges on the frontline which are not addressed by the Ministry of Defense.

That being said, it is important to note that after Prigozhin and Utkin's death in an airplane crash, *Tsargrad TV* reflected on their contributions and the role of Prigozhin's media and PMG Wagner in both the war against Ukraine and Russia's foreign policy interests in Africa. A discourse of common cause and values

A talk show on Tsargrad TV discussing Prigozhin's death. Screenshot taken from the VK video channel of Tsargrad TV by the author.

was present. In a talk show on *Tsargrad TV*, led by Yuri Pronko, Konstantin Malofeev, Aleksandr Dugin, and the priest Andrey Tkachev discussed Prigozhin, his life, and legacy (see above). Their discourses revolved around the heroism displayed by Prigozhin and values needed to "achieve victory". As Malofeev stated: "Prigozhin's cause will not die. *Neither in the media space, nor at the front.*" Going back to the Patriot Media Group, their discourses and the salience of their campaigns can continue among some of their stated partners. The narratives promoted by Prigozhin and his media structures are ubiquitous and even unifying among other nationalist media outlets (such as Tsargrad, for example) as death or imprisonment of key figures from nationalist circles can boost their importance and synergies. Media watchers and scholars interested in the Patriot Media Group should explore further the potential migration of employees from the former Patriot Media outlets (above) to other partnering state-owned, associated, regional, or local media channels or websites.

THE PATRIOT MEDIA networks often reported on established partnerships with local and regional actors as well as veteran organizations. They listed both media partners and associated regional "informational resources". Some of their stated partnerships included the following actors: the Russian National Line (*Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya*), the RMG Russian media group, Life.ru, REX, and novorosinform.org among many others. The head of the Patriot Media Group, Nikolay Stolyarchuk, appeared on the conservative and Orthodox portal *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya* in his capacity as a head of the Patriot Media Group and a commentator.[24] During this statement, Svtolyarchuk responded to criticism from Fontanka.ru and their reporter Kseniya Klochkova about

similarities of content among Patriot Media outlets and their partners as well as the targeted information campaigns against the governor of Saint Petersburg, Alexander Beglov. The Patriot Media group's targeted negative framing was more aligned with the goals of the Rodina party and Prigozhin's political positions.[25] Stolyarchuk replied that the predominantly negative coverage of Beglov on the Patriot Media portals decreased from 57% to 53% between June and July 2021 while "Vestnik Neva", "Urban Environment of St. Petersburg", "InfoRos" and "Donbass Today" were not part of the media group.[26] This small episode demonstrates another type of information campaign which the Patriot media group carried out in relation to internal actors and during gubernatorial elections in support of more nationalistic parties such as *A Just Russia*.

The Patriot Media Group as a nesting doll: Directions for future research

Interestingly, the Patriot Media Group's landing page showed a winking nesting doll as a mascot which had the double-headed eagle on the chest and was wearing red and blue attire. The symbolism of the nesting doll with its hidden layers is an allegorical representation for the Group itself, its operations, and its visible and invisible structures. This essay only scratches the surface and provides a short account of the Patriot media structures based on self-reported data collected through digital ethnography of their channels or partners as well as secondary accounts published in different types of Russian-language media. A more in-depth academic enquiry about their discourses, media framing, representations, partnerships, employees' profiles, and ways of operating should be carried out. Interviews with their former staff members can enrich knowledge on how the organi-

zation operated from inside while a thorough mapping of linked Telegram channels or other social media profiles can inform more fully about their digital propagandistic campaigns and strategic narratives. The death of Prigozhin, the shutdown of the Patriot Media Group or the arrest of Igor Strelkov (Girkin) are some examples of how precarious nationalist or "patriotic" actors are, only operating in an informational space of limited ideological plurality where the regime defines the boundaries of their activism and expressions. ❌

Alexandra Brankova is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies & Department of Informatics and Media, Uppsala University

references

1   Kimberly Marten, "Whither Wagner? The Consequences of Prigozhin's Mutiny and Demise", *Survival* vol. 65 no. 5 (2023): 45–64.

2   *"Address to citizens of Russia"* (The President of Russia, June 24, 2023). Available at: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71496

3   Marco Bastos and Johan Farkas, "Donald Trump Is My President!": The Internet Research Agency Propaganda Machine. *Social Media + Society*, vol. 5, no. 3 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119865466 Siva K. Balasubramanian, Mustafa Bilgic, Aron Culotta, Libby Hemphill, Anita Nikolich, and Matthew A. Shapiro. "Leaders or Followers? A Temporal Analysis of Tweets from IRA Trolls". *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* vol. 16, no. 1 (2022):2–11. https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v16i1.19267

4   "Источник 'Медузы': Пригожин решил распустить свой медиахолдинг 'Патриот'" [A Source of Meduza: Prigozhin has decided to dissolve his media holding Patriot], *Meduza*, June 30, 2023. Available at: https://meduza.io/news/2023/06/30/istochnik-meduzy-prigozhin-reshil-raspustit-svoy-mediaholding-patriot; Georgi Tadtaev and Vladislav Gordeev, "Пригожин распустил медиахолдинг 'Патриот'" [Prigozhin dissolved the media holding "Patriot"], *RBK*, 30 June 2023. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/06/2023/649eecf69a79470731d7e3e1

5   Ibid.

6   Alexey Kolaev, "The political economics of news making in Russian media: Ownership, clickbait and censorship". *Journalism*, vol. 22, no. 12 (2021): 2906–2918. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884920941964 Mariëlle Wijermars, "Russia's law 'On news aggregators': Control the news feed, control the news?", *Journalism*, vol. 22, no. 12 (2021): 2938–2954. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884921990917

7   Vera Zvereva "State propaganda and popular culture in the Russian-speaking internet" in *Freedom of Expression in Russia's New Mediasphere*, eds. Wijermars M, Lehtisaari K (New York: Routledge, 2020), 225–247. Wijermars, "On news aggregators", 2938–2954.

8   Irina Garina, "ФАН off: Медиагруппа Евгения Пригожина 'Патриот' уничтожена своим же создателем. Мы поговорили с 'пригожинцами' об их бывшей работе (а заодно вспомнили то плохое, что они делали)" [FAN off: Yevgeny Prigozhin's media group "Patriot" was destroyed by its own creator. We talked with the Prigozhinites about their former work (and at the same time remembered the bad things they did], *Novaya Gazeta Evropa*, July 5, 2023. Available at: https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/07/05/fan-off

9   Ibid.

10 Maria Lipman, "Russia's Non-governmental Media Under Assault", *Demokratizatsiya* vol. 22 no. 2 (2014): 179–190 Olga Pasitselska, "Ukrainian crisis through the lens of Russian media: Construction of ideological discourse". *Discourse & Communication* vol. 11 no.6 (2017): 591–609

11 "НМГ Активы" [NMG Assets], *NMG.ru*. Available at: https://nmg.ru/holdings/

12 Stognei, A. and Seddon, M., "Yevgeny Prigozhin's 'toxic' media empire left in Kremlin limbo", *Financial Times*, 14 July 2023. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/723a967f-213b-45b4-8ca6-792aa8e10ba0 Olessia Pavlenko, "FT: медиагруппа Пригожина 'Патриот' может возобновить работу" [Prigozhin's media group Patriot can resume work], *Kommersant*, July 15, 2023. Available at: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6109306

13 Stognei, A. & Seddon, M. "Yevgeny Prigozhin's 'toxic' media empire …"

14 Georgi Tadtaev and Vladislav Gordeev, "Пригожин распустил медиахолдинг 'Патриот'" [Prigozhin dissolved the media holding "Patriot"], *RBK*, June 30, 2023. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/06/2023/649eecf69a79470731d7e3e1

15 Dmitri Nikitin, "Евгений Пригожин покинул пост главы попечительского совета медиагруппы 'Патриот'" [Yevgeny Prigozhin left the post of head of the board of trustees of the Patriot media group.], *RTVI*, May 25, 2023. Available at: https://rtvi.com/news/evgenij-prigozhin-pokinul-post-glavy-popechitelskogo-soveta-mediagruppy-patriot/

16 Abbas Djuma, "Журналист-международник Аббас Джума о ситуации в Йемене" ["International journalist Abbas Djuma on the situation in Yemen."], *Izvestiya*, January 12, 2024. Available at: https://iz.ru/1633301/video/zhurnalist-mezhdunarodnik-abbas-dzhuma-o-situatcii-v-jemene

17 Charitable Foundation "SVOIM", "Аббас Джума, международный журналист принял решение вступить в попечительский совет БФ 'СВОИМ'" ["Abbas Juma, an international journalist, decided to join the board of trustees of the SVOIM Charitable Foundation"], *Charitable Foundation "SVOIM" YouTube Channel*, October 11, 2023. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wk1vOQ7vak

18 Oleg Artyushenko, "'Все знали о слежке'. Медиаимперия Пригожина кинула своих сотрудников на деньги" ['Everyone knew about the surveillance.' Prigozhin's media empire cheated its employees out of money], *Sever.Realii*, July 31, 2023. Available at: https://www.severreal.org/a/mediaimperiya-prigozhina-kinula-svoih-sotrudnikov-na-dengi/32525552.html

19 Artyushenko, "Все знали о слежке"

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Marlene Laruelle and Kevin Limonier, "Beyond 'hybrid warfare': a digital exploration of Russia's entrepreneurs of influence", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 37 no. 4 (2021): 318–335, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2021.1936409

24 Nikolai Stolyarchuk, "Глава медиагруппы 'Патриот' ответил на 'расследование' ФонтанкиОбращение Николая Столярчука в связи с попыткой дискредитации медиагруппы" [The head of the Patriot media group responded to the "investigation" of Fontanka: Appeal from Nikolai Stolyarchuk in connection with an attempt to discredit a media group], *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya*, August 20, 2021. Available at: https://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2021/08/20/prosba_proyavlyat_dolzhnuyu_meru_professionalizma

25 Kseniya Klochkova, "'Покушение на петербургскую культуру'. Как у городских властей появилась 'фабрика' критиков [An attempt on Petersburg culture'. How did the city authorities have a "critic factory"], *Fontanka.ru*, August 20, 2021. Available at: https://www.fontanka.ru/2021/08/20/70090457/

26 Stolyarchuk, *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya*, August 20, 2021.

Wagner Viktoria, 2913.

Weinrich Maria, 3012.

Alfred Dillmann, head of the "Zigeunerzentrale" ["Gypsy Central Office"] that was established at the Munich Police Directorate in 1899, published the "Zigeunerbuch" ['gypsy register'] in 1905. The register was intended for official use and printed in an edition of 7,000 copies. Its principal aim was to assist the police authorities in identifying "gypsies". It contained 3,350 names, with 613 individuals described in detail. Photographs of a further 32 individuals were listed in the Annex. Cover and page from the Annex, both from the Documentation Centre Archives.

CONFINED WITHIN THE LAW

Roma in Polish police journals 1920–1939

by **Piotr Wawrzeniuk**

abstract

This article analyzes the Polish police narrative on Roma during the interwar time, unveiling attitudes and potential practices. According to the police journals and handbooks, Roma were mobile and disposed to theft and deceit. Their traditional crafts were merely a smoke screen for illicit activities. As countermeasures, searches of caravans, meticulous checks of identity documents, indiscriminate fingerprinting of Roma suspects, among several measures, were recommended. This narrative constituted part of a larger police professional discourse and is likely to be an indicator of practices on Roma. Polish police followed the contemporary European expertise on Roma produced by the fields of criminalistics and criminology. As there were no discriminatory laws targeting Roma in Poland, it appears that police used legislation against begging and vagrancy, among other tactics.

KEYWORDS: Polish history in the interwar period, Polish State Police, Romani history.

In interwar Europe, Roma- and Sinti-related issues became an object of international discussions and agreements. The Roma as a collective advanced into a "question" or even a "problem" to be handled by the European states. The general tendency was to restrict the movement of the group who were imagined as potentially dangerous to society. At the heart of those processes were the police forces. While there is plenty of research on the Roma's situation during the interwar years, research on the Polish police's approach towards them is virtually absent. This article thus analyzes the narrative on Roma in the Polish police press and professional handbooks as a part of the professional discourse on Roma.

European experiences and practices in dealing with Roma

From the second half of the 19th century, there was a growing interest in Roma among the law enforcement institutions of Eu-

Alfred Dillmann (1849–1924) was head of the "Zigeunerzentrale" ["Gypsy Central Office"] until 1912 and, rose to the rank of deputy police director.

Policemen in Berlin in 1931.

rope. This depended chiefly on the rise of the centralizing modern state and professionalization of police.

In the modern state, Jennifer Illuzzi finds, citizens agree "to give up freedom in order to gain other freedoms and security", and groups or individuals who resist surveillance and identification risk exclusion from the protection and freedoms of the state.[1] Illuzzi claims that the modern, centralizing states of the 19th and early 20th century Europe made different choices when dealing with Roma, either employing illiberal legislation permissive towards the executive power or using a "state of exception". The latter enabled executive officials to use local and regional regulations on public movement and safety to sidestep the judiciary. It was used by Germany and Italy, Illuzzi maintains, while other states, including France and Great Britain "tended to marginalize Gypsies within the confines of the law". In doing so, they violated the universal law, while still leaving Roma with access to the state institutions such as courts.[2] In Germany and Italy before the First World War, there was a wide array of offences that opened for the short-term detention and prosecution of Roma, providing the executive officials time to apply measures such as internment in a workhouse or expulsion from the country, region or land – before the case entered the court system.[3] Roma resisted this by hiring lawyers, changing their personal identities or using false documents in order to escape prosecution or potential penalties for recidivism and elude police surveillance. Police spent big sums on "determining a fixed identity for those categorized as Gypsies". Once the authorities operated outside the law and in the sphere of the state of exception, Roma were rather helpless, Illuzzi finds.[4]

ACCORDING TO PAOLA TREVISAN, the authorities and police forces increasingly viewed the circulation of Roma within and between states as an all-European problem from the end of the 19th century and into 1930s. Several countries signed bilateral agreements, reinforcing controls of foreigners at their border crossings. Trevisan shows there was a problem of citizenship concerning

Roma within the new borders awarded to Italy in accordance with the Peace Treaty of Saint Germain. Many former Austrian Roma without a fixed place of residence were treated as foreigners and faced numerous obstacles when crossing borders. The first Fascist regulation dealing with the movement of Roma aimed at limiting crossing from Poland and Eastern Europe, the policy merely being a continuation of the policies of the liberal regime. Trevisan finds that the policy pursued by Italian authorities in the 1920s and 1930s coincided with the policy directed against Roma implemented elsewhere in interwar Western Europe. Its goal was to curtail the cross-border mobility of Roma and Sinti families. While France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany signed agreements with neighboring countries on the matter, Italy refused.[5] The policy created a category of individuals whom the police could treat at will, "without the least reference to the statute laws".[6] Two categories of non-belonging to the nation state, one of Roma as social outsiders inside the state, and one as ethno-national outsiders at its borders, was the result.[7]

According to Panikos Panayi, the policy makers in Germany did not consider Roma "normal" citizens. In general, public opinion supported legislation such as the 1926 Bavarian *Law for the Combatting of Gypsies, Travelers, and the Work-shy*, or the Prussian law of the following year that among several measures opened up for the fingerprinting all itinerants. Panayi finds that police displayed particular concern with Roma, and "took initiative in many of the new measures'". In 1929, The Munich Centre for the Control of Gypsies began coordinating control of Roma on the national level. As it would turn out, it conducted "groundwork" for the Nazis, who went from controlling measures to genocide, Panayi concludes.[8]

Lucassen traces a continuity in the German approach to Roma from 18th century wanted posters and 19th century police journals, which called for prevention through registration, to the treatment of Roma prior to WWI and during the Weimar years. The police targeted all groups conducting itinerary professional activities and lifestyles, including non-Roma and Sinti itinerary

Hans Gross, professor of law and author of *Criminal investigation*.
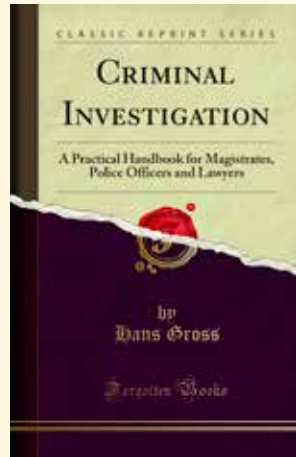
The English edition of Gross's *System der Kriminalistik*.

Image from *Criminal investigation*.

Crime scene illustration from the book.

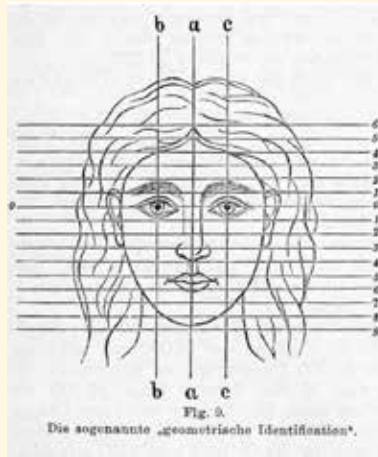peddlers and showmen, who experienced problems carrying out their professions. According to the definition established by Alfred Dillmann, "Gypsies" constituted a sociological category that encompassed all persons who travel around "with his or her family, irrespective of ethnicity or nationality". Dillmann was the head of the Gypsy Centre (*Zigeunerzentrale*) of the Bavarian police and the author of *The Gypsy Book* (*Zigeunerbuch*, 1905), containing photographs and personal information on itinerary groups. The category created by him encompassed people who were Roma or Sinti, and those defined as "people who travel around like Gypsies".[9] In a 1926 Bavarian law against "gypsies and the work-shy", a distinction was made between Roma and Sinti, other itinerants, and "honest itinerants". For the first time, Roma and Sinti were defined in racial terms. Still, it was up to the local authorities "to make a distinction between the various categories", and they continued to issue licenses (to conduct an itinerary profession) and "protection bills" to Roma and Sinti. Lucassen claims it was only after 1933 that the police fully realized "the chance to control the mobility of itinerant groups", who now found themselves "at the crossroad of deterministic ideas on anti-social behavior and the racist doctrine". The question occurred whether these individuals, incorrigible as they seemed, should be sterilized (if they were anti-social) or annihilated.[10]

WHEN READING the Polish police journals, one finds references to all-European theoretical and methodological developments related to police matters, such as criminalistics – "the scientific investigation of the circumstances of a specific crime and the identification of a specific culprit as an end in itself". Its contemporary twin, criminology of the late 19th century, "was shaped by modes of thinking drawn from evolutionary biology, anthropology and anthropometrics". The criminologists of the era believed criminality could be inherited – one could be a "born criminal".[11] According to Burney and Pemberton, Hans Gross, an Austrian professor of law and author of a number of works on criminalistics, took a "hybrid position" between criminology and criminalistics. His *Criminal Investigation* (1906), which built on a twenty-year practice as a police investigator in Upper Styria, borrowed typical elements from criminology. It has a chapter on superstition among offenders and "wandering tribes", using additional terminology and images from criminal anthropology.[12] While Gross strived to promote "the pursuit of a trace-centred forensics",[13] he also operated within the intellectual trends of his time such as criminology. Edited parts of Gross' works were published in Polish police journals during the interwar period.

Peter Widmann suggests that the rise of criminal biology in the second half of the 19th century undermined basic assumptions about Roma as corrigible. If the roots of Roma "restlessness" were in fact hereditary, any campaign to make them live a sedentary life was pointless. Rather unintentionally, Widmann maintains, criminal biologists (operating within the field of criminology) prepared the ground for Robert Ritter, the leading Roma expert of the National Socialist regime, but racism and Social Darwinism only fully thrived after the Nazi's access to power.[14]

The International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) was founded in 1923 to facilitate cooperation on crime prevention, the identification of international criminals, and the centralization of police data. After the eighth meeting of the ICPC in Paris in 1931, countering the "Gypsy plague" was among the main

> "IN A 1926 BAVARIAN LAW AGAINST 'GYPSIES AND THE WORK-SHY', A DISTINCTION WAS MADE BETWEEN ROMA AND SINTI, OTHER ITINERANTS, AND 'HONEST ITINERANTS'."

interests of police experts. A special committee comprising representatives from Germany, France, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary elaborated questions of national registration, the international exchange of individual files, and controlling border crossings with reference to Roma. According to Jan Selling, those matters also were among the priorities of the conferences in Vienna (1934) and Copenhagen (1935).[15]

What appears from the research presented above is that "Gypsies" was a category containing both ethnic groups such as Roma and Sinti, and people engaging in itinerary crafts and trades. Those counted as belonging to this category could expect to experience scrutiny from executive authorities and law enforcement, who would use laws targeting them, or various loopholes allowing for measures outside the limitations of universal law. "Gypsy" was a fluid category – a collective comprising (potential) criminals, an ethnic group, or even a race. People included in the category appeared as social outsiders within the state boundaries, and as ethno-national outsiders at the state borders. To some experts with roots in criminology, they were incorrigible, in accordance with the widespread view that criminal behavior was inheritable. International discussions and cooperation to restrain their mobility persisted during the interwar period.

Roma in interwar Poland

Roma in interwar Poland constituted a minority of 30,000– 40,000 people among a population that reached 35 million before the outbreak of the Second World War.[16] Alicja Gontarek claims that the politics of interwar Poland was shaped by nationalist rule (until 1926), followed by the so-called *Sanacja* (literally "sanitation" or "cleansing" – supposedly of the negative features of Polish democracy prior to the coup d'etat in 1926). A far echo of its leaders' pre-World War One socialist roots, the *Sanacja* regime quickly evolved into "authoritarian elitism". In the mid-1930s, yet another shift appeared when the concept of *national consolidation* replaced the concept of *state consolidation* (author's own italics). In practice, it meant a decreasing tolerance of ethnic and national minorities by the state, a stance supported by the general (Polish) public and the Catholic Church. The period prior to the outbreak of war saw growing nationalism among the majority population, and discriminatory state policies, particularly against the Jews. While anti-Roma laws in the German spirit were not introduced, Gontarek suggests the police used vagrancy and beggary laws to fight against illegal Roma encampments. The purpose was to limit the migratory lifestyle of the group within the confines of the Polish state borders.

Gontarek finds there was a shift towards the repression and oppression of other groups (minorities, political opposition, etc.) from the mid-1930s onwards. In a top-down initiative, Janusz Kwiek (from the Kelderash subgroup of Roma) was crowned a "Gypsy king" in a stadium in Warsaw in 1937. The state-controlled media described the act in detail, promoting a vision of "a uniform and centralized Gypsy authority, subordinate to the government". There were likely mutual benefits, and thanks to the support of the government, the Kwieks could hold onto their claim to power over the Polish Roma. Gontarek argues that the Polish writer, translator and connoisseur of Roma culture Jerzy Ficowski considered the cooperation a "collaboration", suspecting that the Kwieks informed the authorities about whom among Roma were not Polish citizens.[17] The government plan for managing Roma backfired, as the undertaking went against the tradition of "exercising power by many local [Roma] kings, leaders and chiefs", most of whom were not consulted in the process. It also caused an outcry from the majority population and the Roman Catholic Church, who protested against this supposedly positive treatment of Roma.[18] There are indications that Poland tried to constrain the mobility of foreign Roma, and in 1929, the authorities did their utmost to expel a group of Roma who entered Poland after receiving entry visas in Leningrad, although they had invalid Romanian passports. Romania would therefore not accept them, as they no longer were Romanian citizens. After a failed attempt at pushing the group over the border into the Soviet Union, the authorities managed to sneak them over an unattended part of the Polish-Romanian border – but only during the second attempt.[19]

THE IMAGE OF ROMA in the Polish press was hardly a positive one. I have found that three pre-war dailies from the town of Lwów (now Lviv in western Ukraine) produced a surprisingly uniform picture of Roma, although they had different political orientations – Zionist, Ukrainian National-Democratic, and one close to the ruling circles of Poland. The average reader would get the impression that most Roma engaged in, or at least were in the physical proximity of, criminal activities. Roma were most likely to appear on the pages of dailies as suspects or culprits when a crime had been committed. If the dailies discussed the differences between various Roma groups at all, it was against the background of sensations about violent conflicts between them.[20] Gontarek has found that the radical nationalist newspaper Warsaw Nationalist Daily (*Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy*) depicted Roma as a "degenerated collective" of criminals and potential criminals, unlike other newspapers.[21] However, with my study in mind, it appears that the newspaper image of Roma was rather uniform, with more similarities than differences over ideological and ethnic divides.

The source material

Articles and notices on Roma published in police journals constitute the bulk of the source material. I also used handbooks in investigative service and correspondence concerning Polish participation in the International Commission for Police Cooperation.

Three police journals are examined. The first is *The State Po-*

> **"'GYPSY' WAS A FLUID CATEGORY – A COLLECTIVE COMPRISING (POTENTIAL) CRIMINALS, AN ETHNIC GROUP, OR EVEN A RACE."**
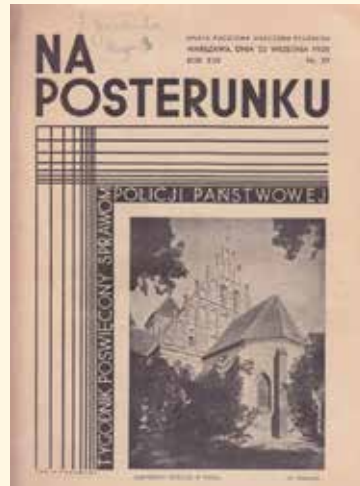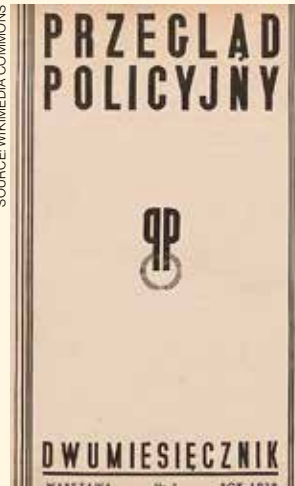
The State Police Gazette (Gazeta Policji Państwowej), On the Watchpost (Na posterunku), and *The Police Review (Przegląd Policyjny).*

lice Gazette (*Gazeta Policji Państwowej*), founded in 1919, which later changed its name to *The Gazette of State Administration and Police* (*Gazeta Administracji i Policji Państwowej*). The GPP, and later the GAPP, targeted senior police officers and were read by police executives, judges, lawyers and municipality clerks.[22] For lower rank police officers, *On the Watchpost* (*Na posterunku*) was published as a weekly from August 1920. NP was, according to the head of the Polish police, intended to develop a fondness among junior police officers for their profession as well as train them in perfecting their duties.[23] The leadership and editors viewed the weekly as the best source of information on police work and the police profession. The editors designed the content so that an average police officer would be able to comprehend it. The ambition of the editors was to turn the journal into a virtual professional handbook. In it one finds legal issues, forensic investigation methods and their development in Europe, general police information, and matters related to police officers. In fact, there were two main "educational blocks" in the journal – one concerning forensic investigation (criminalistics) and one concerning law.[24] The journal also offered information about current developments within the force and rudimentary information about contemporary public safety threats. At times, it even functioned as a guide in crime prevention and investigation, as it contained articles and notices about police work concerned with eliminating crime groups and gangs, and the continuous challenge of facing the offenders, their methods and techniques.[25]

The fourth journal analyzed below, which was known as *The Police Review* (*Przegląd Policyjny*), replaced the GAPP as the journal for law enforcement executives in 1936–1939. It also became a forum for forensic scientists and had a theoretical and educational character.[26]

Among the contributors to the journals, one finds Major Wasilewski, head of the forensic department at the Warsaw Town Police Headquarters; Second Lieutenant Żarek, the head of the forensic investigation department at the police headquarters in Włocławek; and Major Kaliszczak, head of the police in

the county of Piotrków Trybunalski.[27] Józef Jakubiec, who ordered the fingerprint registration of criminals in Warsaw in 1933, translated and edited those works of Hans Gross published in the journals, as well as co-authored the 1928 edition of *Investigation Service* (*Służba* Śledcza). On the editorial board of the PR one finds Władysław Sobolewski, a ballistics expert and graduate of the Police Scientific Institute in Lausanne. He underwent additional training in the laboratory of the International Criminal Police Commission's forensics team and worked as the head of the Central Laboratory of The State Police Investigation Service. Colonel Józef Żółtaszek, another member of the editorial board, headed the police in the Silesian voivodship; he also represented Poland at the ICPC conferences for years.[28]

The goal and research questions

The goal of the exploration below is to analyze the narrative on Roma in the police journals, with a focus on *what* is written and *how*, including the potential measures.[29] The narrative was part of the police's professional discourse. Such a discourse's main meaning is to provide information and regulate and control the practices of professionals.[30] The study of the narrative will likely allow for a hypothesis as to what kind of Roma policy was being employed – i.e., "the state of exception" or measures within the confines of the law as Gontarek suggests.

The journals constituted important channels for professional police discourse. They offered information on a wide range of topics, from the laws of the country, questions of crime prevention and investigation, and relevant developments abroad, to the daily work and working conditions of the police officers. With two articles, two notices, and one Ministry of Interior order solely dedicated to Roma, it seems that the police executives and the journals' editors hardly considered the group to be among the most important concerns of law enforcement in interwar Poland. However, Roma were mentioned a number of times in passing or as a constitutive part of an article dedicated to a larger phenomenon.

The journals comprise an important source when one studies

Roma in interwar Poland (1919–1939) constituted a minority of 30,000–40,000 people among a population that reached 35 million.

the interwar developments concerning Roma, a group under-represented in historical research due to a supposed lack of sources.[31] Historical examinations concerning Roma in Poland are scarce, while those employing the press as the primary source have only appeared in recent years.[32] At the same time, using journals as source material has obvious limitations. While they are likely to mirror the knowledge of, and attitudes towards, Roma prevalent among the authors, information about practices is largely absent.

The questions that guide the analysis below are the following: What were the general features of Roma in the narrative? What potential dangers did these features produce? How should police officers act when facing the group? What similarities and differences, if any, appear between the recommended Polish approach and those applied in other European states?

The "danger" with Roma: Their mobility and character

The most voluminous category of the narrative on Roma encompasses instructions on how to act when in mere contact with, or investigating, the group. The advice would routinely ascribe Roma several features that were likely to influence their behavior and delinquency.

Itinerant Roma, but also farmers, could hide rifles under their carts, among several potential places, as one learns from a piece on the concealment of weapons. Itinerant Roma could also tie short firearms to horsetails, or hide them in women's "most discrete places", the author informed.[33] When on patrol, officers should always undertake a detailed control of "every encountered Gypsy camp" no matter if that meant diverging from the patrol route or working overtime. The officers should establish the identity of all members of the camp, the goal and destination of their journey, check the documentation concerning the horses, and enquire whether there had been any thefts that coincided with the passing of Roma caravans. If "a band of Gypsies" stayed for a longer period, the local police should strengthen the

preventive service to protect the population from "unavoidable acts of theft". The author, Major Garwacki, also called for the control of the flow of "alien persons" in the area by consulting the locals and checking such persons' former whereabouts.[34] From an unsolved case of alleged horse theft and homicide, one learns that failure awaited those who omitted controlling *all* itinerant Roma groups.[35]

HORSE STEALING was among the most common offences ascribed to Roma. Major Garwacki maintained that few would steal horses without first making an agreement with a receiver. Roma were an exception to this rule, as they were often alien to a locality. According to police registers, there were 705 professional horse thieves and 200 receivers in Poland in 1938. In a table on horse thieves / receivers and receivers according to their nationality, one finds that "others" (556 thieves / 84 receivers) and Jews (78 / 106) were the most numerous groups, followed by "Gypsies" (71 / 10). Thus, "while constituting merely 0.02 per cent of the population (around 7.000), they give us 10 per cent of professional horse thieves (71 out of 706) and 5 per cent of receivers of horses (10 out of 200)", Garwacki maintained. The author also found that "Jews have specialized in receiving", as they constituted 53 per cent of all receivers. However, he continued, one should keep in mind that "sometimes even serious and wealthy farmers, and particularly their sons, belong to horse thief bands", and there were serious horse dealers who engaged in the receiving business.[36] One finds the non-Jewish and non-Roma population of some 35 million squeezed into the "others" category to prove the obvious point that Jews were overrepresented as receivers and Roma as both thieves and receivers. Thanks to their itinerary lifestyle, the author continued, Roma are good at gathering the intelligence needed when preparing future offences. They gather valuable information while wandering between houses in rural areas or visit stables as potential buyers. "Gypsy women have even more possibilities, as they wander around all day in the villages nearby, begging, fortune-telling or healing the gullible". Roma men

return weeks or even months after leaving a locality, when the caravan is in another region. They act in accordance with a plan drawn on gathered information, bringing false horse passports or certificates of descent. Horse thieves and receivers, the author sums up, operate up to a "hundred kilometres" from their place of residence.[37]

Roma were sarcastically described as "particularly able" when it comes to deceiving people. Roma women, it is stated, have mastered the art of bringing their victims into passivity and obedience when telling fortune. The author recalls a case where a Roma woman made a Jewish married couple hand over a round sound of money before instructing them to make swimming-like movements on the floor, which is where the neighbors found them.[38] One also learns that Roma women were very good at recognizing the psychological and other needs of the potential victims, promising to find disappeared family members, etc. At the same time, the author wryly claimed, people parted with their money and valuables. By the time they realized what had happened, the Roma were usually far away. The author also claimed that Roma women possessed hypnotizing skills. For example, in a village shop, a saleswoman was made to pack groceries after the suspected Roma woman "seemingly threw something that made a scraping sound while staunchly staring at the saleswoman". While illustrating the methods employed by the alleged culprits, the author also regretted that it was hard to bring them to justice and prove the acts.[39] From a longer article about India, one learns from a single sentence that Roma, originally from India, supposedly have inherited hypnotizing skills from Indian fakirs.[40]

> "ROMA WERE SARCASTICALLY DESCRIBED AS 'PARTICULARLY ABLE' WHEN IT COMES TO DECEIVING PEOPLE."

WRITINGS ON ROMA and child abduction constituted a recurring feature in the journals. That Roma could abduct children "cannot be viewed as a fantasy", although it happens "rather seldom", Major Wasilewski maintained in an extensive piece on child abduction. Roma were likely to "steal children" reminiscent of their own appearance, with darker skin and curly black hair, so those could be raised to become "Gypsies", if the unfulfilled "maternal instinct" of a childless woman was behind the abduction.[41] A case of the disappearance of three boys in September 1935 was supposed to illustrate the negative effects of mistakes committed early in an investigation. One of the working hypotheses of the investigators was that of Roma as abductors. At the time of the disappearance, there were Roma passing through the woods nearby, and they spent a night there. The investigators pursued "the Gypsy, vagrants, beggars, circus people" hypothesis (as the author dubbed it) for ten days before discarding it after "a general search of Gypsy camps". Still, they decided to supervise and control Roma in the region again a few weeks later, when the investigation was running out of feasible clues.[42]

Many police officers, one learns from a piece by Major Kaliszczak, bowed under the workload caused by "the vagrancy plague". The identification of petty offenders carrying no or false documents put considerable strain on the police apparatus. The detention time foreseen by the law was too short for successful identification, and thus for establishing a person's potential criminal record. According to the author, there were five categories of people constituting the phenomenon of vagrancy: "Gypsies – comprising a separate group because of their character, way of life, peculiarities, and particular kind of delinquency"; "railroad vagrants"; "rural vagrants"; "urban vagrants"; and "travelers" ("globetrotters" and "youth in search of adventure").[43]

Major Strzelecki found that Polish laws and regulation from 1928 about registration and mobility of the population, or the ordinance on foreigners from 1926, "do not foresee any restrictions as to Gypsies, who are subjected to general rules of the presidential ordinances". All Roma occupations, and particularly so in the case of itinerant Roma, the authors maintains, often constituted a cover for their "main activities" of stealing (particularly of horses), fraud (forgeries of horse passports), but also "armed gang robbery". Potentially, although proof was absent, there could be "a centralized organization" coordinating the Roma delinquency, the author maintained. Interestingly enough, when mentioning the "general rules" that applied to Roma, Strzelecki left out the presidential decree on "struggle against begging and vagrancy" from October 14, 1927.[44] There were at least three laws invoked by police officers when Roma were approached.

Itinerant Roma usually produce domestic documents, extracts from registers of sedentary population, foreign passports, and birth certificates. Often, they are written in an incomprehensible language, and without specification of the place of birth.[45] Roma women "hardly possess any documents at all", nor do "the Russian Gypsies", the author claims. Roma regularly borrow their documents to each other in order to conceal their identity. Combined with a lack of a "steady centralized registration of Gypsies", all these factors made determining Roma identity and their criminal record very difficult. In addition, there was a risk that offenders with physical similarities to Roma – Hungarians, Greeks, Serbians, Romanians, etc. – would travel along with Roma in order to conceal their identity.

Strzelecki recommended that if a Roma caravan appeared in a locality, police should immediately determine "the first names, surnames, nicknames and the number of members according to sex and age". Among other things, these were needed to clarify the place of departure, documents of the caravan travelers, their means for living, the goal of the travel, and how long they had roamed the territory of the voivodship. The last question was important, the author instructed, as Roma usually return to steal weeks after their caravans have left.[46]

A substantial part of advice on Roma came from Austria and Germany. In an article series about criminal police by the German expert Hans Schneickert, Roma figured among categories particularly dangerous to public security, such as "somebody not in possession of an ID or means to earn money". Police

should pay attention to "Gypsies, suspected peddlers, beggars, etc., because they predominantly deal with theft, and their alleged activities only serve as a disguise of their wicked deeds".[47]

IN THE JOURNALS, one finds recurring adaptations of texts by Hans Gross, the father of criminalistics. The sixth part of the serial was solely dedicated to Roma. One learns that they were "a nation" with many unique features, and "particular customs, thoroughly alien to other nations". A Roma individual "constitutes to us a thoroughly alien and new person" no matter how civilized he might be, in need of exploring and studying "in every detail". Roma are unable to assimilate because of their "very outstanding physiognomy". They all look very much alike, Gross maintained, so somebody who knows a dozen Roma practically knows the whole group. They have remained the same over centuries. They possessed several negative traits, such as vanity and meanness, affectation and indifference. According to Gross, Roma men lacked "male judgement or understanding", but were rather cunning. "The outstanding features" ascribed to Roma were "groveling, presumptuousness, lying, complete lack of shame, immeasurable laziness, vindictiveness, and cruelty". One must keep all these features in mind when approaching and understanding crimes "committed exclusively by Gypsies", Gross claimed.[48] He moreover asserted that you cannot trust Roma's own assurances about their identity, "as all Gypsies aim at deceit, and being a separate and strongly connected community united by interests and customs, they are characterized by great solidarity, apart from that they can punish traitors very severely and ruthlessly". Some physical features of Roma, "starting from physique and ending at the color of the skin", are so characteristic to the group that officers of law should learn to recognize them, as Roma are physically so different from other people that they can be viewed as "a separate ethnic group".[49]

Gross went on to argue that investigating officers should remember that all the crafts and professions of Roma "merely constitute an additional aid" to their preferred craft of "deceit and stealing respectively" as both are rooted in "their whole psychic and morals". The various incarnations of Roma as entertainers (fortune-teller, card player, the clown, magician, musician or singer) are merely ways to make the potential victims lower their defences. Roma use "naivety of the masses" as well as their good knowledge "of the human soul".[50] A Roma person was "a born thief", who mastered the ways of blocking an access to the room, knew how and where to look for the valuables, and possessed good forewarning system thanks to his comrades who keep a lookout. Often, enigmatic cases appear where valuables or other belongings simply have disappeared into thin air. In such cases, it is possible that the culprits have employed fishing hooks assembled into a four-armed anchor with a lead pendant. According to Gross, Roma women capture hens using this de-

> ## "THEY ALL LOOK VERY MUCH ALIKE, GROSS MAINTAINED, SO SOMEBODY WHO KNOWS A DOZEN ROMA PRACTICALLY KNOWS THE WHOLE GROUP."

vice. He also said that Roma usually know the mentality and customs of the population. For instance, when stealing cattle and horses, they will not sell them at the nearest markets, but rather go far away, where the farmers will not search for them.[51]

Gross discards claims that Roma abduct children. This is very unlikely, as Roma fertility is high and their families big. On the other hand, Gross seems also to keep open the option that Roma abduct children anyway, as Roma women seemingly viewed redheaded children as bringing luck, while stories about children supposedly abducted by Roma mentioned such children.[52]

As Roma constituted "a completely separate type of man, far from all external and internal features of Europeans", they behaved differently in general, and before a court of law in particular. All questions, the professor maintains, "are answered by a question". If pressured, a Roma will answer that he has not known his accomplices for long, "perhaps from the preceding day". Once he had calmed down, "currents of talk" come out that may contain valuable information. A Roma person will confess only as a way of escaping an accusation of an even graver offence, as a way of producing an alibi, or in exchange for leniency. Thus, an investigator should treat "Gypsy confessions" with a great degree of doubt.[53]

According to Gross, Roma were remarkably resilient, but not immune, to various diseases. Any investigator should keep in mind their ability to recover quickly from wounds to the skin. One should moreover be skeptical to excuses and alibis referring to illness, wounds or health status. "This eternal vagabond, nomad", if forced to stay too long in one place, "[he] starts to feel sad, to lose weight, he turns pale, loses his appetite", sometimes all the way to "mental illness". If locked in a prison, a Roma person may even die because of unhappiness, due to alien food, and the enforced order and cleanness. This alone, Gross sums up, illustrates the difference between Roma and other itinerants.[54]

AN ANONYMOUS AUTHOR from the United States was shocked that European countries tolerated "Gypsy gangs and caravans, unceasingly nomadic, devoted to idleness, theft and banditry". The author found it amazing that in the 20th century police in Europe allow "a discredited tribe like Gypsies to run their own supposed kettle-making and horse trade, but in fact robbery and fraud of all kinds". The author then presents what he considers successful measures against Roma. When they started travelling with their caravans in the United States, Roma carefully avoided territories populated by Native Americans, wary of the potential retribution if any of their horses disappeared. During the First World War, a handful of Roma families settled in Virginia. Soon, three Roma men were detected stealing grain, and resisted the arrest with firearms. The local sheriff shot the suspects on the spot, claiming his authority to execute the law when the circumstances complicate operations of the court and if there were "credible citizens" who had witnessed the offence. After that,

Mounted police unit, Warsaw 1934. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Polish police patrol in Warsaw 1932. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Roma left and were never seen again.[55] The cases were likely to illustrate that severe punishments or the substantial threat thereof could be productive against Roma.

THE POLISH POLICE investigation service textbooks/manuals borrowed heavily from the works of Hans Gross as did their perspectives on Roma. One finds chapters on Roma inspired by Gross in several versions (1920, 1928, and 1929). From the 1920 edition and its 1923 reissue, one learns that Roma were uncultivated, idle and vulgar. They also attracted other criminal elements. Echoing Gross, an anonymous author claimed there was a "full lack of manly judgement and reason" among Roma men.[56] Among categories of locals whom an investigating officer should know were those under supervision "and indirectly supervised persons, like work-shy, vagabonds, beggars, prostitutes, gypsies, and convicts released after serving their sentences".[57] From the chapter on fingerprinting one learns that "Gypsies of both sexes no matter if [formerly] punished or if of criminal age" should have their fingerprints taken at detention.[58] In the 1928 new edition, one still finds references to Gross, although the chapter on Roma had been shortened and renamed "Theft by Gypsies" (*Kradzieże cygańskie*). The authors also rebuked Gross' conclusion that Roma abstained from grave violent crime. "New experiences", they wrote, show that Gypsies commit bestial bandit assaults, when they murder all household members, not even sparing children in cradles".[59] From 1929 investigation service instructions, one also learns that officers should file Roma fingerprints as "Category V: wandering thieves", encompassing horse, railroad, luggage, and market thieves, as well as "Gypsies" and beggars.[60]

The advice part of the narrative on Roma presents a great number of negative features of the group. According to the authors, Roma would engage in horse stealing, petty theft, various forms of fraud, and begging. They were potential child abductors and would at times engage in violent crime. Combined with their mobility and fraudulent handling (or outright absence) of identity documents, these features constituted a dangerous threat to public safety. The most important countermeasure suggested by the authors was stopping and controlling Roma caravans at first sight, including meticulous checks of identity documents. It turns out that Roma were among the common "usual suspects" of the police. They appeared in the categories of locals in need of being "indirectly supervised" and would be routinely fingerprinted no matter their age and criminal record. The police attempted at controlling Roma international and domestic movement by applying a general judicial framework on stemming begging and vagrancy, and registering the population or movements of foreigners. Polish accounts of criminal investigation and Roma-related delinquency borrowed heavily from Hans Gross, whose works had been translated into "French, Spanish, Danish, Russian, Hungarian, Serbian, and Japanese" by 1906.[61] The greatest difference between his account and the Polish ones was that Gross clearly viewed Roma as a separate, criminal and inferior race, and as "inborn criminals", in his writings, while Polish authors were less explicit on the matter. If this narrative from the professional discourse of the police somehow materialized in reality, it would mean a number of measures aimed at controlling Roma undertaken by the officers within the confines of the laws against vagrancy and begging, with full guidance and support of police manuals.

Roma as mirrored by police work

Articles and notices on police work read as a criminal chronicle (which were sometimes a part of such) and contain very basic information. A notice in the column entitled "Police activity" tells the story of a twenty-four-hour pursuit of suspected Roma horse thieves, who admitted their guilt after being caught.[62] A Roma band of eight robbers was detained in southern Poland and charged with at least three robberies against Jewish shop holders.[63] The "shooting of a Gypsy-horse thief" described an individual riding a horse encountered by the chief of the police station in Nałęczów. He was shot dead after refusing to produce documents and attacking the officer.[64]

A Czechoslovak "Gypsy identification card" with fingerprints. Source: The Museum of Romani Cultur, Brno

"Police in skirmish with Gypsies" described the police along with volunteers pursuing a gang that attacked a farm. After an attempt to stop two horse carriages in a nearby wood, there was an exchange of fire, with "thugs" taking off. Both carriages belonged to Roma, the author claimed.[65] One learns of the successful action of undercover officers Łuczenko and Kuźminski when the police detained a bandit gang that had plagued the Sarny region (nowadays in Volynia in north-western Ukraine). Pretending to be fugitives from the law, the agents caught "the Gypsy Gabryel Wiśniewski", Maksym Szewczenko, Piotr Mikosianczyk, Kusia Pawłowna, and Władysław Gruszewski. Merely Wiśniewski's ethnicity is mentioned, while, deemed by their last names, his accomplices were likely ethnic Ukrainians.[66] However, Roma also fell victim to crime. Eight masked and armed offenders attacked a caravan headed by Ferenc Lakatosz near Krasnystaw in 1922. They robbed the caravan and attempted to hang one of the Roma men but ran away when they heard an approaching cart. The local police took in three known criminals for interrogation.[67]

What strikes one in this section is that the offences where Roma were involved were violent, unlike most such offences described in the advice section. All short notices on police activities concerning Roma dealt with violent crime, in line with most notices published in "Police Activities" and "Police" columns. Here, Roma were dealt with as other suspects, while being the only ones singled out with an ethnicity. No information on other ethnic groups in Poland was available.

The foreign experiences of Roma

There were recurring references to the ways in which law enforcement operated abroad. Only one evidently dealt with Roma developments. The Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior processed 36 728 personal fingerprints cards, among them a "Special collection of the fingerprint cards of Gypsies" with 6 768 entries. It was possible to reveal 3 517 Roma and 605 persons

from other groups living under false name thanks to the collection.[68] Information about the Centre for the Registration of Gypsies in Munich, among other German police centers, was offered in 1927.[69] From the contribution of a domestic author, Major Strzelecki, one learns that there were those in the Polish police who bemoaned the lack of a domestic centralized Roma register. In Germany and in the Czechoslovak Republic, he wrote, the rules aimed at limiting the roaming of Roma and forcing them to a sedentary life "in the name of public security". In Czechoslovakia, those encompassed the restriction of movement without a special permit for caravans bigger than two families; and "itinerary letters" allowing camping on the territory of a given administrative unit (never on the territory of the whole republic, the author notes). Those letters were issued only after consulting the General Criminal Central in Prague and could be withdrawn at any time.[70] "In the name of public safety", the letters specified the name of the head of the family, the direction and the approved goal of the travel, with a possibility to include further restrictions in the text. In addition, the person in possession of an "itinerary letter" was obliged to produce documents such as an artisan card or an entertainment permit. Camps were allowed only in designated places. At the beginning of the stay, "the itinerary letter" had to be deposited at the local gendarmerie station. All Roma aged 14 or more carried the so-called "Gypsy ID", with a photo and a fingerprint of the pointer finger of the right hand, containing information about a possible criminal record, police supervision or any restrictions. It also had information about the movable and immovable property of a person, including animals. A deceased person's ID had to be returned to the nearest gendarmerie post, and the General Criminal Central in Prague had to be informed about any changes to the status of the owner of the "Gypsy ID". The same law foresaw forced subjection to medical examination or treatment (for instance, vaccination against contagious diseases). Moreover, the authorities could take away children of twelve or fewer years of age if

they were not raised "in a proper way". Strzelecki found that the Prussian law from 1927 imposed even greater restrictions on Roma and "persons who conducted a Gypsy-like life". It allowed for the fingerprinting of persons from the age of six. The documents carried by Roma warned that those travelling without documents risked "temporary arrest if substantiated doubts as to his person arise".[71] Strzelecki formulated the title of his article – "*For* the registration of Gypsies" (my own italics) as if it was part of a debate arguing for stricter registration measures by the Polish police. If one considers the writings on problems of controlling travelling Roma's identity and preventing potential offences, Strzelecki was likely to face support from his colleagues.

THERE WAS a direct link between the international discussion and domestic Polish advice on Roma. Colonel Józef Żółtaszek was the main editor of the PP in 1936–1938, and he held lectures at the ICPC conferences in 1930 in Antwerp, 1935 in Copenhagen, and in 1936 in Belgrade.[72] Furthermore, at least up until February 1936, he was receiving correspondence from the ICPC headquarters in Vienna. Among those files, one finds correspondence about preparations before the Belgrade conference, including a draft agreement on "the measures to be taken for the suppression of the nomads' conduct". The draft built on earlier agreements between Belgium and France from 1931, and France and Luxemburg from 1932. No signatory country would extradite "nomads" without first informing and obtaining the permission of the receiving country, or the country whose territory had to be passed – regardless of whether those people were citizens of those countries. Citizenship should be established "in a safe way", and if it could not be established, the signatory countries would not extradite such people without the permission of the receiving country and its cooperation.[73] There are no indications that the Polish police organization ever engaged in such agreements as the one above, or that it took an active part in the cooperation on Roma. What is beyond doubt, however, is that Poles participated in the international discussions and exchanges of ideas and methods. Considering Strzelecki's call for an all-Polish police registration of Roma, those directly cooperating within the framework of the ICPC were not the only ones aware of the international approaches and experiences concerning the treatment of Roma.

"To your attention": Decrees of the Ministry of Interior

While advice on, and accounts of, police activity concerning Roma in Poland and abroad were not binding, the decrees of the Ministers of the Interior were. In 1928, the Minister of Interior instructed that horses belonging to Roma should be registered "on general terms" and on the territory of the community (*gmina*, an administrative territorial unit) where they were brought for inspection, regardless of whether the Roma were Polish citizens. Special attention should also be paid to horses belonging to Roma, as a 'substantial portion of these likely comes from stealing'.[74] In the days preceding the outbreak of WWII, the Ministry of Interior issued the "Combating the Gypsy vagrancy" order. As there often were criminal elements among Roma "terrorizing the population, particularly the rural one", it reads, several laws and regulations should be *strictly followed* (author's own italics). Those included the registration and control of the movement of the population; controlling Roma movement in the state border areas and the border strip;[75] and enquiries as to reasons for travelling and availability of work and means to live at the place of destination – in accordance to the presidential decree about combating begging and vagrancy. The Ministry also ordered the control of Roma horse vehicles' adherence to road safety regulations, and the strict control of the authenticity of documents possessed by Roma, particularly those concerning military service and horse ownership. The list of measures ended with a strict observance of fire-protection regulations with reference to Roma and an admonishment for the population not to allow them to camp on their property.[76] On the eve of the war, the Ministry identified Roma as particularly problematic. This is the first explicit instruction to use all regulations and laws at its disposal in the "combating of Gypsy vagrancy", a term likely borrowed from the professional law enforcement discourse elsewhere in Europe. However, from the call for the legislation to be "strictly followed", one learns that the available laws had not been applied as strictly as they should have been. Rather than introducing new legislation, the state, represented by the Ministry of the Interior, called for the existing legislation to be followed verbatim. The single most important document in these circumstances was likely "The Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland of October 14, 1927 on combating begging and vagrancy". This suggests that the measures described in the section on the narrative on Roma were likely employed, but merely to a degree, and likely dictated by availability of officers and particular local views of Roma.

Concluding remarks: Towards European standards?

The narrative on Roma as it appears in Polish police journals is one of the group as criminal, ethnically or/and racially alien, a category not belonging to the widely understood Polish society (apparently including the Polish majority, the Slavic minorities

> "AS ROMA CONSTITUTED 'A COMPLETELY SEPARATE TYPE OF MAN, FAR FROM ALL EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FEATURES OF EUROPEANS', THEY BEHAVED DIFFERENTLY IN GENERAL, AND BEFORE A COURT OF LAW IN PARTICULAR."

and Germans, but not Jews or Roma who unlike other Polish citizens were presented as ethnicities). As the authors always described Roma as itinerary, their mobility contributed to the overall negative image of the group as beyond control. The answer to this challenge appeared to be more control, exercise through searches of caravans, controlling Roma identity documents if they had any to see if they were genuine, and registering Roma on the local level. There was also a call for the registering of Roma on a central, all-Polish level.

It appears that the police approach towards Roma was rectified by the existing legal framework that did not single out Roma as a category or sub-group of population, but covered categories of "beggars", "vagrants", "foreigners" or referred to legislation on the control of the population. In this approach, the Polish police followed the path of Great Britain and France, who according to Jennifer Illuzzi accommodated their policies on itinerary Roma within the existing legal framework. There was no discriminatory legislation on Roma on the threshold of WWII (August 1939). While not succumbing to practices of what Illuzzi has called "state of exception", the police would use legislation against begging and vagrancy, control of the population or foreigners to control the Roma. Roma would always qualify as routine suspects.

The narrative on Roma in the Polish police journals points to influences from abroad but also mirrors the rise of domestic expertise. In 1920s, the bulk of advice on Roma contained parts of handbooks on criminalistics translated into Polish (Hans Gross or Hans Schneickert, for instance). In the 1930s, there were several domestic authors discussing Roma. Poland took part in the works of the ICPC by the time there was a growing interest and international cooperation on Roma-related matters among the member states, as Żółtaszek's participation in conferences and the correspondence from the ICPC illustrate. It remains to be seen whether the contacts had any consequences for the Polish police's handling of Roma, but it seems that the law enforcement followed one of the main general European trends. Repeated calls for relentless checks of caravans (Roma were the routine suspects) and indiscriminate fingerprinting of Roma, crowned by the order issued in the summer of 1939 to use any legal pretext to prevent Roma from wandering, show that there were forces in Poland in unison with the European police practices of the time. On the other hand, we cannot know to what extent police officers followed calls and instructions in the journals. Perhaps future research using regional and local sources will be able to show the practices Polish police employed when handling Roma. ⊠

Piotr Wawrzeniuk is an Associate Professor at the Swedish Defence University's Department of Military History.

references

1   Jennifer Illuzzi, "Negotiating the 'state of exception': Gypsies' encounter with the judiciary in Germany and Italy", 1860–1914, *Social History* vol. 35, no. 4 (2010), 430.

2   Illuzzi, "Negotiating", 421. Illuzzi was inspired by thoughts of Giorgio Agamben in his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA 1998).

3   Illuzzi, "Negotiating", 420, 423.

4   Illuzzi, "Negotiating", 434–437 (citation 435).

5   Paola Trevisan, "'Gypsies' in Fascist Italy: from expelled foreigners to dangerous Italians", *Social History* vol. 42, no. 3 (2017), 346–350.

6   Trevisan, "'Gypsies'" 362.

7   Trevisan, "'Gypsies'", 363.

8   Panikos Panayi, *Ethnic minorities in nineteenth and twentieth century Germany: Jews, gypsies, Poles, Turks and others* (Oxfordshire & New York: Routledge, 2013), 143–145.

9   Leo Lucassen, "'Harmful tramps' Police professionalization and gypsies in Germany, 1700–1945", *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1997): 39–41, 45–46. The full name of this institution was Intelligence service for the security police with regard to gypsies (*Nachrichtendienst für die Sicherheitspolizei in Bezug auf Zigeuner*).

10   Lucassen, "'Harmful tramps'", 41–44.

11   Ian Burney and Neil Pembleton, "Making space for criminalistics: Hans Gross and fin-de-siècle CSI", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, vol. 44, (2013): 16.

12   Burney and Pembleton, "Making space", 18.

13   Burney and Pembleton, "Making space", 23.

14   Peter Widmann, "The campaign against the restless: criminal biology and the stigmatization of the Gypsies, 1890-1960", in *The Roma: A Minority in Europe. Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, eds. Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 23, 25, 27. The father of criminal biology, Cesare Lombroso was a Socialist debating against anti-Semitism and for mixing of races. See, Widmann, "The Campaign against the Restless", 27.

15   Jan Selling, "The Obscured Story of the International Criminal Police Commission, Harry Söderman, and the Forgotten Context of Antiziganism", *Scandinavian Journal of History* vol. 42, no. 3 (2017): 329–330.

16   Alicja Gontarek, "Political Activity of Kwiek 'Dynasty' in the Second Polish Republic in the Years 1935–1939", *Social Inclusion* vol. 8, no. 2 (2020): 336.

17   Gontarek, "Królowie cygańscy w II Rzeczypospolitej. Wokół dorobku Jerzego Ficowskiego na temat sprawy cygańskiej w okresie międzywojennym" [Gypsy kings in the Second Polish Republic. Around the achievements of Jerzy Ficowski on the Gypsy issue in the interwar period] *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis, Studia Historicolitteraria XVI* (2016): 146, 155.

18   Gontarek, "Political Activity", 337, 343.

19   Elżbieta Alina Jakimik, *Romowie. Koczownictwo, osiadły tryb życia – wybór, konieczność czy przymus?* [Roma. Nomadism, sedentary lifestyle – choice, necessity or coercion] (Szczecinek: Związek Romów Polskich, 2009), 13–18.

20   Piotr Wawrzeniuk, "'The Gypsy Question' and its answers: Anti-Roma propaganda in the press of the District of Galicia 1941–1944", *Baltic Worlds* vol. 13, no. 2–3 (2020): 30, 34.

21   Alicja Gontarek, "Problematyka cygańska w prasie narodowej w latach 1935–1939, na przykładzie 'Warszawskiego Dziennika Narodowego'" [Gypsy issues in the national press in the years 1935–1939, on the example of the 'Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy'], *Studia Historica Gedanensia* vol. 8, 2017: 77.

22 Leszek Smolak, *Prasa Policji Państwowej: 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawniczo-Reklamowa, 2003): 57, 59, 62.

23 Smolak, *Prasa*, 68.

24 Smolak, *Prasa*, 91, 96.

25 Smolak, *Prasa*, 121.

26 Smolak, *Prasa*, 62.

27 Jarosław Olbrychowski, "Policja Państwowa II RP powiatu piotrkowskiego" [State Police of the Second Polish Republic of Piotrków County], *Policja* Łódzkie vol. 8 (2017): 16.

28 Grażyna Kędzierska, "Polska kryminalistyka w okresie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego" [Polish forensics in the interwar period] *Rocznik Stowarzyszenia Naukowców Polaków Litwy* [Yearbook of the Association of Polish Scientists in Lithuania], vol. 18, (2018), 248–249.

29 Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou, *Analyzing Narrative: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 24.

30 Silvia Blanca Irimiea, "Professional Discourse as Social Practice", *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* vol. 9, no. 1 (2017): 110–111.

31 Gontarek, "Political Activity", 337.

32 See Wawrzeniuk, "'The Gypsy Question'" and the works of Alicja Gontarek presented in this article.

33 Stefan Garwacki, "Gdzie i jak szukać nielegalnie posiadanej broni" [Where and how to look for illegally possessed weapons], *Na posterunku*, [On the Watchpost], January 29, 1939: 5–7.

34 Stefan Garwacki, "Służba prewencyjna na posterunku" [Preventive service at the station], *Na posterunku*, February 19, 1939: 3–4.

35 Wacław Żarek, "Błędy w dochodzeniu" [Errors in investigation], *Na posterunku*, December 18, 1938: 14.

36 Stefan Garwacki, "Koniokradztwo w Polsce w latach 1922–1938 R." [Horse theft in Poland in the years 1922–1938], *Przegląd Policyjny* vol. 4, no. 4 (1939): 260–261.

37 Garwacki, "Koniokradztwo", 264, 262.

38 Tomasz Bielanów, "Oszustwo na 'kant-maszynę'" [Fraud on the "spoof-machine"], *Na posterunku*, November, 27, 1938: 8.

39 Aleksander Rutkowski, "Cygańskie wróżby i czary" [Gypsy fortune telling and spells], *Na posterunku*, March 12, 1939: 12.

40 Czesław Rokicki, "Indje kraj dziwów, czarów i niewoli" [India is a land of wonders, magic and slavery], *Na posterunku*, February 23, 1935: 4–5.

41 Stanisław Wasilewski, "Przez pryzmat dochodzeń w sprawach porywania dzieci" [Through the prism of child kidnapping investigations], *Przegląd Policyjny* vol. 1, no. 2 (1936): 146.

42 Marjan Wagner, "Sprawa Zduńsko-Wolska. Na kanwie poszukiwań zaginionych chłopców" [The Zduńsko-Wolska case. On the basis of the search for missing boy], *Przegląd Policyjny* [Police Review], vol. 1, no. 3 (1936): 209, 211.

43 Witold Kaliszczak, "Włóczęgostwo" [Vagrancy], *Przegląd Policyjny* vol. 3, no. 6 (1938): 431.

44 Dz.U. 1927 nr 92 poz. 823, *Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 14 października 1927 r. o zwalczaniu żebractwa i włóczęgostwa*, [OJ 1927 No. 92 item 823, Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of October 14, 1927 on combating begging and vagrancy]. Approached December 13, 2023. Available at: https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19270920823

45 W. Strzelecki, "O ewidencję Cyganów" [For the registration of Gypsies], *Na posterunku*, 5 November 5, 1932: 708.

46 Ibid., 709.

47 Hans Schneickert, "O policji kriminalnej", [About Criminal Police]

48 Hans Gross, "Badanie istoty czynów występnych" [Examination of the essence of criminal acts], *Na posterunku*, February 26, 1921: 131.

49 Gross, "Badanie istoty czynów występnych", *Na posterunku*, April 9, 1921: 227.

50 Gross, "Badanie istoty czynów występnych", *Na posterunku*, April 2, 1921: 212.

51 Gross, "Badanie istoty czynów występnych", *Na* posterunku, March 19, 1921: 179.

52 Gross, "Badanie istoty czynów występnych", *Na posterunku*, April 2, 1921: 212.

53 Gross, "Badanie istoty czynów występnych", *Na posterunku*, April 9, 1921: 227.

54 Gross, "Badanie istoty czynów występnych", *Na posterunku*, April 16, 1921: 240.

55 "Jak się ustrzedz od kradzieży" [How to avoid theft], *Gazeta Policji Państwowej*, September 24, 1921: 609.

56 *Służba śledcza podręcznik dla szkolenia funkcjonariuszów policji państwowej* [Investigative service - manual for training state police officers], (Warszawa: Skład Główny w Księgarni F. Hoesicka, 1920), 24–27; *Służba śledcza podręcznik dla szkolenia funkcjonariuszów policji państwowej* (Warszawa: Skład Główny w Księgarni F. Hoesicka, 1923), 23–27.

57 *Służba śledcza* (1923), 4.

58 *Służba śledcza* (1923), 14–15. Prior to 1928, this was a perfectly legal procedure - see Gontarek, "Krolowie cygańscy", 146–147.

59 *Służba śledcza: podręcznik dla szkolenia funkcjonariuszów policji państwowej* (Warszawa: Drukarnia Policyjna, 1928), 393.

60 *Służba Śledcza. Instrukcja* [Investigative Service. Instructions], (Warszawa: M.S.W. Komenda Główna Policji Państwowej w Warszawie, 1929), 53.

61 Hans Gross, *Criminal Investigation. A Practical Handbook for Magistrates, Police Officers, and Lawyers* (Madras: G. Ramasawmy Chetty & Co., 1906), v. This first edition of Gross' *System der Kriminalistik* in English was adapted to "Indian and colonial practices". A chapter entitled 'Wandering tribes' is mainly dedicated to "gipsies".

62 "Działalność policji" [Police activity], *Na posterunku*, August 22, 1923: 10.

63 "Działalność policji", *Na posterunku*, January 30, 1926: 12.

64 "Policja", *Gazeta Administracji i Policji Państwowej*, January, 27, 1923: 84.

65 "Kronika", *Gazeta Policji Państwowej*, June 18, 1921.

66 "Policja", *Gazeta Administracji i Policji Państwowej*, December 9, 1922: 776.

67 "Napad na obóz cygański" [Attack on the Gypsy camp], *Gazeta Policji Państwowej*, March 4, 1922: 140.

68 "Z policji zagranicznych" [From foreign police], *Na posterunku*, June 19, 1926: 10.

69 "Sprawy policji" [Police matters], *Na posterunku*, September 24, 1927: 14.

70 Strzelecki, "O ewidencję", 709.

71 Strzelecki, "O ewidencję", 710.

72 Kędzierska, "Polska kryminalistyka", 249.

73 AAN, Komenda Główna Policji Państwowej, sygn. 1714, 11–12, 13–16. Żółtaszek also headed the police of the Silesian voivodship. [AAN, National Police Headquarters, ref. no. 1714, 11–12, 13–16.

74 "Ku waszej uwadze" [For your attention], *Na posterunku*, June 23, 1928: 11.

75 "Zwalczanie włóczęgostwa cyganów" [Combating gypsy vagrancy], *Na posterunku*, August 6, 1939: 20.

76 "Zwalczanie", 21.

Prisoners in a Gulag camp building the White Sea Canal. During the Great Terror of 1937 and 1938 an estimated 1,6 million people were arrested, and approximately 700 000 of them executed. The remaining 900 000 were imprisoned in camps, where many of them perished.

ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЕТ СОВЕТСКАЯ КОНСТИТУЦИЯ !

Some, but far from all, of the Swedes who lived in the USSR during the Great Terror were communists who had emigrated to the USSR to build a new future in "the socialist paradise". USSR propaganda poster from 1937. The text reads "Long live the Soviet constitution!"

RESCUED FROM STALIN'S TERROR

The unknown Swedish operation in the 1930s

by **Torbjörn Nilsson**

abstract

The author analyses the operation by Swedish diplomats in the Soviet Union during the peak of the Stalinist Terror. Although Swedish communists living in the USSR have been in the spotlight of some journalists and historians, the extent of the different Swedish groups and the complicated diplomatic actions to help them are nearly unknown. Who could be saved? Who disappeared in the Gulag? The context is the Soviet actions against all foreigners in the Great Terror from 1937, forcing them to either become Soviet citizens or immediately leave the country. Comparisons are made with Finnish people in the Soviet Union, a group much harder hit by the terror than the small groups of Swedes.

KEYWORDS: Swedish communists, Gulag, the Great Terror, Soviet Union.

In September 1937 the 40-year-old roadworker Johan Johansson, born in Nordmaling, returned home to the north of Sweden. Four years earlier he and Hildur Viktoria Venström, seamstress, had arrived in Leningrad on the *Proletarii*, a Finnish boat used for passengers, mostly communists, from Sweden and Finland. All of them were to settle in the Soviet Union, the promised land where the working class was said to be in power and a new society was in progress. Uhtua in Karelia became Johan and his wife Hildur's new home.[1]

However, the emigration to the "socialist paradise" ended in disaster. Some of his comrades in the SKP (Swedish Communist Party) on the boat perished in the Great Terror: Ernst Eriksson-Kalla, Soviet citizen since 1937, was executed in 1938, his wife Hilma died in the Gulag in 1941.[2] Others disappeared – maybe they were executed, died in the Gulag, or survived somewhere in the enormous Soviet Union, deported to unknown places far away. Others still, like Johan and Hildur, managed to return to their former homeland, Sweden.

Following years of xenophobic propaganda, in 1937 the Soviet regime launched an attack on all foreign citizens living in the country. Thus, the NKVD, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs,[3] made official visits to Swedish homes and handed over orders of expulsion. Many had expired passports, were born in Russia, or lived with partners and children who were Soviet citizens. How could they escape the terror?

Decisive for their homecoming were the efforts by the diplomats at the Swedish Legation[4] in Moscow and the Consulate in Leningrad (closed by the Soviet authorities in 1938). Not all of those who wished to go back to Sweden succeeded. How many failed is difficult to say. Those who could not get in contact with the Legation are probably not visible in the archives. The diplomats had no official records of all Swedish citizens in the vast Soviet Union, just lists of the few Swedes who had announced their arrival. The communists on the *Proletarii* and other radical workers in the early 1930s were not interested in the old, capitalist "homeland". They wanted to build the future. Contacts with the Swedish diplomats did not seem necessary.

Theory and analysis

This rescue operation of Swedish citizens during the peak of the Stalinist terror has so far not been scientifically analysed. To understand how this mostly unknown diplomatic operation could be arranged, various factors must be discussed, theoretically and empirically. Aspects of the accessible sources, judicial limits for the diplomats in the Soviet Union and the importance of citizenship are all decisive factors.

The concept of *strategic moral diplomacy* has been used for studies in various fields – international economic aid, aid to

Hilma Eriksson-Kalla with daughters Astrid and Alice in Pongoma, northern Karelia, in 1941.

SOURCE: KAA ENEBERG

The Lindberg family was among the group of Swedish citizens who emigrated from Kiruna to the USSR. They lived in what was called "The Swedish house" in Kirovsk (Hibinogorsk) between 1933 and 1935.

SOURCE: KAA ENEBERG

refugees and victims of natural catastrophes.[5] The central thesis is that moral issues in international conflicts often are misunderstood. Two sides with different moral thinking fail to form a dialogue. Strict application of moral rules without understanding the moral universe of the other is not a fruitful strategy. This is not the same as relativism, argues political scientist Lyn Boyd-Judson. The term "strategic" tells us that the goal is still to get as much as possible from the opposite side.

In some cases there were different opinions among Swedish diplomats working with distressed individuals in the Soviet Union, compared to the higher civil servants in Stockholm. This links up with the concept *emotions*. Political scientist Christian Reus-Smit argues that "until recently, International Relations scholars have turned a stubborn blind eye to the nature and role of emotions in world politics. Structuralism, materialism, and rationalism have all encouraged this neglect". To sum up: emotions are politically consequential.[6]

IN ANALYSING the rescue operation four questions therefore will be posed: 1) What did the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Legation, the Consulate, and the Centre in Stockholm) know about the Soviet Swedes? Which sources were available in getting the information? 2) What were the legal limits of the diplomatic efforts? How important was the issue of citizenship when discussing cases with the Soviet authorities? 3) Were there any discrepancies – morally or politically – between the Legation/Consulate in one hand and the Ministry in Stockholm in the other? 4) What did the diplomats achieve during this extremely difficult period with massive terror in the Soviet Union?

The rescue operation took place in the middle of the Great Terror, when the Soviet government also limited the possibilities of diplomatic work.[7] Almost the entire staff of the Legation in Moscow became occupied with helping their fellow countrymen back to Sweden.[8]

Previous studies

The cruel fate of minorities in the Great Terror, especially in the western parts of the Soviet Union, has been studied internationally in recent decades. Less is known of the often tragic fate of foreign nationals, although foreign communists working for the Comintern in Moscow have attracted attention.[9]

Swedish historian Lennart Samuelson and Russian scholars Oleg Ken and Aleksandr Rupasov have observed that in 1937–1938, Swedish diplomats were working under tremendous pressure. The Soviet side denied visas to newly appointed diplomats, disregarded the principle of the inviolability of the diplomatic bag, arrested Soviet citizens who were employed by the Swedish authorities, and disrupted the consular service.[10]

There are still only a few studies of the Swedes living in the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the millennium, journalist Kaa

> "THE RESCUE OPERATION TOOK PLACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GREAT TERROR, WHEN THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ALSO LIMITED THE POSSIBILITIES OF DIPLOMATIC WORK."

Eneberg published several books on communist emigration, especially from the county of Norrbotten ("Kiruna Swedes").[11] Her studies can be seen as pioneer works, still not surpassed by academic historians. She chiefly described the emigrants and their situation in the Soviet Union, especially in Karelia, also using Soviet archives. The diplomatic efforts were just briefly mentioned. Without diminishing Eneberg's important contributions, this also concealed the magnitude of the citizenship issue when discussing the situation for Swedes in the Soviet Union.

In another study, Anders Gustafson emphasizes that the fate of the Swedes in Karelia was related to the ongoing conflict between the red Finns (former refugees from the civil war in 1918) and the Russians, supported by the Soviet central government/NKVD.[12]

Most studies of Nordic emigration have focused on the oppression against Finns in Karelia.[13] However, not much is known of possible diplomatic efforts. The Finns who had kept their citizenship had to travel to Helsinki to extend their passports. Luckily some of them had American or Canadian passports.[14] The relations between Finland and the Soviet Union were tense, especially due to the landscape of Karelia, a huge border zone divided between the two countries, representing west and east.[15]

Despite the broad similarities between Sweden and Finland, on a scale classifying ethnic groups victimized by the Great Terror, Sweden and Finland should be placed at opposite ends. The Finns were massively subjected to the repression – arrests, deportations, and executions. In just one year, from July 1937 to August 1938, NKVD arrested 9 250 Karelians. 33 per cent of them were Finns, despite their share of the population in Karelia only amounting to 3 per cent. Most of those arrested (83 per cent) were shot.[16]

The national operations in focus

A deeper analysis of the terror mechanisms cannot be presented here. A short summary of the Bolsheviks in power must suffice. Since 1917, Soviet society had been characterized by violence and repression. Originally, researchers into the violence in Soviet history were mainly occupied with enemies like counterrevolutionaries, kulaks, White officers, dissenting socialists, liberals, and former civil servants in the tsarist governments. The brutal collectivization of agriculture from 1929, with hundreds of thousands of victims, has also been analyzed to some degree.

The ethnic character of a considerable part of the regime's deeds was also known, but research has mostly dealt with the deportations of, among others, Germans, Poles, Koreans, Kurds, and Finns. They continued during the war – Germans along the Volga River (1941, 330 000) and the Crimean Tatars in 1944.[17] However, in the last 15–20 years, studies of the ethnic angle have contributed to a clearer picture of the comprehensive terror system.[18] The operations against ethnic groups were built on collective guilt, not even on fabricated accusations of individuals.

Soviet dictator Josef Stalin (center) and Soviet secret-police head Nikolai Yezhov (right) walk near Moscow in 1937, the same year Yezhov signed Order No. 00447, which began the Great Terror.

PHOTO: STATE MUSEUM
OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF RUSSIA

The *national operations* were especially severe in relation to minorities living along the borders, but all Soviet citizens of various foreign origins, whether counted in millions or in thousands, could be subjected to the terror. Some had been residents in Russia for centuries, others were refugees from Germany or other dictatorships. Many exiled communists working in the Communist International in Moscow were also among the victims. At the same time the "ordinary" suppression was continued, often mixed with the ethnic terror.[19]

THE PURGES WERE preceded by intensive propaganda campaigns in the state-controlled media. Whole nationalities were accused of spying. It became very dangerous to write letters to foreign countries, or to relatives in the former homeland. Membership of international organisations was extremely suspect. Studying the artificial language of *esperanto*, originally a manifestation of the internationalism of the labor movement, could end in the Gulag, or worse. Likewise, collecting foreign stamps was dangerous.[20]

The Great Terror in 1937 began as mass repression of formerly targeted groups accused of anti-Sovietism – members of opposition parties, officers and soldiers of the White armies – but was soon transformed to ethnic cleansing. Step by step, national operations were put into effect. The census of 1937 and the introduction of compulsory passports for domestic travel had already

"WHOLE NATIONALITIES WERE ACCUSED OF SPYING. IT BECAME VERY DANGEROUS TO WRITE LETTERS TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES, OR TO RELATIVES IN THE FORMER HOMELAND."

strengthened the control of all individuals. In April 1937, directive 26 of the NKVD was issued. It obliged local operatives "to detect and remove from the USSR all foreign nationals, who in one way or another were suspected of espionage".[21]

Still more brutal was the NKVD order 00439 (July 25, 1937), the German operation, approved of by Stalin four days earlier. At first all Germans in the defence, electricity, chemical and building industries were arrested. Then the suppression was extended to German dominated areas. The Polish operation (NKVD order 00485, August 9, 1937) followed the same pattern. Soon almost all inhabitants of Polish descent were targeted, including friends, family members and children. Approximately 122 000 Germans and 111 000 Poles were executed.[22]

After suppressing these two major ethnic minorities other groups followed: Koreans, Chinese, Latvians, Estonians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Romanians, Iranians, Afghans, Finns, and smaller nationalities. All of them had some settlements where they were in majority. Apart from Gammalsvenskby in Ukraine, there were no districts or villages dominated by Swedish people, and most of the Swedes in Gammalsvenskby had been allowed to move to Sweden in 1929.[23]

By denying the extension of work or residence permits, staying became impossible for foreign citizens. If orders were not obeyed, the foreigners were arrested, risking the Gulag or execu-
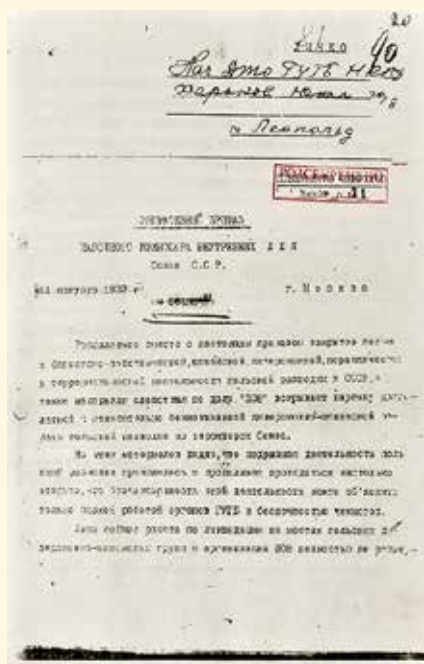
The Soviet NKVD Order No. 00485 (left) was an anti-Polish ethnic cleansing campaign issued on August 11, 1937, which laid the foundation for the systematic elimination of the Polish minority in the Soviet Union between 1937 and 1938. Approximately 111 000 Poles were executed by the NKVD. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

tion without trial. The executions were decided by a *troika* – a three-man meeting of the local NKVD chief, the local prosecutor, and the party secretary.[24] Paradoxically the authorities tried to cleanse the country from "dangerous elements" (all foreigners), but in practice it was very difficult to go back to the home country, due to the totalitarian communist system. Lack of foreign exchange, limited possibilities of buying tickets on international trains, and closed communications with relatives and authorities in the homeland worked in the other direction. By NKVD order 00693 (October 10, 1937) all embassies, legations and consulates were classified as spy nests. All Soviet citizens who contacted or visited them were to be arrested.[25]

Executions by quota

The national operations ended in October 1938. But the "ordinary terror"[26] continued, and the NKVD orders were still valid. Number 00447 (July 30, 1937) had extended the terror. Quotas for every district were decided at the central level, meaning that numbers of arrested as well as numbers of executed were settled beforehand. Generally, all the quotas were filled successfully.[27] One could say that this was one of the few examples in the history of the Soviet Union where centralized plans were exceeded.

Citizens of countries not bordering on the Soviet Union – Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Great Britain, etc. – were not made subjects of the extensive ethnic purges. Normally they were ordered to leave the Soviet Union (or change citizenship). However, there are many examples of victims from these countries too.[28] And the severe penalties for ex-Swedish citizens visiting the Legation were still valid. Wives, children, and relatives were also seen as guilty.

One of many Swedes affected was Hilda Maria Kafadshjy, née Jönsson, born in Lund 1886. She arrived in Russia in 1906 and married a Russian citizen who died in 1922. In a letter to the Legation (January 12, 1939) she listed nearly all the common problems: As a foreign citizen she had lost her job at a medical clinic in Tashkent. She had been ordered to leave the Soviet Union in a couple of weeks, or to apply for Soviet citizenship. The only alternative was going home. However, due to rigorous exchange regulations, she could neither bring foreign currency when leaving, nor exchange to Western currencies when travelling. With the Legation's help, she returned to Sweden in 1939.[29]

Karl Albin Ekstedt was born in Baku in 1902. A foreign citizen like his brother Fritz Erhard, he therefore also lost his employment. Their father Fritz [Hjalmar Ossian] Ekstedt had been working at the Nobel factory even after its nationalization by the Soviet authorities. He was now retired, with a small Soviet pension. Without the allowances from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, he would have been living on the knife-edge of survival. The two generations of Ekstedts, including other family members, wanted to go to Sweden as soon as possible. One problem was their Russian/Soviet born wives. As they were married to Swedish citizens they were allowed to settle in Sweden. However, in the Soviet Union they generally were classified as Soviet citizens. As such their chances of getting an exit visa were small. Only by cancellation of their Soviet citizenship would it be possible to leave the country.[30]

Not only "Kiruna Swedes"

Johan and Hildur Johansson and Ernst Eriksson-Kalla represent what is commonly understood of Swedes in the Soviet Union during the 1930s: workers from the north of Sweden, arriving in the 1920s and early 1930s, ideologically tied to the international communist movement. Kafadshjy and the Ekst-

Several Swedish children went to school in Uhtua, Karelia.

SOURCE: KAA ENEBERG

edt family represent something else, and contrary to earlier research, more ordinary Soviet-Swedes. Nearly 700 adults of Swedish origin can be found in the archives, mentioned as inhabitants in the Soviet Union for shorter or longer periods in the 1920s and 1930s.[31] A rough estimation is that only 15–20 per cent of them were organized communists. Some of the workers emigrating to the Soviet Union obviously embraced a more general appreciation of the "Worker's state", without taking an active part in politics. Generally, they are not included in the communist group.

The 1926 Soviet census had registered 2 495 Swedes living in the country. By "Swedes" the statistical surveys meant persons with Swedish as their mother tongue.[32] Accordingly, many from Kiruna were classified as Finns, and Finland-Swedish people in Finland as Swedes. However, most of this population left the country in a couple of years or became Soviet citizens. In the latter cases, all contacts with the Swedish authorities often came to an end. Apart from the immigration of Swedes around 1930, the small Swedish population probably vanished in the vast crowd of Russians/Soviet peoples.

A THOROUGH ANALYSIS of all relevant volumes in the Swedish Riksarkivet makes it possible to present a more comprehensive view. The Swedish population can be divided in at least six different groups. However, the exact numbers of the various groups are uncertain. More important is the existence of different groups of Swedes, and the circumstances that affected each group respectively.

1 *The communists*, generally called the "Kiruna Swedes", although not all of them came from Kiruna or the county of Norrbotten. Not all of them were party members, but at least 105–110 organized communists can be found in the material. Many of them came to live in Uhtua in the north of Karelia, as many Finns did, building a road to Kem on the White Sea.[33]

2 The *engineers* (45–50). Some of them were born to Swedish parents in Russia or had emigrated to the Soviet Union in the 1920s when technical specialists from various countries were recruited to the growing industry. Probably their enthusiasm for the Soviet system was weaker.

3 Besides the engineers, various occupations by *Russian born* men and women who kept their Swedish passports are represented: sewer, filer, instrument maker, housepainter, clerk, actress, foreman and many others.

4 *Widows* of deceased Swedish men, or divorcées, constituted a group with special problems. At least 20 of them are represented in the material. It seems that especially Russian-born women lived under difficult conditions. There were also widows born in Sweden who sometimes received help from relatives in Sweden or allowances from the Swedish authorities. 10–12 women regularly received such economic support from Stockholm. Due to deaths or returns to Sweden, in 1938 the group had been reduced to 5–6.[34]

5 The *Swedes in Baku* (Ekstedt and other families) can be classified as a special group. The families mostly consisted of a male Swedish-born worker in the former Nobel factory and a woman born in Russia who was a Soviet citizen, as well as the children.

6 Some of the emigrants (at least 65) became *Soviet citizens*, due to loyalty to communism, some social benefits, or by persuasion or pressure. Not surprisingly, most of them had been

members of the SKP. (Membership of the Soviet party, CPSU, demanded Soviet citizenship).

IN ADDITION TO these groups an unknown number of Swedes who had been Russian citizens before 1917 or became Soviet citizens in the 1920s probably lived in the country. More seldom they maintained contacts with the Swedish authorities or distant relatives in Sweden.

By showing the different groups of Swedes in the Soviet Union, different in background, living conditions and political connections, the difficult task for the diplomats becomes more visible. All Swedish citizens had the same legal rights: Russian-born widows without any knowledge of Swedish, as well as immigrants from the 1930s; individuals of Swedish descent in several generations, as well as enthusiastic communists fulfilling their dreams of the future in sharp contrast to what they called "capitalist oppression" in their homeland.

Nationality lists

An important discovery by the author is the lists of Swedish nationals kept by the Legation and the Consulate respectively. Names and personal information were entered when someone reported on arrival in the Soviet Union or contacted the Swedish authorities while already living in the country. These nationality lists ("Nationalitetsmatriklar") were continuously filled with current notes, more and more concerning the wishes of traveling "home" to Sweden, although some of them had never been in Sweden or had any knowledge of the language.

Originally, in the 1920s, the lists only contained 10–15 names each, a very small proportion of the Swedes in the country.[35] Due to the arrival of the Kiruna Swedes around 1930 the lists were expanded. However, the many new names in 1937–1938 were not the result of additional Swedish immigrants, but of the growing hardship for all foreign nationals. The Leningrad list in 1938–1939 contained 94 adults, the Moscow list 209.

In the nationality lists following columns were used: Registration number – date of registration – surname and all first names – profession – date of birth – place of birth – civil status – year leaving Sweden – last residence in Sweden – residence in the Soviet Union – date of issue of Swedish passport – remarks. The last column is especially useful for the historian, with sometimes detailed remarks on citizenship, passport, children, return to Sweden or death. Arrests, sentences or deportations are also noted, given the seemingly ordinary bureaucratic lists a sense of the oppression that affected not only the small groups of Swedes, but millions of people.

These lists came to be the most important tools for the diplomats. With the basic information, various lists of the most urgent cases also were made.[36] After World War II with all turmoil in the Soviet Union the old usage of nationality lists seems to have come to an end. Instead, more informal lists of disappeared Swedes or citizens still trying to get permission to leave the Soviet Union were used.

The nationality lists clearly demonstrate the importance of citizenship and more will be said of that later. That Swedes who

The article in *Pravde* July 9, 1937 portraits Rickard Sandler favorable when arriving to Moskva, "Прибытие в Москву министра иностранных дел Швеции господина Сандлера" [Sweden's Foreign Minister comes to Moscva].

Eric Gyllenstierna (left) was minister at the Legation in Moscow up to January 1938, when Wilhelm Winther (right) took over.

Information about Swedes in the USSR can be found in the Incoming diary (Inkommande diarium) from the Swedish Legation in Moscow, 1938.

SOURCE: RIKSARKIVET STOCKHOLM

had been Soviet citizens still remained on the lists is important for our understanding of the diplomatic work. Ex-citizens could apply for renewal of Swedish citizenship, although the chances of gaining permission to give up Soviet citizenship were small. However, for the diplomats, Swedish nationals of different kinds as well as ex-citizens were all included in their diplomatic duties, although the latter group was difficult to help, due to the Soviet legal system.

The diplomats and their sources

After WW I, the Swedish foreign ministry had been considerably strengthened. In 1924 the Legation in Moscow was opened, illustrating the Swedish recognition of the young Soviet state. A consulate in Leningrad also started its work.

Eric Gyllenstierna was minister at the Legation in Moscow up to January 1938, when Wilhelm Winther took over. Both were career diplomats, with many years of experience in other countries. Equally important was the press attaché Nils Lindh.[37] He had been correspondent of the Swedish daily the *Social-Democrat* in Russia 1917–1920, had a complete mastery of Russian and could occasionally supplement his diplomatic reports with extensive analyses of the political situation. He had learnt how to find important facts even in the state-controlled Soviet press. Lindh's competence was especially useful when Swedish foreign minister Rickard Sandler visited the Soviet Union in 1937. In 1938 he was promoted to councillor of the Legation. Two secretaries of the Legation, one military attaché, one clerk and some local employees (chauffeur, kitchen staff) also worked at the Legation.

In Stockholm the Foreign ministry was headed by the Social Democrat Rickard Sandler, up to December 1939 when a broad four-party government replaced the Social Democratic/Agrarian coalition. Other civil servants of importance for the Soviet relations were Erik Boheman, under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, Östén Undén, professor and expert in international law, Hans Gustaf Beck-Friis, head of the political department and Gösta Engzell, councillor of foreign affairs and head of the legal department. Later Magnus Hallenborg took over the legal department.[38]

Government instructions stated that diplomats abroad had three duties: [39]

> **The head of the Legation and the Consul should in each field of action respectively, protect Swedish interests, promote its trade and industry, and give** *assistance to Swedish citizens* **(the author's italics).**

Formally read, the instruction could be interpreted to mean that helping *former* citizens was not parts of their duties. However, it has already been pointed out that the Swedes they tried to help included both citizens and former citizens.

HOW DID THE SWEDISH diplomats get the information necessary for their work? The value of the nationality lists was totally dependent on the quality of the information received.

- *Letters from Swedes* in the vast Soviet Empire were important, but too often frightened Swedish citizens contacted the legation/consulate only when their expulsion date was near. Ex-citizens were not allowed to visit any Swedish authority, and sending letters were also dangerous.
- *Homecoming Swedes* could sometimes give information on neighbors or friends in the Soviet Union. However, the repression of recent years had increased the isolation and the fear of dangerous contacts with so-called suspected people. Another problem was that some of the returnees could have acted as informers, maybe as a price to pay for getting their exit visa. Who was a victim? Who was a perpetrator? In the politicized milieu, silence seemed to be the natural strategy for the returning Swedes.
- *Relatives or friends in Sweden* frequently applied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, requesting enquires about missing people in the Soviet Union.
- In 1931–1932 the *local government in Kiruna* granted allowances to 31 unemployed workers, ready to emigrate to the Soviet Union. A document confirming the employment was requested. That made the emigration of maybe 50–60 individuals possible.[40]
- Contacts with *other diplomats* in Moscow could be useful. Reports to Stockholm were written on persecuted Iranians, Turks, Greeks, Germans, and French people.[41] Finnish diplomats reported how a group of Finnish citizens they had taken care of were arrested just outside the Legation. Another group were nearly caught when taking a short ride in a car outside the diplomatic yard. These episodes illustrate that foreign citizenship could not prevent the NKVD from arresting anybody – probably more so for the Finnish people.[42]
- The *Narkomindel*, formally NKID (The People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs), informed the Swedish Legation about Swedes who had become Soviet citizens. Information on arrested Swedish citizens was also given to some extent.

"The prison of the peoples"[43]

Extension of passports was a routine matter for Swedish diplomats. The amount of this kind of activity expanded noticeably in 1937–1938. The main reason was the Soviet law that individuals living in the country without a valid foreign passport and other documents were classified as Soviet citizens.[44] In the law of 1931, *Instructions on Entry and Exit from the USSR*, Soviet citizens could only be permitted to travel abroad in *exceptional cases*.[45] In other words: Not observing that your passport had run out could make your Swedish citizenship invalid. As a citizen of the Soviet Union, you were not allowed to visit any foreign legation, embassy, or consulate. And the chances of returning to your homeland were small.

Besides invalid passports, ex-citizens' desire to resume Swedish citizenship became a problematic issue for the diplomats. Ex-citizens could not regain Swedish citizenship simply by announcing that they wished to become Swedish again. An application had to be approved by the Swedish authorities. In the late 1930s, this procedure was facilitated. To make it easier to get new passports the Legation was permitted to issue provisional pass-

ports, but still on condition of documents verifying that Soviet citizenship had been cancelled. That was the problem.

By Swedish law, Russian-born wives or widows of Swedish men were seen as Swedish due to the husband's nationality. However, by Soviet law normally their citizenship had to be dissolved before an exit visa could be issued. That was arranged rather often, sometimes even during the Great Terror in 1937–1938. If dissolution was denied, the Swedish diplomats had only limited chances to help them.

The wives had no problem getting permission to stay in Sweden. Visiting Sweden with a Soviet passport was also possible. *Entry* visas were issued accordingly. But *exit* visas were also needed. Entering in Sweden became easier for the Swedes but getting out of the Soviet Union more difficult.

The diplomats at work

By a closer examination of a couple of cases, the diplomatic work will be scrutinized. Although some of them look similar, the differences are helpful in grasping why some Swedes could return home, while others were not so lucky. This chapter will focus on themes mentioned earlier: In which cases were the diplomatic efforts successful? How could they act when Swedes had become Soviet citizens? Were there any discrepancies – morally or politically – between the Legation/Consulate and the Ministry in Stockholm?

In the 1920s and early 1930s, in several cases the Swedish diplomats could assist their citizens in different ways. Some of them were able to return to Sweden thanks to the help from the Legation and the Consulate.[46] More difficult, or rather impossible, was helping people sentenced by courts, either for political or other crimes.

AN EARLIER (1930–1931) successful case is that of the Swedish citizen Yngve Rosell. He was employed by a chemical trust and had been arrested for alleged economic sabotage. That was a common accusation when the first five-year plan met various obstacles. Managers and other executives became obvious scapegoats. The party's plans could not just be wrong. In the end, Rosell was released and sent home to Sweden.[47]

Michael (Michail) Harteveld, born in Kiev, was accused of counterrevolutionary activities and sentenced to ten years in prison by a military court in 1936. As he was a Swedish citizen, the Legation was informed of his arrest. His father, music professor Wilhelm Harteveld, tried with the help of Swedish diplomats to assist Michael, but to no avail. Considering the serious charge, maybe the diplomatic efforts at least saved him from the death penalty: a penalty increasingly used in the following years.[48] Information on the imprisoned Michael is sparse in the material. A memorandum in 1939 mentions that a friend of his had reported that Michael was alive, but this was difficult to corroborate. In 1956 he was still on the list of dis-

Chicago born engineer Ben Georg Kvelms and his Swedish born wife Selma Teresia were arrested in 1938 after applying to leave the Soviet Union, accused of counterrevolutionary activities. After several intents, minister Winther managed to get them out of the country in 1939. Ben Georg Kvelms later became successful in the field of wood gas, a trade that he had learned during his years in the USSR.

appeared Swedes in the Soviet Union.[49] The Memorial data base, however, states that he died in Vorkuta-Gulag in 1942.[50]

Equal rights or tactical behaviour?

Ben Georg Kvelms and his wife Selma Teresia recur many times in the records. His background was international: He was born in Chicago in 1896 to parents of German nationality originally from Russia. Kvelms became a naturalized Swedish citizen. The reason for that is not to be found in the material, but like his wife he had a valid Swedish passport.

After deciding to leave the Soviet Union, in the summer of 1937 the couple obtained their Soviet exit visa. However, before leaving the Soviet Union Kvelms was arrested (February 17, 1938), and some weeks later his wife (March 7, 1938).[51] That was the start of a long process. The Soviet authorities maintained that Kvelms already had confessed their deeds: counterrevolutionary activities.

Knowing that children of arrested "enemies of the people" usually were sent to orphanages with military discipline and poor standards, the Legation decided to find the daughter, 12-year-old Margot, and send her to Sweden. After some trouble the Soviet authorities issued an exit visa for her. She left the Soviet Union in May 1938. In February 1939, after ten written official requests and 25 oral demarches from the diplomats, her parents at last were released and could reunite with their daughter in Sweden.[52]

Minister Winther seemed very proud of himself when later relating the success,[53] and that was without doubt a happy end-

> **"ENTERING IN SWEDEN BECAME EASIER FOR THE SWEDES BUT GETTING OUT OF THE SOVIET UNION MORE DIFFICULT."**

ing. But the Kvelms' case also illustrates the norm of secrecy. Generally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept the homecoming Swedes hidden from publicity. The diplomats were convinced that publicity could complicate further actions. The press and Swedish Broadcasting did not use what nowadays is called "investigative journalism". Winther let the press know that reports on the case were not welcomed. That was also explained to the Kvelms themselves.[54] All that resulted in a nearly total lack of media reports on what was going on with Swedes in the Soviet Union. This strict policy of silence did not end here. Four years later, in a letter to Ben Kvelms, Magnus Hallenborg, head of the law department, explained that publishing their experiences in Soviet Russia was not in the interest of the country.[55]

The politically motivated secretiveness in the communist milieu in Kiruna, the weak media cover and the tactical secretiveness of the Ministry contributed to the silence that remained for many years.

ANOTHER ASPECT of the Kvelms case touches the fate of two women, Rika Gawatin and Käthe Güssfeldt-Svensson. Both were Jewish, born in Germany, active communists – and Swedish citizens. Gawatin arrived in the Soviet Union in 1933, as she had received a Swedish passport when she married Leopold Gawatin. In 1936 Gawatin was arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison (April 4, 1938). Six months later, Güssfeldt-Svensson was also arrested. During a visit to Stockholm, she had married a young student/journalist, Gustaf Svensson.[56] However, he did not follow her to the Soviet Union and very little is mentioned of him in the records that for many years registered the two women in various lists of disappeared or imprisoned Swedes.

The Narkomindel maintained that their links to Sweden were shallow. The marriages were called "camouflage", and therefore the Swedish authorities had no right to engage in the cases. Hallenborg himself used the word "camouflage", when meeting Winther (April 9, 1938). This is one of the few examples of disputes on who the Swedish diplomats should help. Hallenborg argued that in some cases (Kvelms, Gawatin and Güssfeldt-Svensson) it was wiser "to keep a more passive attitude". The Legation should use strong words and activities only when Swedish-born individuals were arrested and unjustly treated. In these cases, stronger support from the Ministry in Stockholm and the Swedish opinion probably could be expected, Hallenborg maintained.[57]

Principally this was a divergence from the rule of law – the equal rights of all citizens. Neither Gyllenstierna nor Winther accepted Hallenborg's view. Gyllenstierna declared to the Soviet authorities that both women were Swedish citizens, therefore

Sweden had the full right to act. Camouflage or not was not an issue. The diplomats working in the field seem to have been more influenced by personal feelings. This could be seen as an example of the concept of *emotions*, but mixed with the concept of rule of law.

Later, in a letter to Boheman (December 2, 1938), Winther emphasized the importance of harsh words and behavior when discussing the cases with the Narkomindel. The same discussion can be found regarding British victims and whether their political antecedents would influence diplomatic concern.[58]

From diplomacy to the world of Kafka

Despite the Soviet dictatorship, continuing repression, and widespread bureaucracy, some kind of mutually satisfactory diplomatic relations existed between the Legation and the Soviet side. The Swedish diplomats were on speaking terms with the high civil servants responsible for Swedish affairs, especially Besjanov, head of the Balto-Scandinavian department in the Narkomindel. Another important person was Potemkin, deputy head of the Commissariat of foreign affairs. Both were soon to be replaced.

THIS KIND OF UNDERSTANDING – opposite points of departure creating congruent views on a solution – is what the concept *strategic moral diplomacy* refers to. Without doubt the Narkomindel and the Swedish diplomats represented different positions and interests. However, in this situation both were in favour of getting as many Swedes as possible out of the Soviet Russia. The communist state tried to cleanse the country of nearly all foreign nationals. The Swedish diplomats tried to save as many compatriots as possible from repression or starvation. The Swedes were not welcome any longer, but as a country not bordering on the Soviet Union and without substantial settlements in border areas, the Swedish inhabitants escaped being labelled spies and enemies to the Soviet state. Furthermore, very few Swedes held high positions in the government or in the Comintern. Earlier successful careers in the system increased the risk of being a victim of the same system in the 1930s.

Winther was upset when he informed Boheman of the situation in 1938. Thousands of innocent people had been arrested (He could have written millions). However, comparing with the citizens of other states "we have so far got off lightly". Obviously, the Soviet authorities generally chose expulsion instead of arrests, Winther added.[59] However, step by step the diplomatic work became more difficult. In the spring of 1938, all consulates of Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Afghanistan, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden were closed. The United States

> **"DESPITE THE SOVIET DICTATORSHIP, CONTINUING REPRESSION, AND WIDESPREAD BUREAUCRACY, SOME KIND OF MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS EXISTED BETWEEN THE LEGATION AND THE SOVIET SIDE."**

were permitted to keep their consulates, Japan had to close five of its nine and Poland kept two consulates.[60]

IN A REPORT TO STOCKHOLM (November 16, 1938) Lindh stated that civil rights matters had become increasingly difficult to handle. The Narkomindel had declared that former Swedish citizens should contact the Soviet authorities, like all other Soviet citizens. Previously, Lindh explained, various cases had been benevolently received. Such cases had not been seen as interference in Soviet affairs. From now on, the Narkomindel even refused to receive a note or listen to an oral message. Questions were not answered, currents matters were sent to other parts of the department, and then back again, recalling the experiences of Josef K in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* rather than Weber's rational bureaucracy. The strategic moral diplomacy that had benefited both sides was not working anymore. Lindh maintained that surely the NKVD prevented tendencies to softness in the Narkomindel.[61]

The extension of the terror had wiped out diplomatic flexibility. Gyllenstierna and Winther had sometimes been allowed to meet the foreign minister, the veteran diplomat Maxim Litvinov.[62] Now however, his position was weakened and in 1939 he was to be replaced by Molotov. And then came the outbreak of World War II. Some cases were still under investigation by the Swedish diplomats, but continuous work could not be initiated again before the end of the war in 1945.

The diplomatic actions — a conclusion

What can be said of the diplomatic efforts? Some Swedes were executed, others sent to the Gulag where most of them perished, and quite a few disappeared, at least from the diplomat's sight. So -accordingly a failure? That would be an unfair judgement.

Approximately 700 (adults) Swedes are mentioned in the archives as living in Russia/the Soviet Union for shorter or longer periods between 1920 and 1940. This is a minimum number. Many surely lived without contact with Swedish authorities, with or without Swedish passports. Swedish citizens returning to – or arriving for the first time in – Sweden roughly amount to 270–280. Again, many other may have returned without notice of the Swedish authorities. And not all the Swedes needed any help, especially in the 1920s. However, when the terror escalated, many more Swedish people, citizens or ex-citizens, tried to leave the Soviet Union. And in these cases, diplomatic help could make the difference between life and death.

The journalist Kaa Eneberg mentions critically in an article that the Swedish authorities were "helpless" when they received great many letters or other entreaties for help.[63] Probably she was influenced by letters in the archives from the 1930s, and maybe later accounts from relatives. Many in Sweden were disappointed when relatives or friends were not found or could not be rescued. Especially the Kiruna Swedes, the most dedicated communists, became victims of repression. One reason is that they had changed to Soviet citizenship to a larger extent. Thus, the Swedish diplomats had no formal right to intervene.

This can be illustrated by a document in the Legation archive (dated December 28, 1938).[64] The list contains ex-Swedes that wanted to resume their Swedish citizenships and return to Sweden. What happened to the persons on the list?

Ekeskog, Agnes	Resumed Swedish citizenship 1938. Unknown fate
Eriksson, Hilma G,	Labour camp, died 1941
Hansson, Per Olof Adolf	Died in the war
Heikkinen, Eino (wife deceased)	Sweden 1940.[65]
Holma, Isak Einar	Returned to Sweden in 1938, very emaciated.
Holma, Laila Maria (wife)	Sweden 1938
Hult-Eskola, Nanna	Labour camp, Sweden 1975, later back to USSR
Hägglund, Olof	Investigations fruitless
Jaako, Karl Oskar,	Sweden 1940
Jaako, Selma (wife)	Sweden 1940
Johansson, Hanna	Sweden 1939
Johansson, Bertil (son)	Sweden 1939
Keskitalo, Valdemar	Evacuated 1941, unknown fate
Kopylova, Maria	Move to Sweden in 1939 cancelled. Unknown fate.
Krikortz, Hans	Executed, possibly Soviet citizen.
Krikortz, Svea (wife)	Possibly stayed in the USSR as Soviet citizen.
Lehtinen, Elina	Case 1939. Unknown fate.
Lindberg, Rut Ingeborg	Divorced. Remarried Soviet citizen. Stayed in the USSR.
Markstedt, Yngve Emanuel	Killed in the war?
Markstedt, Oskar	Sweden 1938
Miller, Axel	Sweden in the 1950s, after ten years in the Gulag.
Miller, Irja	Sweden in the 1950s
Niemi, Bodolf	Remained in the USSR, survived the war
Nyström, Bror	Sweden 1939, sentenced for Soviet espionage
Olsson, Oscar	Disappeared during or after the war
Pohjanen, Johan Kristian	Received Swedish passport in 1939, but disappeared
Remusjeva, Signe	Ex-husband B Niemi. Remarried arrested Soviet citizen
Sandels, Axel	Naturalized Swedish citizen. Sweden 1935
Sandels, Tatjana (wife)	Russian-born. Executed

Regarding the difficulties of getting ex-citizens home and the increasing terror, twelve returning ex-citizens could be seen as a good result. At the same time those executed, those who perished in the Gulag, and the many disappeared persons are testimonies of a totalitarian system. Just two cases of executions and one death in the Gulag in the list may seem positive. However, people known to have been executed did not belong on this kind of working list that was meant to find and help countrymen. By looking at other documents, a more extended list of Swedish victims could be made, although with many question marks.

HOWEVER, THE PURPOSE of this study is not to find all Swedish victims of the Soviet terror in the 1930s. Rather, it aims to analyze what Swedish diplomats did in helping citizens scared of execution, arrest, deportation, or other penalties.

Surprisingly, a kind of diplomatic understanding between the Legation and the Narkomindel survived in the early stages of the Great Terror. The Swedish group was not characterized as hostile, at least compared with many other ethnic groups. When almost all foreigners were ordered to leave the Soviet Union, generally the Swedes were expelled – not executed.

Swedish citizens with a valid passport had better chances of returning to Sweden. But as we have seen, arrests and executions also happened to them. The communist emigrants to the Soviet Union, the Kiruna Swedes, were harder hit by the repression, mostly due to the transition to Soviet citizenship, thereby making themselves subject to the Soviet system. Still, the lack of high positions in the Soviet party or the government, or in the Comintern, to some degree reduced the risk of being arrested. The diplomatic work was successful many times, but of course not always. As illustrated in the above list, the fate of many Swedes is unknown. The coming war, in particular, destroyed all traces of them.

Besides the efforts per se, the strict following of the rule of law by the Swedish side is impressive. All Swedes, including communists who were Soviet citizens, were to be helped. Not even a probable camouflage marriage prevented the diplomats from arguing for their citizens when discussing the cases with the Narkomindel.

FINALLY, AS ALREADY implied, the relatively small number of Swedish victims does not support an interpretation of a less repressive system. Repressions against all ethnic groups, whether Swedish citizens or ex-citizens, are equally dreadful from a human perspective. The Swedish victims were a very small part of the terror system that took place during those years, or rather since the Bolsheviks took power in 1917. By active diplomacy, and due to specific circumstances, many were rescued from the repression. At the same time there were also many victims. A preliminary count gives a figure of at least 100 Swedish victims of different categories. That number includes executed Swedish citizens or ex-citizens, those who died in camps, survivors of prison sentences, arrested wives of Swedish men with dual citizenship, those who disappeared or were deported under difficult circumstances and children of arrested parents sent to orphanages.

When the totalitarian Soviet Union attacked all foreigners, the detested capitalist system at home turned out to be a rescuing haven for many former emigrants to the communist system. That is also part of the conclusion. ⊠

Torbjörn Nilsson is a Professor Emeritus in History at the Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University.

references

1   Johan Johansson, R 67 Utvisningar konkreta fall, 1937–1938 [Deportations specific cases, 1937–1938], Konsulatarkiv Leningrad. RA (Arninge); P 96 Diverse biträde åt enskilda 1934–1938 [Various assistance to individuals 1934–1938], Konsulatarkiv Leningrad. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge); Lista svenska passagerare [List of Swedish passengers], *Proletarii* no. 6–8/10 vol. 2 (1933), Kaa Enebergs samling. RA (Arninge).

2   "The Great Terror" refers to the repression mainly in 1937–1938. "Gulag" as a term for the labour camps in the Soviet Union was first established in the 1970s. However, nowadays it is used in many languages and sufficiently widely known to justify its use here. Eriksson-Kalla: Kirunasvenskar. R 20 Er I, vol. 577, 1. (1939–1957). Ersättning understöd andra än sjömän. UD 1920 års dossiersystem. UD:s arkiv, RA (Marieberg) [Compensation support other than seamen. Foreign Ministry's 1920 dossier system], Eriksson-Kalla also came to the Soviet Union on the Proletarii in 1933.

3   NKVD, the former Tjeka and GPU, was responsible for the state security, thereby deeply involved in the brutal oppressions. In 1946 NKVD was reorganized into the KGB.

4   The term was used by smaller countries in the 1930s. After WW II embassy was generally used instead. There is no difference in status between the concepts.

5   Lyn Boyd-Judson, *Strategic Moral Diplomacy: Understanding the enemy´s moral universe* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2011).

6   Christian Reus-Smit, "Emotions and the social", *International Theory*, vol. 6, 3 (2014), 568–574.

7   Oleg Ken, Aleksandr Rupasov & Lennart Samuelson, *I stormaktspolitikens periferi: Sverige i Moskvas politik under 1930-talet* [On the periphery of great power politics: Sweden in Moscow's politics during the 1930s] (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2011), 114.

8   Winther 11/1 1939 Politisk rapport utrikes 4:e kvartal.D N:o 25/17. II. Övrigt, Sovjet (Er) HP 01 Politik allmänt. 1920 års dossiersystem 1918–1952 [Foreign Policy Report 4th quarter. D No. 25/17. II. Other, Soviet (Er) HP 01 Politics in general. 1920 dossier system 1918–1952], UD:s arkiv, RA (Marieberg). For a great help in orienting in the material of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see Örjan Romefors, *Utrikesförvaltningens källor 1520–2000* (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 2017).

9   Andrej Kotljarchuk, "Nordic fishermen in the Soviet Union: Ethnic purges and the Cleansing of the Cultural Landscape", in *The Barents and the Baltic Sea Region. Contacts, Influences and Social Change,* ed. K. Alenius & M. Enbuske (Rovaniemi: 2017); Kevin McDermott, "Stalinist Terror in the Comintern: New Perspectives", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1995): 111–130.

10   Ken, Rupasov & Samuelson, *I stormaktspolitikens periferi,* 114.

11   Kaa Eneberg, *Tvingade till tystnad*: *En okänd historia om några svenska familjeöden* [Forced to silence: An unknown story of some Swedish family fates] (Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Högberg, 2000); Kaa Eneberg,

Förnekelsens barn: *Svenskarna som drog österut* [Children of Denial: The Swedes Who Moved East] (Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Högberg, 2003)**;** Kaa Eneberg, *Knuts ask och Kejsaren av Karelen: Om den svenska Rysslandsfebern* [Knut's Ash and the Emperor of Karelia: About the Swedish Russia Fever] (Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Högberg, 2007).

12 Anders Gustafson, *Svenska sovjetemigranter: om de svenska kommunisterna och emigrationen till Sovjetunionen på 1920- och 1930-talen* [Swedish Soviet emigrants: on the Swedish communists and emigration to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s] (Linköping: Nixon, 2006), 119.

13 Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia: politics, planning and terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920–1939*. (London: Routledge, 2007); Nic Baron, "Production and Terror: The Operation of the Karelian Gulag, 1933–1939", *Cahiers du Monde russe*, no 1, vol 43 (2002), 139–80; Auvo Kostiainen, "Genocide in Soviet Karelia: Stalin´s Terror and the Finns of Soviet Karelia", *Scandinavian Journal of History* 21, no 4 (1996).

14 Alexey Golubev & Irina Takala, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado: Finnish immigration to Soviet Karelia from the United States and Canada in the 1930s* (East Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press, 2014); *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*, ed., Ronald Harpelle et. al (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 2004).

15 On Karelia and the Swedish and Finnish relations to the Soviet Union, see Torbjörn Nilsson & Andrej Kotljarchuk, "Svenskt och finskt i mörkt sovjetiskt 1930-tal" [Swedish and Finnish in the dark Soviet 1930s], *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* (2022), 454–482. Worth mentioning is also Francis Beckett, *Stalin´s British Victims* (London: Routledge, 2004).

16 Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 211.

17 For the deportations, see Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013); Otto J. Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937–1949*, Westport: Greenwood, 1999.

18 The national operations: J. Arch Getty & Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1999); Golubev & Takala, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado*; Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing", *Journal of Modern History*, vol 70, 4, (1998), 813–861; Norman Naimark, *Stalin´s Genocides*, (Princeton University Press, 2010), 99–120; David Shearer, *Policing Stalin´s Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924–1953* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009), 285–319.

19 The Communist International: Fridrikh Firsov, Harvey Klehr & John Earl Haynes, *Secret Cables of the Comintern, 1933–1943* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2014), 101–127; V. Kahan, "The Communist International 1919–1943: The Personnel of its Highest Bodies", *International Review of Social History*, no 2, (1976), 151–185; McDermott "Stalinist Terror in the Comintern", 111–130.

20 Esperanto: Getty & Naumov, *The Road to Terror*.

21 Paul M. Hagenloh, "´Socially harmful elements´ and the Great Terror", in *Stalinism: New Directions,* ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), 286–308; David Shearer, "Elements Near and Alien: Passportization, Policing and Identity in the Stalinist State, 1932–1952", *Journal of Modern History*, 76 (2004).

22 Paul M. Hagenloh, *Stalin´s Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926–1941* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 227–287; Getty & Naumov, *The Road to Terror*; David Hoffman, "*Cultivating the Masses. The Modern Social State* 1952", *Journal of Modern History*, 76 (2004), 295–305.

23 Andrej Kotljarchuk, *In the Forge of Stalin: Swedish Colonists of Ukraine in Totalitarian Experiments of the Twentieth Century* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2014); *The Lost Swedish Tribe: reapproaching the history of Gammalsvenskby in Ukraine*, ed. Piotr Wawrzeniuk & Julia Malitska (Huddinge: Södertörn University, 2014).

24 Hagenloh, *Stalin´s Police*, 206; Galina Mikhailovna Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System* (Armonk: Sharpe, 1997/2000).

25 Christopher Andrew & Julie Elkner, "Stalin and Foreign Intelligence", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 4:1 (2003), 69–94.

26 "Ordinary terror" or "ordinary repression" refer to the actions against different targets such as former political adversaries, priests, obstructive peasants and other groups that had been persecuted for many years.

27 J. Arch Getty, *Practicing Stalinism: Bolsheviks, Boyars, and the Persistence of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2013); Hagenloh*, Stalin´s Police*, 227.

28 On Britain: Beckett, *Stalin´s British Victims*

29 Kafadshyj: Utvisningar från Ryssland 1924–. R 67 Er I. Rättsärenden 1920-2002 [Deportations from Russia 1924–. R 67 Er I. Court cases 1920–2002], UD Huvudarkivet. RA (Arninge).

30 Swedes in Baku: Winther to Boheman, December 28 1938. F1f 111 1938–1956. Beskickningsarkiv 1918–1939 Moskva. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge).

31 Children included, maybe a thousand individuals. Information on the individuals can be found in many places in the Archive of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The Legation in Moscow, the Consulate in Leningrad and the central departement in Stockholm. Mentioning all of them would be confusing.

32 Gustafson, *Svenska Sovjetemigranter*.

33 Nilsson & Kotljarchuk, *Svenskt och finskt*; Golubev & Takala, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado*, 8–13. Uhtua is nowadays renamed Kalevala.

34 Förteckning över periodiska understödstagare. Kvarlåtsräkningar 1936–1938. Räkningar, ersättningar svenska medborgare[List of periodic aid recipients. Bequest accounts 1936–1938. Bills, allowances Swedish citizens], R 19–20 A, vol. 582. UD:s arkiv, RA (Marieberg).

35 The lists: Bengt Jangfeldt asserts that in 1921 140 Swedish citizens lived in Petersburg (Leningrad), and 40 in Moscow. Bengt Jangfeldt, "John Tuneld och svenska kyrkan i Petersburg", *Det evigt mänskliga: Humanismen inför 2000-talet* [The eternally human: Humanism for the 21st century], ed. Anders Björnsson (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1996).

36 R 49 Er. Rättshjälp i brottmål, Ryssland 1924–1947 I-III. Rättsärenden 1920–2002. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge); Utvisningar från Ryssland, 1924–. 91.Rättsärenden 1920–2002 [Legal aid in criminal cases, Russia 1924–1947 I-III. Court cases 1920–2002. Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RA (Arninge); Deportations from Russia, 1924–. 91. Court cases 1920–2002], UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge).

37 About Lindh**:** Wilhelm Carlgren, "Nils Lindh", in *Människan i historien och samtiden. Festskrift till Alf W Johansson* [Man in history and the present. Festschrift for Alf W Johansson], (Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Högberg, 2000); Peter Westlund, "'Sanningen'om Sovjetunionen. Rysslandskännaren Nils Lindhs möte med öst åren 1917–1938", in *Jag har sett framtiden och den fungerar inte. Journalisterna och främlingarna i* öst ["The Truth about the Soviet Union". Russia expert Nils Lindh's meeting with the East in the years 1917–1938", in I have seen the future and it does not work. The journalists and the strangers in the East], ed. Tom Olsson & Patrik Åker (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2002), 20–55.

38 UD:s kalender 1938. Sovjetunionen.

39 *Den svenska utrikesförvaltningens historia* [The history of the Swedish foreign administration], (Uppsala, 1935), 472 (translation by the author).

40 Gustaf Frank, *Kiruna 1900–1950. Minnesskrift* [Memoir], (Stockholm: Esselte, 1950), 233–249

41 Rapport Beskickningen Moskva, 26 maj 1938 Den främlingsfientliga rörelsen. D N:o 23/231. Sovjet (Er) HP 01 Politik allmänt II. Övrigt. 1920 års dossierssystem [Mission Moscow, May 26, 1938 The xenophobic movement. D No. 23/231. Soviet (Er) HP 01 Politics in general II. Miscellaneous. 1920 dossier system], UD:s arkiv, RA (Marieberg); Brev

Winther till Söderblom, 4/5 1938. Sovjet (Er) Politik allmänt. Hp 513 LXIII [Letter Winther to Söderblom, 4/5 1938. Soviet (Er) Politics in general. Hp 513 LXIII], UD:s arkiv, RA (Marieberg).

42 Brev Lindh till Söderblom, 13/7 1938. Sovjet (Er) HP 01 Politik allmänt. 1920 års dossiersystem 1918– [Letter Lindh to Söderblom, 13/7 1938. Soviet (Er) HP 01 Politics in general. 1920 dossier system 1918–], UD:s arkiv, RA (Marieberg); [Turkey] 5/1 1939. Sovjet (Er) Hp 01. Politik allmänt. DN:o 25/5. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge).

43 The phrase was used in the 19th century against Tsarist Russia. However, the Bolsheviks made the metaphor still more real.

44 Brev Folke Malmar till Gyllenstierna, 16/11 1932. R 32 A IV. F1g:30. Beskickningsarkiv Moskva [Letter Folke Malmar to Gyllenstierna, 16/11 1932. R 32 A IV. F1g:30. Mission Archives Moscow], UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge) (The case of K H Peterson). Folke Malmar, *Förlust och förvärv av svenskt medborgarskap* [Folke Malmar, Loss and acquisition of Swedish citizenship], (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1936).

45 Larisa P. Belkovets, "Inostrantsy v Sovetskoi Rossii: regulirovanie pravovogo polozheniya" [Foreigners in Soviet Russia: legal status], *Yuridicheskie issledovaniya* (2013), 220–284. (The author´s italics)

46 For example more unknown names as 1) Ture Abrahamsson and his wife Eva Matilda (b. Karlsson). They arrived to Leningrad in 1937, lived in Uhtua, Karelia, and returned in 1937 or 1938. 2) Anastasija Andersson (b. Sjilkin), former wife of Karl Andersson. After much bureaucratic trouble she obtained an exit visa and returned in 1938. 3) John Adolf Ludvig Ahlbom and his wife Maria (b. Koliesov). The couple lived in Vladivostok where she was born. In 1938 they went back to Sweden. Abrahamsson & Andersson: D Nationalitetsmatrikel 1937–1938. Vol. 76. Konsulatarkiv, Leningrad 1875–1939. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge). Ahlbom: D 1, Nationalitetsmatrikel, 1924–1938. Beskickningsarkiv, Moskva 1918–1939. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge).

47 Rosell: R 49 Rättshjälp i brottmål i Ryssland, 1920–1989. vol. 86 Er 1924–1947. Rättsärenden 1920–2002 [R 49 Legal aid in criminal cases in Russia, 1920–1989. Vol. 86 Your 1924–1947. Court cases 1920–2002], UD:s arkiv. RA (Arninge).

48 Michael Harteveld: F1f:111 1938–1956. Beskickningsarkiv 1918–1939 Moskva. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge); Rättshjälp i brottmål, Ryssland. I–III. Vol. 86. R 49 Rättsärenden 1920–2002. UD Huvudarkivet. RA (Arninge).

49 Michael Harteveld: 21/3 1956 PM angående vissa svenskar mm i Sovjetunionen. R 18 A/III/25. Beskickningsarkiv Moskva. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge).

50 Memorial

51 Probably the arrests were caused by the arrest of his brother Valter, American citizen, October 25, 1937. He was later executed.

52 Kvelms: R 49 Rättshjälp i brottmål i Ryssland, 1920–1989. Vol. 86 Er 1924–1947. Rättsärenden 1920–2002, UD:s arkiv. RA (Arninge)

53 Winther 21/2 1939 to E Å Åkerman, whose brother Per Yngve Åkerman was missing (he was executed). III. 1/2 1935–1/9 1940. Efterforskningar 1925–1949. Mål IV A. R 18. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge)

54 Kvelms to Heidenstam. R 49 Rättshjälp i brottmål i Ryssland, 1920–1989. Vol. 86 Er 1924–1947. Rättsärenden 1920–2002, UD:s arkiv. RA (Arninge).

55 Hallenborg t Kvelms 26/2 1943. R 49 Rättshjälp i brottmål i Ryssland, 1920–1989. III. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge)

56 Güssfeldt – Gawatin. Nils Lindh PM. R 49 Er. Rättshjälp i brottmål i Ryssland, 1920–1989 II. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge).

57 Hallenborg 28/4 1938. PM rörande samtal med envoyén Winther angående svenska medborgare i Sovjetryssland [PM concerning conversation with envoy Winther regarding Swedish citizens in Soviet Russia], R 49 Er. Rättshjälp brottmål utomlands, 1920–1989. UD:s arkiv RA (Arninge)

58 Gyllenstierna: PM Lindh R 49 Er Rättshjälp i brottmål i Ryssland. I–III.

RA. Winther: letter from Winther to Boheman 2/11 1938. R 49. Rättshjälp brottmål utomlands, 1920–1989. UD:s arkiv RA (Arninge). Beckett, *Stalin´s British Victims*, 69.

59 Winther to Boheman 2/11 1938. R 49. Rättshjälp brottmål utomlands, 1920-1989. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge)

60 Indragning utländska konsulat i Sovjetunionen [Withdrawal of foreign consulates in the Soviet Union] 8.2 1938. Diarier över PM. II. Övrigt. P 2 Er. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge)

61 Lindh to UD I Stockholm, 16/11 1938. F1g:28 Beskickningsarkiv Moskva, UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge)

62 Winther had met Litvinov during the NF-conference in Geneva 1939. In February 1939 Winther sent a letter to Litvinov.

63 Kaa Eneberg, "Recruitment of Swedish Immigrants to Soviet Karelia", in *Karelian Exodus. Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era,* eds. Ronald Harpelle et. al,, (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 2004), 189–200.

64 F1f:111 1938–1956. 28/12 1938. P-dossierer. Beskickningsarkiv, 1918–1939 Moskva. UD:s arkiv, RA (Arninge).

65 A Finn with the same name was executed on September 21 1938. He had received an entry visa to Sweden but was arrested before the trip.

The third act of the Bolshoi theatre version of *Mazepa* from 2021 is placed in 2014. On stage is a lone bus, burnt out after the bombing.

TCHAIKOVSKY'S *MAZEPA* IN THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR.

Rescuing a cultural hero for a sovereign nation

by **Liubov Kuplevatska**

abstract

This essay considers the myths surrounding the historical figure of Hetman Mazepa and their artistic expressions. More specifically, it compares and contrasts two recent stage versions of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's Mazepa opera by theaters in Kharkiv in 2017 and Moscow in 2021, at the time of the Russian military operations on the territory of Ukraine. The desire of Ukrainian directors to return honors to the national hero is opposed by the Russian interpretation of the image of Mazepa as an archetype of a traitor. The essay shows how the Ukrainian version updated the plot and liberated the Mazepa myth from Russian and Soviet imperial distortions, thereby connecting the opera's events with the contemporary struggle for a sovereign state. Meanwhile, underneath its modernist surface, the Russian version maintained the opera's age-old metropolitan view of Ukraine as inferior.

KEYWORDS: Mazepa, myth, national identity, opera version, Tchaikovsky.

Russia's undeclared war against Ukraine in 2014 gave new life to deep-seated cultural narratives in both countries about their mutual relationship. A particular point of contention concerns the historical significance of the hetman Ivan Mazepa (1639–1709), a military commander of the Zaporizhzhian Cossacks whose life has inspired literature, paintings, and music throughout Europe for more than 300 years. This essay considers the myths surrounding Mazepa and their artistic expressions in Russian and Ukrainian arts and literature.

Arts, music, literature, and language are key to a nation's sense of itself and obtain a particular urgency when faced with a struggle for survival against a seemingly superior enemy. In Ukraine, the war resulted in fervent creation of new artistic works as well as in the reinterpretation of classical ones. This essay analyses the contrasts between two recent stage versions of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Mazepa* opera by theatres in Kharkiv (2017) and Moscow (2021). It shows how the Ukrainian version updated the plot and liberated the Mazepa myth from Russian and Soviet imperial distortions, thereby connecting the opera's events with the contemporary struggle for a sovereign state. Meanwhile, underneath its modernist surface, the Russian version maintained the opera's age-old metropolitan view of Ukraine as an inferior colony.

Mazepa: the man and the myth

Ivan Mazepa was the leader from 1687 to 1709 of the political entity on the left bank of the Dnipro River variously recognized as the Hetmanate, Left Bank Ukraine, or Cossack Ukraine. During the Great Northern War (1700–1721), Mazepa's Cossacks broke away from Moscow and sided with the Swedish King Charles XII in his campaign against Peter the Great. Following their defeat at the hands of the Russian Tsar at Poltava in 1709, Mazepa went into exile and died soon after. Known during his lifetime for his political shrewdness and support of the arts, Mazepa's surprising turn against Muscovy forever earned him a mythical stature in Russian and Ukrainian historical narratives. While Russians have condemned his betrayal of the Tsar, Ukrainians have celebrated him as a national hero.[1] Mazepa's controversial role in the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations and the abundance of myths surrounding his eventful life have been the subject of several studies.[2] In fact, the scholarly discussions and artistic interpretations of Mazepa's deeds gave rise to a whole field of "Mazepiana" almost from the outset.[3]

The inaugural author of Ukrainian Mazepiana was hetman Pylyp Orlyk (1672–1742). An ally of Mazepa, Orlyk championed Mazepa's aspirations for a sovereign state and authored the Bendery Constitution in 1710, which was one of the first in the world to enshrine the separation of powers. In 1695, Orlyk penned the panegyric "Alcides Rossiyski tryumfalnym lawrem koronowany" [The Russian Hercules crowned with a triumphal laurel], which celebrated Mazepa's achievements. Beyond the Slavic world, where Mazepa became better known as "Mazeppa", the French enlightenment philosopher Voltaire touched on the hetman's role in the war between Charles and Peter in his historical works on the two rulers. In all likelihood, Voltaire drew on the testimony of Orlyk's son, Hryhor, as he presented Mazepa and the idea of Ukrainian independence in a positive light in his *L'histoire de Charles XII* published in 1731. "Ukraine has always aspired to be free,"[4] Voltaire wrote in one of the earliest statements of support for Ukrainian statehood. In the later work, *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* commissioned by the daughter of Peter the Great, Empress Elizabeth I, and published 1759–1762, Voltaire instead cast Mazepa as a foolish and disloyal barbarian. Nevertheless, in revisions of his book on the King Charles XII of Sweden, Voltaire did not alter his original view of Mazepa and Ukrainian independence.[5]

Voltaire's literary contributions held immense sway across Europe, serving as the foundational wellspring from which authors, composers, poets, and painters would draw inspiration. The Mazepa myth, symbolizing a romantic hero fighting for his state's independence, captivated artists across Europe. In 1818, Lord Byron penned the poem *Mazeppa*, which soon appeared in numerous translations.[6] Inspired by Byron's poem, Théodore Géricault painted Mazepa twice in 1820 and 1823 and Eugène Delacroix followed suit in 1824. Victor Hugo wrote the poem *Mazeppa* in 1828 and between 1851 and 1854, Franz Liszt composed the symphonic poem *Mazeppa*.[7]

Russian Mazepiana

After the death of Mazepa the Russian empire's secular and religious authorities thoroughly discredited him and sought to erase

> **"WHILE RUSSIANS HAVE CONDEMNED HIS BETRAYAL OF THE TSAR, UKRAINIANS HAVE CELEBRATED HIM AS A NATIONAL HERO."**

Portrait of hetman Ivan Mazepa on a Ukrainian banknote and his words "but die for the faith and defend your freedoms".

Ivan Mazepa and his ally Swedish king Karl XII after the defeat against Russia at Poltava, by Carl Cederström.

traces of his legacy.[8] The artistic interpretation of Mazepa in Russia, however, largely emerged much later as a counter reaction to the romantic interpretations in western Europe. First out, though, was the Decembrist revolutionary Kondraty Ryleyev, who sympathized with Mazepa's mythological resistance to autocracy. In 1825, Ryleyev published the poem *Vojnarovskij* about a Ukrainian nobleman, Mazepa's nephew, who supported the hetman's defection to the Swedish side. In Ryleyev's poem, Mazepa was not a traitor, but a fighter against Russian despotism. The author's political engagement, however, ended up costing him his life as he was executed together with five other Decembrist leaders the same year the poem was published.

A few years later, in 1829, Alexander Pushkin set the lasting tone for the Russian Mazepiana with the narrative poem *Poltava* about the Russian army's decisive victory against the invading Swedish troops. Commissioned by the Russian Tsar Nicholas I, the poem's central theme revolved around the treasonous and ungodly Mazepa. The poet's task was to create a Russian version of the Mazepa myth, which would differ from the idealized romantic image of the Ukrainian hero popular in Europe.[9] Pushkin delivered, but nevertheless he could not help disclosing Mazepa's motive:

> A fortunate hour is upon us;
> The time for glorious battle nears.
> For far too long we've bowed our heads,
> Without respect or liberty,
> Beneath the yoke of Warsaw's patronage,
>
> Beneath the yoke of Moscow's despotism.
> But now is Ukraine's chance to grow
> Into an independent power;
> Defying Peter, I will raise
> The bloody banner of our freedom.[10]

Half a century later, Pushkin's poem inspired Pyotr Tchaikovsky's eponymous opera composed between 1881 and 1883.

Victor Burenin wrote the libretto, but Tchaikovsky finalized it and included the Pushkin lines above. Despite this admission of Mazepa's honorable ambitions, according to Thomas Grob, "Pushkin nevertheless assumes that it was the country's natural fate to become part of Peter's Russia."[11] Pushkin's poem and Tchaikovsky's opera fueled the imperial Russian narrative about Mazepa. Over the years, the poem assumed a central role in the Russian history and literature curriculum, through which it served the Russification project and helped shape an imperial mentality.

Mazepa in the Soviet Union

The imperial struggle against the glorification of the Ukrainian hetman's image was sustained by the Soviets. Tchaikovsky's opera was first presented on a Soviet stage on October 6, 1922, two months before the creation of the Soviet Union, which purported to unify fraternal peoples. In the following years, the opera was staged in Kyiv in 1933, at the Bolshoi Theatre and at the Leningrad Opera and Ballet Theatre in 1934, and abroad in New York, Vienna, Prague, and Sofia between 1933 and 1937. The opera served as a medium through which the conventional colonial narrative about the interplay between fraternal nations and the shared historical origins of Russian-Ukrainian unity was brought to life. It highlighted a historical connection over three centuries, which was posited as the foundation for a new historical community–the Soviet people. As Vitaliï Masnenko has pointed out, the "brotherly" mythology was "an effective tool for political manipulation aimed at the social mobilization [...] for the needs of the empire."[12] Arguably its clearest expression came with the 1944 lyrics of the Soviet anthem, which defined Russia's role in the Union: "An unbreakable union of free republics, the Great Rus has sealed forever."

In Soviet Ukraine, Mazepiana that did not conform to the Russian interpretation of the relation between the colony and the metropole was generally repressed if not outright banned. Ukrainian authors of Mazepiana such as Stepan Rudansky, Pantelejmon Kulish, Bogdan Lepkij, Volodimir Sosiura, and Ivan Pavliuk

found their works hushed by the authorities, while the drama by Ludmila Starits'ka-Cherniahivs'ka was explicitly prohibited. It was only once a sovereign Ukrainian state was declared in 1991 that patriotic Ukrainians could openly celebrate Mazepa's struggle for autonomy and make him a cornerstone of contemporary national identity projects.[13] While Putin's Russia reclaimed the Soviet heritage as its own, Ukrainian citizens sought to liberate the country from its Soviet legacy in the 2005 Orange revolution and the 2013–2014 Euromaidan.

Staging *Mazepa* during Russia's war against Ukraine

Russia's undeclared invasion of Ukraine in 2014 provided a new context for the *Mazepa* opera to highlight Russian and Ukrainian visions of the self. In 2017, the Kharkiv State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, the first permanent Ukrainian opera house, offered Kharkivites a new interpretation of Tchaikovsky's opera.

The original plot revolves around a tragic love story between Maria, a young woman, and Mazepa, an ally of Tsar Peter the Great of Russia. Maria runs away with Mazepa, her godfather, causing her family shame. In retaliation, her father informs Tsar Peter about Mazepa's plans to ally with Sweden against Russia. Peter dismisses the warning and hands over Kochubey, Maria's father, to Mazepa for execution. Maria learns of her father's impending death too late and descends into madness. After a failed alliance with Sweden and defeat in the Battle of Poltava, Mazepa encounters the now-insane Maria, who no longer recognizes him. She later mistakes her dying childhood friend Andrei for a child and sings him a lullaby as he passes away, marking the culmination of a tale of love, betrayal, and revenge.

Timed to coincide with the 330th anniversary of Ivan Mazepa's election as Hetman, the Kharkiv production deviated from the traditional Russian colonial narratives by not glorifying the Russian army and not portraying Mazepa as a traitor, while maintaining the romance between the elderly hetman and the young Maria. The producers created their own version of the text and, accordingly, made changes to the musical dramaturgy of the opera and its language. The production wanted to show Mazepa as a national hero: "After all, now we need a new look at the personality of this statesman, which would restore historical justice."[14] as Vladimir Garkusha, stage conductor and the chief conductor of the theater, commented in an interview before the opening of the show.

IN THE NEW INTERPRETATION, the elderly statesman is presented as a tormented man, caught between his love for Maria and his duty towards Ukraine. Ultimately, his duties towards the state took primacy and he put aside his feelings and personal allegiances. The director of the Kharkiv version, Armen Kaloyan, explained that, in his understanding, "the hetman's main goal was the European future of Ukraine. He understood that living under the rule of Russia and Poland was painful for Ukraine, [...]. After all, the Russian autocracy rigidly built its empire, not allowing freemen on its borders. And this completely excluded any hope for Ukraine's independence. Therefore, going against Peter I, uniting with the Swedes, seemed to Mazepa the only way to gain independence for Ukraine. Unfortunately, in the process of achieving such a lofty goal, sacrifices are inevitable..."[15].

The Kharkiv show was widely celebrated, as Mazepa's attempt to liberate Ukraine from the Muscovite yoke echoed with the country's contemporary struggle for sovereignty. Especially the opera's opening and final acts when the 17th-century Cossack folk song *The black field is plowed* was sung reminded audiences of the ongoing military struggle in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The lyrics, preserved by the author, translator, and ethnographer Ivan Franko (1856–1916), capture the tragedy of unburied soldiers on the battlefield.

Fragment from the text of song according to M. Maksymovich (1834):

> **1.**
> **The black field is plowed, hey, hey!**
> **The black field is plowed**
> **and sown with bullets.**
> **White body dragged, hey, hey!**
> **And covered in blood.**
>
> **2.**
> **A cossack is lying on a bush, hey, hey!**
> **A cossack is lying on a bush,**
> **With scarlet kerchief his eyes are covered, hey, hey!**
> **With scarlet kerchief,**
> **With kerchief his eyes are covered.**
>
> **3.**
> **There is neither coffin, nor grave, hey, hey,**
> **There is neither coffin, nor grave,**
> **There is neither father, nor mother**
> **No one to call, hey, hey**
> **There is no one to bother.**[16]

In Russia, music critics were perplexed as to why the song was included in the opera. One media outlet considered it "Stepan Bandera's favorite song",[17] seeking to discredit the production by tying it to the violent and radical war-time leader later celebrated as a Ukrainian national hero.[18] Commentators also objected to the end of the opera when photographs of the "heavenly hundred" killed during the Euromaidan appeared in the background. Even the production's choice of Ukrainian language was considered an affront to good taste. As one commentator noted, Ukrainian "is completely unsuitable for the melody of opera."[19] Such a statement echoes the long history of Russian repression of the Ukrainian language codified by the Valuev circular of 1863, which defined Ukrainian as a dialect, prohibited Ukrainian-language teaching, and made Russian the language of high culture.[20]

Perhaps as a response to the Ukrainian staging of Tchaikovsky's *Mazepa*, the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow presented its own, modern interpretation of the classical opera in 2021. The production was led by director Yevgeny Pisarev who placed each of the three acts in a different historical time. The first act was

The Kharkiv staging of the opera *Mazena* in 2017 was timed for the 330 years anniversary of Ivan Mazepa's election as Ukraine's Hetman.

set in the historical period of Mazepa and Tsar Peter the Great, around the battle of Poltava (1709). The events of the second act played out at the beginning of the 20th century, in the time of the Russian Civil and the Second World Wars, while in the third act unfolded in during Russia's contemporary war in Ukrainian Luhansk and Donbass, against the background of a burned bus with dead bodies and soldiers in uniforms. According to Pisarev, the opera shows how Ukraine "is doomed to eternal ordeals because of the Hulyaipole mood seething in the blood."[21] These words clearly hinted at Ukraine's struggle to contain the Russian invasion disguised as a rebellious insurgency.

THE BOLSHOI PRODUCTION, although staged before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, had forebodings of the worsening of the conflict to come, as it prioritized political tension at the expense of the tragic love story between Mazepa and Maria. A commentator put it in vivid terms: "the image of Ukraine today is associated not with romance, not with Gogol, not with a quiet night near the Dnieper [...], but with the theme of war and the victims in the Donbass. Therefore, the starting point in Pisarev's play was war, conflict, and the destruction of the home."[22] The Russian production emphasized the omnipresence of war in Russian – Ukrainian relations and its tragic consequences.

An article on the new production contained the key to understanding the show in its title: *Requiem for Ukraine*.[23] According to a critic, the opera "focused on painful issues of national history of the last three centuries,"[24] yet at the end of the day, the performance demonstrated the traditional imperial Russian narrative perspective on Ukraine as the colony. Eventually, both the Kharkiv and the Moscow interpretations differed significantly from Burenin and Tchaikovsky's libretto. The only common feature of the original and modern versions was the war: The war for independence in the Ukrainian version

and the transhistorical eternal war in the Russian. The Russian performance however remained on the program in 2022, so that Russia's full-scale illegal war of aggression against Ukraine launched on February 24, 2022, added yet another historical layer of significance to the text.[25]

Conclusions

In 2010, the historian Gary Marker observed that Mazepa continues to inspire competing stories and "to engage political and artistic imagination even now."[26] The undeclared Russian war against Ukraine in 2014 and the full-blown invasion in 2022 have only heightened the resonance of Mazepa. The competing interpretations of Tchaikovsky's opera in Kharkiv and Moscow were merely a prelude to Ukraine's existential struggle faced with Russia's genocidal attempt to wipe the country off the map. As Ukraine's national identity is redefined in light of Russia's indiscriminate targeting of civilians, bombing of hospitals, and abduction of Ukrainian children for Russification in foster families, the role of Russian cultural heritage in Ukraine is reassessed. This has led to the banning of the Russian language and to the boycott of Russian culture including the music of Tchaikovsky.[27] However, the Kharkiv opera production, predating the full-scale invasion, demonstrated the potential for repurposing Russian music in celebration of Ukrainian national history. Exposing the imperial myths and restoring the significance of national heroes, no matter how contradictory their views may seem, is one way to shape the national consciousness

"THE ONLY COMMON FEATURE OF THE ORIGINAL AND MODERN VERSIONS WAS THE WAR: THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE UKRAINIAN VERSION AND THE TRANSHISTORICAL ETERNAL WAR IN THE RUSSIAN."

of Ukrainians in an independent state. The Ukrainian version of the *Mazepa* opera was an important step towards expressing the Ukrainian national identity in the musical arts. As the authors of the Kharkiv theatre project stated: "During the national political and artistic renaissance, this performance will reveal the image of Ivan Mazepa for contemporaries in a new way,"[28] as an exam-

ple of the formation of national self-consciousness, the return to Ukraine of its heroes and a telling of the historical events without the rigid framework of the imperial myth about Mazepa. ❌

Liubov Kuplevatska is a Ukrainian scholar currently based at Lund University, the Center for Languages and Literature, via a grant for Ukrainian scholars from the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation. She holds a PhD in Philology 2000 from V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, where she became an Associate Professor in 2005. She was working at the Kharkiv National University in Kharkiv when the war started in February 2022.

references

1   Thomas M. Prymak, "The Cossack Hetman: Ivan Mazepa in History and Legend from Peter to Pushkin," *The Historian* 76, no. 2 (June 1, 2014): 237–39.

2   For an overview, see Thomas Grob, "'Mazepa' as a Symbolic Figure of Ukrainian Autonomy," in *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 79–97; Prymak, "The Cossack Hetman"; Taras Koznarsky, "Obsessions with Mazepa," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 31, no. 1–4 (2009): 569–615.

3   For an overview of Mazepiana, see for instance O. O. Kovalevs'ka, ed., *Mazepiana: Materialy Do Bibliohrafii (1688–2009)* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2009); Bohdan Strumins'kyj, "Mazepiana in the Harvard Manuscript Collection (1691–1709)," *Harvard Library Bulletin* XXVIII, no. 1 (1980): 64–80.

4   Quoted in Thomas M Prymak, "Voltaire on Mazepa and Early Eighteenth Century Ukraine," *Canadian Journal of History* 47, no. 2 (2012): 263.

5   Prymak, 272–78.

6   Lord Byron, *Mazeppa, a Poem* (London: John Murray, 1819).

7   Victor Hugo, *Les orientales* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1829).

8   Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 66–67.

9   Lina Steiner, "'My Most Mature Poèma': Pushkin's Poltava and the Irony of Russian National Culture," *Comparative Literature* 61, no. 2 (2009): 97–98.

10 Ivan Eubanks, "Poltava by Alexander Pushkin," *Pushkin Review* no. 11 (January 1, 2008): 129–72. Canto the Second, lines 60–69.

11 Grob, Thomas. "'Mazepa'as a Symbolic Figure of Ukrainian Autonomy" in eds., Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra, *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 87.

12 Vitalij Masnenko, "Mifologema 'bratskih narodov' kak ideal'naja model' russko-ukrainskih otnošenij v covetskoj/rossijskoj istoriografyi," [The Mythologem of "brotherly peoples" as an Ideal Model of Russian-Ukrainian Relations in Soviet/Russian Historiography], Studia Historica Gedanensia no. 9 (2018): 206. Available at: https://doi.org/DOI 10.4467/23916001HG.18.011.10327.

13 Maryna Romanets, "History, Politics, and the Cartography of Sexed Bodies in Iurii Illienko's 'A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa,'" *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 56, no. 1/2 (2014): 135–54.

14 Izvestiya. Ivan Mazepa. Geroj ne tol'ko opernij. [Ivan Mazepa. A Hero not only in the Opera]. Available at: https://izvestia.kharkov.ua/culture/ivan-mazepa-geroj-ne-tolko-opernyj/

15 Ibid.

16 Oksana Kuzmenko, "Chorna rillya izorana" [The Black field is plowed] Available at: https:uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Чорна_рілля_ізорана in У Франковій Рецепції Та Пісенній Традиції Століть," [Frank's Reception and Song Tradition of Centuries] (2020), 109–10.

17 "In Kharkov, They Decided to Add the Favorite Song of Bandera to the Opera 'Mazepa,'" *Top war*, July 19, 2017. Available at: https://en.topwar.ru/120896-v-harkove-reshili-dobavit-v-operu-mazepa-lyubimuyu-pesnyu-bandery.html.

18 Per Anders Rudling, "Yushchenko's Fascist: The Bandera Cult in Ukraine and Canada," *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 3, no. 2 (October 30, 2017): 129–87.

19 "In Kharkov, "They Decided to Add the Favorite Song of Bandera to the Opera 'Mazepa,'" *Top war*, July 19, 2017. Available at: https://en.topwar.ru/120896-v-harkove-reshili-dobavit-v-operu-mazepa-lyubimuyu-pesnyu-bandery.html.

20 Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia*, 139.

21 Aleksandr Matusevich, "Rekviem po Ukraine: prem'era 'Mazepi' Chajkovskogo v Bol'shom" [Requiem for Ukraine: premiere of 'Mazepa' by Tchaikovsky at the Bolshoi Theatre] *ClassicalMusicNews.Ru.* (2021). Available at: https://www.classicalmusicnews.ru/reports/bolshoi-mazepa-2021-2/. Hulyaipole is a village in the Zaporizhzhia region where the famous anarchist Nestor Makhno was born.

22 Iryna Muravyova, "V Bol'shom teatre postavily operu pro possijsko-ukrainskuyu istoriyu", [An Opera about Russian-Ukrainian History was Staged at the Bolshoi Theater], *Rossiiskaya Gazeta - Federal issue* no. 140 (2021): 8491. Available at: https://rg.ru/2021/06/27/reg-cfo/v-bolshom-teatre-postavili-operu-pro-rossijsko-ukrainskuiu-istoriiu.html

23 Aleksandr Matusevich, "Rekviem po Ukraine: prem'era 'Mazepi' Chajkovskogo v Bol'shom" [Requiem for Ukraine: premiere of 'Mazepa' by Tchaikovsky at the Bolshoi Theatre] *ClassicalMusicNews.Ru.* (2021). Available at: https://www.classicalmusicnews.ru/reports/bolshoi-mazepa-2021-2/.

24 Jekatierina Kliuchnikova V Bol'shom teatre v deviatyj raz postavili "Mazepu" P.I. Chaikovskogo. [The Bolshoi Theatre staged 'Mazepa' by Tchaikovsky for the ninth time]. *Muzikal'noye obozrieniye* [Music Review] no 7 (2022): 498. Available at: https://muzobozrenie.ru/v-bolshom-teatre-v-devyatyj-raz-postavili-mazepu-p-i-chajkovskogo/

25 Ibid.

26 Gary Marker, "Casting Mazepa's Legacy: Pylyp Orlyk and Feofan Prokopovich," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 88, no. 1/2 (2010): 111.

27 See: Yuriy Gorodnochenko, Ilona Sologoub, "Kulturnaja vojna Ukraini i Rossii". [Culture war between Ukraine and Russia]. Natsionalnij institut strategichnih doslidshen. Project Syndicate. June 7, 2023. Available at: https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ukraine-russia-culture-war-gessen-pen-resignation-by-yuriy-gorodnichenko-and-ilona-sologoub-2023-06

28 Mikhail Cherniak, *V Harkove sostojalas'prem' era operi 'Mazep a*' [The premiere of the opera "Mazepa", July 10, 2017. Available at: http://hatob.com.ua/ukr/news/o-nas-v-smi/1050-v-kharkove-sostoyalas-premera-opery-mazepa

By **Stefan Jonsson**
and **Galyna Kutsovska**

Introduction.

Returning to the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 ten years after

In hindsight, a revolution can be reconstructed as a chain of causes, albeit overdetermined by multiple contingencies. This is in stark contrast to the living present of revolution, which is usually characterized by hope, potential, and danger. At once fractured by political conflicts and unified by expanding social ties, a revolution interrupts historical continuity and sets itself apart as an important event. The task of explaining such an event after the fact is different from the task of understanding its unfolding in real time. In addition, both these tasks are different from interpreting the *meaning* of the event for those who were absorbed by the action - the subjects of the revolution, its winners and losers, and its victims.

The two peer-reviewed articles that follow return to the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 ten years after.[1] They do so by analyzing artworks and cultural imaginaries created during the revolution and its aftermath. Why revisit Maidan now? For one thing, it tells us something about *the stakes* in the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Screenshot from Sergei Loznitsa's film *Maidan*, 2015.   PHOTO: ATOMS OCH & VOID

We suggest that the war can be seen as a struggle over the radical democratic aspirations that flourished in Kyiv's Square of Independence, Maidan Nezalezhnosti. It is these aspirations that we want to return to, and we do so by going to the only place where we can still explore them: the aesthetic artifacts and cultural creations in which the revolutionary event, as we argue, is preserved. This explains our approach through aesthetics and culture. As we seek to show in our articles, aesthetic

Roman Bonchuk, Iconostasis of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.
Courtesy of the Museum of the Heavenly Hundred, Ivan-Frankivsk.

Living Memorial on the Alley.

PHOTO: GALYNA KUTSOVSKA

knowledge is truthful and relevant, perhaps more so than other forms of knowledge, in the rendering of the revolution's present moment, the meaning it held for its participants, the self-understanding of Ukrainian society, and its aspirations for the future.

The contributions that follow belong primarily to the transdisciplinary fields of political aesthetics, memory studies, cultural criticism and the history of consciousness, and they are perhaps affiliated with scholarship that adopts oral history and participatory ethnography, approaches that in themselves demand modes of aesthetic creativity and composition.[2]

THE FIRST ARTICLE by Stefan Jonsson discusses how aesthetic expressions help understand the *political emergence* of the Ukrainian protest movement and the intensification of *solidarity* that characterized it. Maidan's revolutionary art presented solidarity now as open and universal, now as a patriotic and self-sacrificing nationalism.

The second article by Galyna Kutsovska demonstrates how aesthetic figurations and cultural initiatives confirm or contest what seems to be the unavoidable result of successful revolutions such as the Maidan, namely its petrification into fixed symbols and ideological representations. As an "official" view of the

"THE ART OF MAIDAN RETAINS AN ENORMOUS RELEVANCE FOR WHAT IT TELLS US ABOUT DEMOCRATIC EMERGENCE."

revolution is canonized in collections and archives, or materialized in architectural blueprints for museum buildings, monuments, and memorials, will the radical experiences of popular power and self-organization vanish?

IN OUR ARTICLES we refer to the *Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014* as a general and noncommittal denomination, while we also use the revolution's historical names. The most common reference in late November and early December 2013 was *Euromaidan*. By mid-December and January 2014 this was replaced by *Maidan*. At the end of February, the revolution attained its heroic epithet, the *Revolution of Dignity*, today the official name in the Ukrainian context.[3]

Our articles also refer to established periodizations of the consecutive phases of the revolution.[4] From November 21–30,

2013, students and activists occupied the area of Maidan near the Monument of Independence. The second phase began with the brutal assault on the occupants by the security police on the evening of November 30, which was followed by popular outrage and an expansion of the protests across Ukraine and abroad against Viktor Yanukovych's pro-Russian government. The third phase began on January 16, 2014, with the so-called dictatorial laws, which declare the ongoing popular assemblies illegal. This phase is characterized by increasing vigilance on both parts and brutal suppression by the security police, leading to violent clashes and several deaths from January 21–22 onward. The fourth phase comprised a few days of culmination: February 18–20, "the Battle of Maidan," are days of lethal violence where snipers kill some eighty anti-government protesters.[5] This is followed by international condemnations and a partial breakdown of domestic political institutions, leading to Yanukovych's sudden escape from the country on February 22. The president's abandonment of his country effectively concludes the revolution in the strict sense. It also triggers a new chain of events and decisions, the most momentous being Russia's annexation of Crimea and orchestration of separatist militias in south-eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine's revolutionary art from the winter of 2013–2014 offer a living record

of the Ukrainian people in their effort to understand themselves, reinterpret their past and reimagine their future. Above all, the artworks ask: who are the Ukrainian people? As such, these works offer insight into the enigma of historical change and collective agency. As we argue, the art of Maidan encapsulates aesthetic knowledge of three phenomena: the political emergence of protest, the solidarity of revolt, and the collective memory of the revolution, what we also may think of as the preparation, production, and preservation of the revolution.

TEN YEARS AFTER, in the midst of an unjust and horrifying war with unpredictable outcomes, it is worth recalling what Ukrainians struggled for in 2013–2014 and how they used a range of artistic expressions to present their aspirations for the future and preserve the memory of their struggle.

In writing about the Maidan Revolution today, we are aware that we enter intellectual and academic terrain that since then has become torn and polarized, and we move under a horizon of searing uncertainty. While there is therefore no doubt that our efforts are as deeply embedded in history as is the revolutionary event that we investigate, it is just as true that the aesthetic productions at the heart of our attention are not fully reducible to historical time. They also register a dimension of interrupted temporality, collective solidarity, and human freedom. In the contemporary crisis, the art of Maidan retains an enormous relevance for what it tells us about democratic emergence, and hence also about the future of both Ukraine and Russia.

OUR ARTICLES build in part on field work conducted in Kyiv in June and July 2021, which involved visiting the Maidan Museum premises and meeting the director and staff of the Museum, as well as visiting the Maidan memory sites in Kyiv and meeting artists and scholars dealing with Maidan. The selection of artworks, material, and documentation chosen for interpretation is the result of long months of inventorying and sifting literature, artworks, music, films, and other aesthetic artifacts produced during the Ukrainian Revolution. We are tremendously grateful to numerous people who generously shared their experience and expertise: Ihor Poshyvailo, Ola Salo, Lesya Onyshko, and their colleagues at the Maidan Museum; Matvyi Vaisberg; Oleksei Beliushenko; Nataliia Moussienko; Volodymyr Tykhyi, Andrii Kotliar, Yuliia Hontaruk, Roman Liubyi, and Denys Vorontsov of the Babylon' 13 film community; and Anton Drobovych and Olena Snihyr of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. ❎

Stefan Jonsson is Professor in Ethnic Studies and Head of the Division of Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO) at Linköping University, Sweden.

Galyna Kutsovska is a PhD student at the Department of History at Uppsala University.

references

1   For a general overview of the historical aspects and political factors of Maidan, see, for instance, Ilya Gerasimov, "Ukraine 2014: The Postcolonial Revolution," *Ab Imperio* vol. 32 (2015): 22–44. Serhy Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); David R. Marples and Frederick V. Mills (eds.), *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2015); Tetyana Malyarenko, "A Gradually Escalating Conflict: Ukraine from the Euromaidan to the War with Russia," in *The Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*, 2nd ed., ed. Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff (London: Routledge, 2016), 349–368; Marci Shore, *The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Olga Bertelsen (ed.), *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenge of Change* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2017); Mychailo Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine's Maidan, Russia's War: A Chronicle and Analysis of the Revolution of Dignity* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2019); Dominique Arel and Jesse Driscoll, *Ukraine's Unnamed War: Before the Russian Invasion of 2022* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); Viktor Stepanenko and Yaroslav Pylynski (eds.), *Ukraine After the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015); Klaus Bachmann and Igor Lyubashenko, eds., *The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention: Ukraine's complex transition* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014). Additionally, on the general history of Ukraine, see Sergii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), esp. 337–345. In Ukrainian: Alla Kyrydon, "Ievromaidan / Revoliutsiia Hidnosti: Prychyny, Kharakter, Osnovni Etapy" [Euromaidan / Revolution of Dignity: The Causes, Nature, Basic Stages], *Istorychna Pamiat* vol. 33 (2015): 17–32.

2   See, for instance, Shore, *The Ukrainian Night*.

3   Tamara Hundorova, "Ukrainian Euromaidan and Social and Cultural Performance", in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine*, 163–164.

4   For considerations on the periodization of the revolution, see Igor Lyubashenko, "Euromaidan: From the students' protest to mass uprising", in *The Maidan Uprising*, 61–85; Olga Onuch and Gwendolyn Sasse, "The Maidan in Movement: Diversity and the Cycles of Protest", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 68, no. 4 (2016), 556–587; Gleb Gusev, ed., *#Euromaidan: History in the Making* (Kyiv: Osnovy Publishing, 2014), 54–55.

5   For documentation and summary of the violence, see *The Price of Freedom: Public report of human rights organizations on crimes against humanity committed during Euromaidan*, ed. Oleksandr Pavlichenko (Kyiv: International Renaissance Foundation, 2015).

Figure 3. Matviy Vaisberg, *The Wall 28/01–08/03/2014*, no. 24. Courtesy of the artist.

WHAT ART KNOWS ABOUT DEMOCRACY

The aesthetics of the Revolution in Ukraine 2013–2014

by **Stefan Jonsson**

abstract

Based in part on interviews and fieldwork, this article analyzes how artworks produced during the Ukrainian Revolution (2013–2014) present the political emergence of the Ukrainian people as a collective fused by bonds of solidarity. At first characterized by a strong universal thrust, presenting a boundless democratic anticipation, this solidarity was subsequently contained by religious-political traditions and specific forms of self-sacrificing and masculinist nationalism, often projected as a revolutionary utopia in its own right, which has been operationalized in the defense against Russia's invasion. To substantiate the argument, the text analyzes numerous artworks from the Ukrainian Revolution. These interpretations demonstrate how aesthetic acts contribute to the production of bonds of solidarity that transcend existing modes of political and cultural representation of Ukraine.
KEYWORDS: Political aesthetics, art and revolution, crowds, Ukraine, social movements in art and culture

Professional artists, writers, filmmakers, and musicians, as well as unknown authors of slogans, oratory, visuals, memes, posters, songs, and performances, were intimately linked to the Maidan protests from the outset. "Revolution always gives impetus to the arts," states Andrey Kurkov in his chronicle of the uprising. Commenting on the so-called "Art Barbican", a spacious tent for cultural activities that was set up in Kyiv's Independence Square during the protests, Kurkov explains that it is "an active and fully integrated part of the Maidan" which yet "has a life of its own":

> There is a permanent exhibition of revolutionary painting there, generally anarchistic and politicized, evoking the poster art of the 1918 Civil War. There are also book launches, concerts by singer-songwriters, readings by poets and writers. Revolution always gives impetus to the arts. It was the same in 1917 and after the October

Revolution, and it is the same today. Handwritten or printed poems are stuck to fences and tents, in Russian and Ukrainian. Among the Euromaidan activists, there are writers, rock singers, even publishers. In between writing articles for websites and doing interviews, they help to build barricades.[1]

Fully integrated, yet with a life of its own: Kurkov's description of the artists' position in relation to a political movement that they both participate in and record, hints of an understanding of the epistemological privilege enjoyed by aesthetics in periods of revolutionary change. In his diaries Kurkov adopts the perspective of the participant observer. While participating, he commits to paper what he hears, sees, smells, and feels. He takes down notes which he then stores for subsequent revision and reuse. In doing so, and although the process entails a remodeling and reinterpretation of the uprising, he usually proceeds in a documentary mode and does not compromise the authority of the witness.

There are several examples of such a perspective from Maidan in 2013–2014. Natalya Vorozhbit, one of Ukraine's leading playwrights, went to Maidan with her colleagues with the conviction that they should participate, not just as citizens, but also as professional theater workers. Already in early December she realized that "something definitive, something historic" was in the making:

> So, we went to Maidan, where the protestors were camping out and we asked them to tell us about their experiences of the day-to-day and about key events that had taken place. We recorded all of the interviews on video or on Dictaphones. Then, in March, we started compiling the interviews. We transcribed and edited them to compose a script for the play. The basic idea was to try to capture the event, to capture the emotions.[2]

Vorozhbit emphasizes the authority that stems from the immediacy of the recorded statements. She and her colleagues caught history in the making: "What we collected were fresh and unaltered reactions."[3] The collection of interviews were converted into drama form: *Maidan: Voices from the Uprising*, a verbatim play based on witness stories, is a major artwork of the Maidan revolution.

FILMMAKER SERGEI LOZNITSA urged his cameraman and sound technician to join him in Maidan. From December 2013 to February 2014, they moved their equipment from place to place to record for hours on end the unfolding of the protest. The footage and sound recordings turned into a film that virtually situates the viewer inside the everyday activities of the revolutionary collective. Bluntly entitled *Maidan*, the film renders the protest movement in ethnographic detail while at the same time inserting it into a filmic drama which is primarily structured by its soundtrack. With neither voiceover nor interviews, the film challenges the viewer to attend only to the plural voice of the upris-

Figure 1. Sergei Loznitsa, *Maidan*, 2015. Screenshot. Courtesy ATOMS & VOID..

ing, or, better, to the uprising's choral voice: now megaphonic, now joyful, now militant, now melancholic, now solemn. This voice has a function in the film similar to that of a choir in classical drama. Loznitsa offers no commentary on the action other than that provided by the revolutionary collective itself: the film being edited as if the speeches and songs emerge directly from within the pictures (figure 1).

The film's visual dimension is also thoroughly collective. The viewer is slowly moved from one camera position to the other, observing the revolution like a sequence of history paintings in which the totality of the revolution and the insurrectionary masses traverse the cinematic frame. Loznitsa's *Maidan* has neither hero, nor protagonist, nor even any main plot. The narrative center being dispersed, we see bodies swarming or moving with determination across the screen yet never quite coming into focus or entering the foreground. A major preoccupation of Loznitsa is apparently what Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, in capturing another kind of social movement, forced migration, has called *Human Flow*: a decentered and anonymous collective whose bodies and faces exit and enter the field of vision according to a logic that the filmmaker neither directs nor fully controls. Loznitsa has expressed the awe he felt upon entering Maidan's radicalized crowds. Like a present-day ghost of Dziga Vertov's photographer in *Man with a Movie Camera* – a film also shot and produced in Kyiv – he seized the opportunity to witness the revolution in real time:

> I was also surprised that almost no other professional filmmaker except myself had filmed in the square. What a chance missed! *Maidan* has cost a bit more than 100 000 euro; if you wanted to reconstruct such events afterwards to make a feature film, you would have to spend dozens of millions: thousands of extras, explosions in the middle of a European capital, and so on. It would be expensive. Anthropologists and other researchers would also have found it insanely interesting to come to the square. I mean, when will you next get the opportunity to make a live observation of such a revolution?[4]

Figure 2. Matviy Vaisberg, *The Wall 28/01–08/03/2014*. Courtesy of the artist.

Visual artist Matviy Vaisberg also remained at Maidan for days and nights on end, capturing the drama with his camera. He posted the photos on Facebook as a running visual chronicle: shattering episodes of violence, shelling of teargas, exploding Molotov cocktails, rolling flames, undulating crowd waves of attack and retreat, and between the outbursts, long periods of waiting when people huddle together, stand watch, and try to anticipate everybody's next move. After the events on Hrushevsky Street in late January, he began to paint, at first for therapeutic reasons and then increasingly as possessed by affects elicited by the experience of the escalating violence. He reworked some of the camera snapshots, creating twenty-eight small-size oils, as many as he could fit on the wall of his studio. The resulting artwork, entitled *The Wall 28/01 – 08/03/2014*, is a somber panorama in front of which the viewer is stunned silent by Vaisberg's compression of the revolution into complex constellations of color, form, and light (figure 2).

At a distance, the 28 images appear like blurry snapshots pinned to the wall. Up close, they give off an abstract and non-figurative expression. Events, actions, and actors that were recognizable in the photographic image disappear into the materiality of the painting and find a hiding place somewhere in the sheets and spots of oil and pigment. A tiny, elongated spot of gold suggests a brass trumpet. A line scraped in a surface of black paint is what remains as an outline of a human crowd. Such are the sole remnants of the image's representational features, whereas most areas of the painting appear to depict social matter in various stages of congelation or liquefication, the fluid character of the surface offering an allegory of revolutionary transformation (figure 3).

THUS, WHILE VAISBERG'S aesthetic practice is a fully integrated part of Maidan and takes documentary photographs as a point of departure, it soon takes on a life of its own, sidelining the docu-

mentary account so as to heighten the emotional charge and existential weight of the event. Everything that to the artist's mind is non-essential to the experience of the revolution is filtered out. What remains is the volatile and explosive nature of the antagonism between popular power and its militarized opponent.

In this way Vaisberg produced a visual and material equivalent to something transient and imaginary: the horizon of hopes, fears, ideals, and values that animated Maidan throughout these days and nights, the atmosphere that united people into a revolutionary collective, as it were. Having been an eyewitness to a radical historical opening – "something definitive, something historic" as Vorozhbit put it – Vaisberg visualized political emergence as such, the constituent power of the revolution, something which by nature is intermittent and resistant to aesthetic as well as political representation, but which is here peculiarly spatialized, visualized and crystallized in a montage of 28 pictures.

The quartet I have just mentioned – Kurkov, Vorozhbit, Loznitsa, Vaisberg – is but a small group in a larger crowd of artists, writers, and intellectuals who prepared and produced Maidan through aesthetic expressions. If revolutions always give impetus to the arts, as Kurkov asserted, the Maidan revolution is notable because of the high quality as well as the sheer quantity of the artistic expressions that fueled and responded to the protests. The square that hosted the political occupation also became an art factory.

The aesthetics and politics of democratic emergence

My general theoretical assumption in this article is that artistic representations – such as the works by Kurkov, Vorozhbit, Loznitsa, and Vaisberg – know something about crowds and democratic action that other forms of knowledge barely comprehend. This assumption makes sense only if we regard democracy not primarily as a mode of representation–for instance, liberal

parliamentarianism with a multiparty system and constitutional rights and freedoms – but as the ability of people to question each mode of representation. The assumption is inspired by political ontology rather than political science. While the latter is primarily concerned with politics as a system of representation, the former is concerned with how such systems are instituted, consolidated, transformed, and destroyed. "The political" here indicates the primal scene of society: how people join together by drawing a boundary with the rest of the world; how this community then draws a boundary across itself, so that one or a few (a king or a national assembly) are elevated to represent all; how these boundaries are constitutionally walled in and maintained by consensus or repression; and how they are periodically contested by social movements, demonstrations, and uprisings that do not recognize existing politics as representing their interests. Democracy, in this perspective, is the inherent potential of people to demolish existing political representations and create new ones, a process that repeatedly asserts itself in history and can be seen as a driving force of democracy.[5] With this perspective, we apprehend the close link of democracy to crowds and collective agency.

From this understanding of democracy follows a second theoretical assumption, which we may conceptualize as political emergence. Political emergence designates a process whereby a shared experience of objective constraint or oppression is dialectically transformed into practices of collective resistance. If we adopt an expression by Alain Badiou, this issue concerns "the rise of the inexistent," that is, the slow or sudden rise of new kinds of social and political agency that materialize in the breach of an existing order of representation.[6] Political emergence applies to popular forces that appear outside established political formations or are generated by contradictions and conflicts within these formations. If established channels of representation and communication cease to function, people scramble for new ways to assemble, protest, and resist, and new ways to narrate, enact and perform social transformation. Such movements may not be immediately recognizable as political entities. Often, they are ignored, demonized as "masses," or regarded as immature and disorderly by political institutions, journalism, and research. Notwithstanding such rejections, these movements remain political in that they create new ways of sharing, embodying, enacting, and imagining society. Although their demands may not be acknowledged by established political institutions, their political dimension resounds all the more strongly in the cultural and aesthetic dimension. In this context, put simply, the aesthetic gesture or aesthetic work becomes a prime instrument, both a mode of understanding for registering political emergence and a practice for its realization.[7] The brief examples above suggest that aesthetic figurations give access to deep dimensions of the Maidan uprising.

As I argue, these aesthetic presentations and performances

"WITH THIS PERSPECTIVE, WE APPREHEND THE CLOSE LINK OF DEMOCRACY TO CROWDS AND COLLECTIVE AGENCY."

offer unique ways of knowing the Ukrainian Revolution, the civil protests that forced it to happen, and the democratic aspirations of those who made it happen. To avoid misunderstanding, I should underline that I use aesthetics not in its conventional, watered-down sense, as referring to some exclusive quality of certain texts, images, or objects usually called high art, but rather in its rigorous epistemological meaning: as understanding acquired through sensory perception and imagination–in other words, how we make *sense* of the world, how the world is made intelligible or *sensible* through acts of hearing and seeing, as in fiction, poetry, visual arts, film, and theater, but also in masks, songs, slogans, and graffiti. Such presentations enable us to comprehend political emergence because they register sociopolitical transformation through voice, embodied experience, and subjective expression in ways comparable to the testimonial mode of the participant and the witness. Put differently, aesthetic works can absorb the phenomenological experience generated by participation in collective protest and revolt.

MY ANALYSIS IS NOT primarily concerned with what today is often discussed as art activism, that is, intentionally mobilizing artistic and cultural creativity and institutions as tools for social and cultural change. To be sure, Maidan contained many examples of art activism in this sense. However, I am interested in the other end of the process: how political emergence inevitably articulates itself aesthetically as it claims voice and presence in public space, and how the collective agency formed in this process presents itself through a variety of aesthetic modes and media, thereby enabling all who share this agency to understand the meaning of their actions. In other words, I am not primarily interested in art activism as a specific modality or genre by which artists and art institutions energize politics by injecting a dose of art into it, as it were, but more so in what I call the political aesthetics of democratic emergence, a broader category encompassing the ways in which political and aesthetic expression are at first indistinguishable and interchangeable as new collective actors and movements make their appearance in the public sphere. Aesthetics and politics, beauty and communal deliberation-action, are here two components or aspects of one and the same emergence of people rising toward freedom. Taken separately, the aesthetic aspect appears as the mode and medium through which the actors make sense of what they do and bring this into the realm of experience. As we shall see in the following section, this perspective has significant consequences for our interpretation of the Maidan uprising as an exercise in democracy.

Social and historical causes of the revolution

National politicians and their party symbols and flags were not welcome at Kyiv's Maidan.[8] On the evening of November 30, 2013, Andrey Kurkov noted in his diary that a record had been

set: "Yes, nine days of protest without the involvement of any party, even an opposition party: that's a new record."[9] A couple of days before, upon learning that students protesting in Lviv had chased members of the rightwing Svoboda party off the stage, Kurkov asked: "Why do politicians have such difficulty imagining that people can go out on their own and protest when something in the government gets them angry?"[10]

Polls made among the participants in the Maidan protests substantiate Kurkov's impression. Among people asked on December 7 by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, nine out of ten, or 91.2 percent, said they did not belong to any organization, while only 3.9 percent said they belonged to a political party.[11] The result was confirmed by another poll made by Olga Onuch and colleagues.[12] While commentators thus agree that party loyalty or ideological affiliation neither represents nor explains the Maidan events of 2013–2014, they ascribe greater explanatory weight to a generational collective.[13] Maidan is often described as being spearheaded by the "contemporaries of independence," the generation born after 1991 and the Soviet era. In January 2014, an overwhelming 73 precent of Ukrainians aged 16–29 supported association with the EU. It was their pro-European spirit that rose up in the first week. Inspired by occupations and uprisings elsewhere in the world, and with similar savvy in networking on digital platforms, cohorts of young pro-European activists set the tone for what was to follow.

However, the number of activists in the occupation was at first small. Those who stayed overnight were a few hundred at most. By the end of November, after a week of intensive protests that had failed to change the government's intention concerning the EU association, the occupants were set to pack up and disperse. Had it not been for a misguided intervention at this very moment by the infamous special police forces, Berkut, which on the night between November 30 and December 1 attacked the occupants and severely injured several of them, Ukrainian history, would have taken "a different turn," as political scientist Mychail Wynnyckyj puts it.[14]

WHEN THE ARMED units descended on the square – with the official pretext that the space had to be cleared for the erection of the *yolka*, the New Year Tree – they breached what Igor Lyubashenko calls "an unwritten rule of Ukrainian politics": that peaceful protests are not to be suppressed by force.[15] Outraged by the unprovoked brutality, many more now rose in protest in order "to protect the young," as the phrase went. As hundreds of thousands walked to the square the following day, the police forces, seeing themselves outnumbered, abandoned the site. Soon, new tents went up, as well as a big stage, while the metal framing of the *yolka* was repurposed into a symbol of protest. The adjacent Trade Unions' building and the building of the Kyiv City Administration were also occupied the same day.

The assault by the security forces on the young occupants thus catalyzed a process whereby the spontaneous protest

against the cancellation of the EU association fused with broader popular passions – of discouragement, dissatisfaction, betrayal, and frustrated ambition – concerning the situation in Ukraine.[16] According to Myroslav Shkandrij, on November 30 the Euromaidan was transformed into "a struggle conducted under the national flag, against tyranny."[17] Resulting from this was the political emergence of a new collective agency that stubbornly resisted the existing system of political representation and ultimately defeated it.

OVER SEVERAL MONTHS, from December 2013 to the spring of 2014, this emergent collective conjured up radical ideas of national and democratic rebirth.[18] The vast majority participated in the Maidan Revolution as citizens and did not see themselves as part of any official structure or organization. They showed up because of their loyalty to the collective event itself. While the uprising thus entertained porous boundaries to Ukrainian society at large, with people entering and exiting the occupation much at their own ease, the borders against the special police forces and government troops were attentively guarded. They were patrolled by spontaneously formed militias, organized into so-called *sotni*, or squads (more on this below). Borders were fortified by barricades built of metal sheets, furniture, boards, planks, sacks of sand, tires, rocks, construction material, urban debris, and blocks of snow and ice. Creations of collective effort and ingenuity, some barricades resembled artistic assemblages in their own right. Within the confines marked by these mounds, Maidan formed a large community and served as a basis for transformational social and national movements. In this sense, Maidan was a manifestation of popular power, or the democracy of the street.

Several historians, political scientists and sociologists have remarked as much. Olga Bertelsen in her introduction to a significant collection of articles asserts that "the Euromaidan" affirmed "the paramount role of human agency in history."[19] She goes on to describe the Revolution as "the beginning of a new history."[20] Stefan Auer speaks of the Maidan revolution as belonging to those events that "transform the people and their political culture."[21] Igor Torbakov explains: "the implications of the Euromaidan have been tremendously important: the world observed dramatic changes in Ukraine in 2013–2014 – the dismissal of the authoritarian political regime and the emergence of a new Ukrainian civic nation."[22] Ilya Gerasimov goes one step farther, asserting that Kyiv and Ukraine in 2014 displayed "the first postcolonial revolution." It deserves this designation, Gerasimov claims, because the revolution was "all about the people acquiring their own voice, and in the process of this self-assertive act they forge[d] a new Ukrainian nation as a community of negotiated solidary action by self-conscious individuals."[23]

While there may be no reason to doubt these assertions, it is interesting that the authors offer little in the way of substance and

> ## "MAIDAN WAS A MANIFESTATION OF POPULAR POWER, OR THE DEMOCRACY OF THE STREET."

explanation to back up such epochal claims. Between the brazen assertions (the rise of a new nation; the emergence of a collective subjectivity) and the empirical observations made to support them, there is a disconnect and lack of proportion. Few if any scholarly and intellectual accounts of the Maidan Revolution actually examine the emergence of the revolutionary movement. More modestly, they analyze the discourses, practices, and actions of Maidan in 2013–2014 as manifestations of the remote or recent past of Ukraine.[24] In this way, they infer the revolution from a set of representations of various facets of Ukraine's society, history, culture, and politics, which are then posited as so many causes contributing to the different phases and outcomes of the revolution. Because revolutions are by nature complex, compressed, and conflictual, such explanations *a posteriori* can always be further amended, nuanced, enriched, or questioned by any number of additional details and observations. The historical accounts thereby grow thicker, richer, and more reliable. Simultaneously, however, the historical accounts thereby analytically dismantle and retrospectively collapse the revolution into a myriad of social, political, individual, psychic, and ideological causes, among which we are at pains to make out the contours of that "emergent collective subjectivity," or "new nation," or "New Ukraine," which these very accounts were supposed to explain and define for us. Despite the seeming clarity introduced by such explanations, the revolutionary emergence of the collective agent will thus remain as obscure as before, or even more so.

AS A RESULT, the revolution appears as a black box, an enigmatic transformation or interruption beyond understanding. Even if we identify the contributing forces that came before and piece out the consequences that followed afterwards, the event itself still remains concealed and unknown. In this way, representational epistemology fails to account for what we for lack of better words may call the revolutionary character of the revolution: the *destruction* of existent systems of political and cultural representations, the *emergence* of collective political agency, and the *release* of democratic imagination. In a word, it fails to shed light on the *monstrous* nature of the transformative event.[25] An understanding of *these* processes necessitates an in-depth investigation of the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the revolution. We need to open the box and discern the meaning of its content, which perhaps is the very meaning of democracy.

A multiform people

In the absence of representation by established political parties and organizations, people assembled for Maidan invented or discovered ways to present themselves in various repertoires of imagination. Political aspirations expressed themselves in aesthetic figuration and fantasy. Artistic expressions served as circuits of communication and signposts to the future, powering the protests, enabling its participants to present themselves as an emergent political force, thereby making manifest a *people* in the process of realizing themselves

> **"THE QUESTION BEING ASKED HERE CONCERNS ART'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY."**

as a subject of history. For these reasons, aesthetic expressions help understand what historical meaning the Maidan uprising held for those who were absorbed by and contributed to its formidable agency.

The witness accounts by Andrey Kurkov, Natalya Vorozhbit, Sergei Loznitsa, and Matvyi Vaisberg introduced above testify to the strong presence of an artistic spirit in the revolution that left an imprint on participants and onlookers from the first. Tamara Hundorova describes the Maidan as a cultural performance with at least four different themes or codes: Carnival, apocalypse, performance, and Cossack encampment. Quoting one of the protesters, she states that the Maidan was "a true art space," a "cornucopia of opportunities."[26] Nazar Kozak interestingly compares Maidan art to what Joseph Beuys once called a "social sculpture." Aesthetic expressivity here served as an invisible substance or energy that integrated and resurrected the people as a political agency and thereby blew new life into the social body.[27] Dmytro Shevchuk and Maksym Karpovets also emphasize the performative nature of Maidan, its unexpected release of "creativity and collective imagination" whereby it offered "an alternative version of social reality." That the demonstrators prevailed, they argue, is coupled to the fact that it "was an experience on the edge of human capabilities": "Maidan managed to 'blow up' politics, offering a unique experience of the extraordinary."[28]

As these writers also argue, the task of producing aesthetic presentations of the revolution that capture and preserve its explosive and experiential freshness, its horizontal and democratic multiplicity, its popular surplus and social multiformity, is different from the task of producing a political representation, sociological explanation, or historical interpretation of the event. In the latter case, we deal with the question of how to make an accurate representation of the revolution as an event in social and political history by identifying its underlying causes, central interests, and main agents. The question being asked is: what or whom does the revolutionary process represent? In the former case, we are dealing with the ways in which aesthetic expressions intervene into the revolution and capture and record the political emergence of the people as a collective agency, or even a new political sovereign, or agent of power. The question being asked here concerns art's contribution to the realization of democracy – to its preparation, production, and preservation: what or who present themselves in the emergence and unfolding of the revolutionary process?

WHEN SEARCHING FOR answers to such questions, we should note how Maidan artworks often perform an aesthetic balancing act. They present or even perform the sociopolitical force of the multiform people, while they also seek to represent the people in a compelling form. In the following two sections I analyze some iconic artifacts that illuminate how the revolutionary crowd oscillates between the multiform and the uniform.

Figure 4. Pavel Klubnikin and Strayk-Plakat, *R kraplya v okeani* (I'm a drop in the ocean). 2013.

From an ordinary drop to the universal ocean

A drop of water, a piano, and a New Year's spruce – the people behind the Maidan revolution operationalized ordinary things, repurposing them into political weapons. A whole gamut of revolutionary folk art saw the day during the three months of conflict as people painted, carved, crafted, chiseled, scribbled, sew, embroidered, and in other ways designed and decorated their political outfits and accessories. Though these decorated objects may seem crude from an artistic point of view, they demonstrate the sheer enthusiasm with which the nameless collective supported and produced the revolution. Several initiatives led to remarkable performance pieces, many of them produced by known individuals, and many other by ordinary, anonymous citizens.

Our first example is the drop (figure 4). This symbol was introduced via a poster designed by Pavel Klubnikin, one of eight graphic designers who on December 1, 2013, launched the Facebook group *Strayk Plakat* [Strike Poster], which published posters that could be downloaded and printed for use in the demonstrations.[29] Klubnikin's poster immediately became emblematic. In simple conceptualist or neo-functionalist style, its upper part shows a yellow drop against a blue background, and its lower part depicts a rippled yellow area symbolizing a water surface. The text in bold black is as simple: "I Am a Drop in the Ocean" (*Ia kraplia v okeani*).

If Klubnikin's poster was the first piece of political lore from Kyiv's Maidan to be sanctified as an expression of the sovereign people, this was for good reason. The poster's message is existential rather than political. It can be claimed by everybody and excludes no one. "A drop in the ocean" is a common expression in many languages. It typically serves as a synecdoche, a figure of the relation of part to whole, of individual to collective. Most often, the saying is used to express one's insignificance in rela-

tion to overwhelming social and political forces: "What does it matter what I do? I'm just a drop in the ocean" (*Ia tilky kraplia v okeani*). By omitting the "just" or "only" in the proverbial saying and by finding an iconography to match it, the designer struck a chord that transformed the message from a statement on the hopelessness and futility of all action into a piece of agitation: "I am a drop in the ocean. It matters what I do!" Or, as in a later version of the same poster: "I am a drop in the ocean that will change Ukraine."

A CLOSE READING of Klubnikin's poster shows that this rhetorical recoding mirrors the process of political emergence. As mentioned, the text and image interpellate the individual as a drop. The drop is apparently small and superfluous. However, the acts whereby many individuals simultaneously advertise to each other their insignificance as mere drops also entail recognition of their shared condition as drops. Between them, there is now equivalence. But the recognition of their equivalent condition is also a discovery that they together make up a new entity; as drops make up an ocean, individuals make up a collective. What the poster shows, then, are the ties between individuals that come into being when they understand that they share a common identity (all are drops). Insofar as they recognize this identity, they also recognize that they constitute a collectivity that previously did not exist. In one stroke, the poster thus makes visible the individual, "the drop," inasmuch as each embodies what everybody has in common with others, while it also makes visible the collective, "the ocean," as existing through the recognition by individuals of this same commonality.

Such is the process of political emergence that Jean-Paul Sartre once described as the transformation of *seriality* into a *fused* group.[30] The process presupposes what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe theorize as democratic equivalence: the recognition that people, as drops, or citizens, are equivalent in relation to power.[31] Gayatri Spivak designates this process as one of synecdochization: a person recognizes herself as being part of a whole, which enables her participation in a collective movement and offers her a share in the common.[32] This also explains how, in its historical present, the constellation of words, forms, and colors on Klubnikin's poster can be seen as a performance of democracy in the deep sense. Individuals discover and affirm their individual agency inasmuch as they become parts of the collective, and the collective discovers and affirms its collective agency inasmuch as it enables individuality.

IN THE AESTHETIC and rhetorical register, the poster establishes the concurrence of individuality and collectivity through three tropes. One is synecdoche, the relation of part to whole; drops are connected to one another by being placed in relation to the whole of which they are part. The second is metonym, close association, or nearness; the single drop is associated with larger bodies of water such as the ocean. The synecdochical and metonymical relation is then reinforced by the third trope, metaphor, as the meaning of the relation of drop and ocean is transferred to the relation of the individual to the social totality.

As a result, just as the drop *is* (a synecdochical and metonymical representation of) the ocean, so the individual *is* the political whole; every "I" is a representative of the collective and is responsible for its well-being.

To note, the poster does not *represent* this confluence of individuality and collectivity. The point is rather the following: in the unfolding of the uprising the poster rhetorically and aesthetically performs democratic equivalence and agency. The poster is in this sense what Horst Bredekamp calls an "image act" (*Bildakt*), wherein an image can be seen as a "speaking" subject.[33] In speaking and acting, the poster prepares and produces the revolution. The poster is therefore a historical index of the political rupture that it helped bring into being.

Interestingly, the drop soon started to live a life of its own in the culture of Ukraine's revolution, undergoing a series of visual transformations. In one version, the drop is imprisoned. In another, it bends the bars of a prison to escape. In yet another, it rises as David against Goliath (figure 5). The drop is frozen or freezing; it transforms itself into fire (or a Molotov cocktail) (figure 6); it infiltrates the stars of the EU flag; it drips as tears from a woman's cheeks. Thus, the drop generated its own sign language to address the various phases of the struggle. In mid-March 2014, finally, another version emerged, now with a yellow and blue drop against the colors of Russia's flag (figure 7). The artist who uploaded this image stated that he wanted to thank all the Russians who supported the revolution.

IN THE IMAGES of Strayk Plakat remain traces or impressions of a political act that redistributed political meaning and visibility–or sensibility, to use Jacques Rancière's term.[34] In the presence of the revolution, the drop posters made people see their impotence as individuals vis-à-vis the existing power structure, while also enabling them to see their potency as they joined in the creation of an oceanic force able to challenge that structure.

Collective emergence of this kind intensifies people's emotional investment in social interactions, and it thereby accounts for the common feeling of solidarity that characterizes such political events. Such an emergence also changes the constellation of political forces. If before there was an established regime governing a mass of atomized persons, as isolated as drops, now there is a tangible antagonism between the regime and an emergent, oceanic popular force. This process tends to dismantle hierarchies and erase social alienation, to the effect that people trust the collective, that is, they trust one another, as they make up a safe space and a source of meaning that emancipate people by realizing their individual agency.

A point can here be made of the fact that Klubnikin's poster did not state "We are drops in the ocean" but "*I am* a drop in the ocean." The revolution seems not to have stifled individual creativity but rather to have asserted it. Any contribution was of importance. Everyone was welcome – to cook, build barricades, donate money, or sing – and everyone fulfilled their self-imposed duties to represent and care for all others. This led to an outburst of both modest and extreme initiatives.

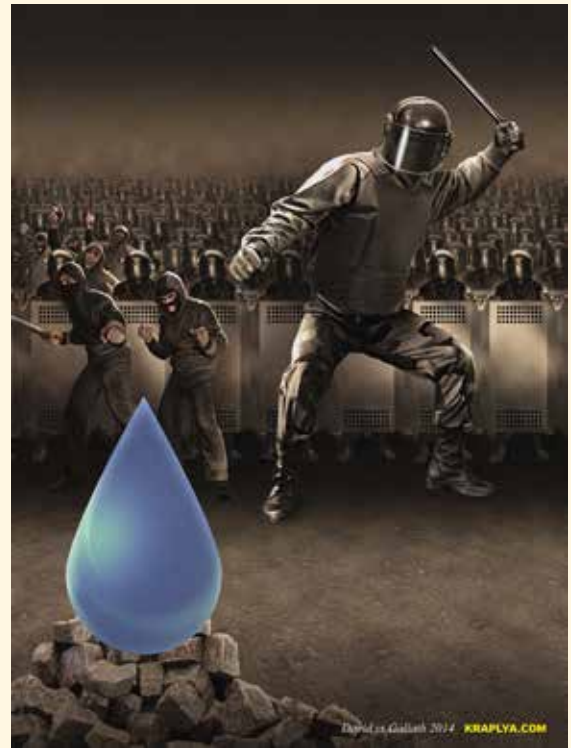On December 5, 2013, for instance, Markyian Matsekh and

Figure 5. Strayk-Plakat, The drop fights against the Goliath of the security forces. 2014.

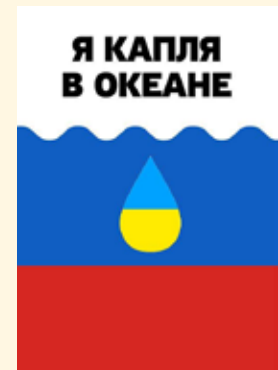Figure 6. Strayk-Plakat, The drop transforms itself into a Molotov cocktail. 2014.

Figure 7. Strayk-Plakat, The Ukrainian drop in a Russian ocean. March 15, 2014.

some of his friends painted their piano in the national colors of blue and yellow, hauled it to the square and placed it right in front of the riot police line. Matsekh then sat down on the stool and began playing Chopin's Waltz in C sharp minor until his fingers went numb in the cold. Photos of Matsekh playing Chopin's Waltz to the riot police immediately became iconic (figure 8). In interviews, the amateur pianist and IT worker from Lviv confessed that these performances had given a new meaning to his life. His intention was to show that, unlike the police and security forces, the Maidan occupants were peaceful. Even so, Matsekh's choice of Chopin spoke for itself. Chopin's music resonates with the sentiments of the composer and pianist whose native Poland was cut up between three European empires, and its main part dominated by Russian tsarism. The composer Robert Schumann described the music of his good friend Chopin as a force for national liberation, a "cannon buried in flowers," as he put it.[35] Incidentally, the Walz that Matsekh chose to perform was composed a year before the revolutions of 1848 that upset the political landscape of Europe, a historical event sometimes called *the spring of nations*.

MARKYIAN MATSEKH is an example of the ways in which Maidan's collective encouraged micro-heroism that asserted individual agency. At the other end of the spectrum, we detect equally inventive aesthetic practices without individual authorship. The foremost example of such anonymous or collective popular art is the *Yolka*, the great New Year's Tree that traditionally was erected on Kyiv's Maidan for the Christmas and New Year holidays. It was under the pretext of clearing ground for the scaffolding of the artificial tree that police assaulted the occupants on November 30. As the enormous crowd the next day chased the police off the site, the abandoned scaffolding was deployed for new purposes. The metal frame designed to be decked by plastic garlands, glitter, and electric lights turned out to be an ideal framework to which the revolution's symbols, messages, posters, flags, banners, paintings, and icons could be attached. Reportedly, the political decking of the *yolka* began as a young man climbed the structure to affix an EU flag at its top, after which others followed suit and tied their various banners and posters to the metal rods.

What the city authorities envisioned as an official symbol for the holiday season thus became an anti-monument, seized by the people from their government and now transformed into a symbol of their own plurality (figure 9). As the third main symbol of Maidan, alongside the drop and the piano, the tree was infinitely reproduced in photos, pictures, postcards, stickers, and kitchen magnets. Manuals on how to make miniature "Maidan yolkas" as Christmas gifts by using cardboard, wood, and paper circulated on the internet.

The *Yolka* was a bulletin board, scrapbook, and wardrobe, holder and hanger for the tags and colors of the protesting people. As such, it was a piece of street art or accidental art. Intended as a giant crinoline that would serve as support for a fake tree, the scaffolding now displayed different tissues and materials, and it made the voice of the people *stand out*. What was hung on, strung to, and draped over the metal bars was a collective garment: "the tattered clothing of the people," to use Victor Hugo's words about similar phenomena in the June 1848 uprising in Paris.

Nationalism is certainly a reference in the three artworks of the revolution that I have discussed. But the patriotic allusion is faint and open to question. In Klubnikin's poster, the nation is present in the color scheme, as is also the case in Markyian Matsekh's piano performances. In Matsekh's performances, the nation is also alluded to by the political edge of Chopin's music, as it presumably asserts a Polish identity trampled by neighboring empires. In the case of the New Year's tree, the nation is present only in a vague folkloristic sense. When turned into an artwork, the *Yolka* becomes collective and indeterminable: a universal frame for whatever you attach to it.

The *Yolka* is a case of collective iconoclasm, a conquest from below of state-imposed traditions and celebrations. Smashing the symbolism of the state, the tree in this sense corresponds to the numerous assaults on public monuments and particularly those representing the Soviet heritage, such as the destruction of the Lenin statue in Kyiv on December 9, 2013. This demolition, and similar acts before and after, made clear that Lenin's figure was no longer acceptable as an embodiment of society.

This brings us to a new level of the argument. With all the representations of the current political order being symbolically destroyed and emptied of meaning, what could serve as a new image of the radicalized people? While the drop and the ocean certainly offered an idea of the social cohesion and civic loyalty that connected individuals to the protesting collective, they did not in themselves offer any representation of the people except in the form of an oceanic universality. As for the *Yolka*, its patchwork outfit was continuously restyled and restitched, and underneath the crinoline of steel there was just hollow space, waiting, as it were, for a political body to fill it.

THE SEARCH FOR a truthful representation of the Ukrainian people took on many forms. One of the major ones was established by Babylon'13, a film collective which early in the protests established itself as the "Voice of Maidan" and a "Cinema of a Civil Protest." The community of filmmakers was first called together by the documentarist Volodymyr Tykhyi, who understood that radical filmmakers owned the tools needed to provide Ukrainians and the entire world with a view of the revolution from the ground. With short films and chronicles uploaded to the group's YouTube channel only hours after shooting, Babylon'13 soon became a dissident alternative to official media,

> "THE *YOLKA* IS A CASE OF COLLECTIVE ICONOCLASM, A CONQUEST FROM BELOW OF STATE-IMPOSED TRADITIONS AND CELEBRATIONS."

Figure 8. Markyian Matsekh playing the blue-and-yellow piano on Maidan, February 2014.

Figure 9. The Yolka, the New Year's Tree on Maidan. Early February 2014.

Figure 10. Roti, "New Ukraine". Sculpture in rose marble placed on Maidan on January 7, 2014.

which was restrained by government control. Babylon'13 was an eminently collective undertaking to which any person with adequate cinematic skills and revolutionary sentiment could contribute. Rather than conveying a specific perspective or idea of the revolution, it encouraged rapid coverage mainly in documentary and journalistic form.[36] All of the films were published anonymously; the film collective itself took responsibility for what each of its individual film makers published. This collective organization, in addition to the documentary format, made it possible for Babylon'13 to preserve the multiform and multivocal nature of the Maidan revolution. As a running news reel of the revolution, presenting it from within several perspectives and facets at once, Babylon'13 adopted something of the decentered aesthetics of the *yolka*; a changing assemblage of statements, voices, and views formatted only by the constraints of their YouTube platform. It is likely that no other revolution or uprising in history can provide such a complete and diverse filmic record of its unfolding day by day, and from a perspective matching the perception of the revolutionaries themselves.

Allegories of the new Ukraine

The search for an embodiment and visual representation of the people was provisionally resolved by the street artist Roti, a Frenchman with close links to Kyiv's art community. On Janu-

ary 7, after two weeks of intensive stone-carving, he unveiled on Maidan nothing less than the *New Ukraine*, a two-meter-long horizontal sculpture in rose marble that represents a woman's body horizontally submerged in water with only her face, hands and feet sticking out and rippling the surface (figure 10).

THE AESTHETIC IMPACT of Roti's sculpture is due largely to the fact that it captures an undecidable instant of appearance. Judging from the sculptural expression only, it is impossible to tell whether the female body is floating, sinking, or rising. With context and title added, the symbolism is unequivocal. What we see is the new body of Ukraine, emerging from the depths of the waters and breaking the surface in the form of a beautiful woman. The sculpture prompts the viewer to undertake a veritable act of creation, to bring the submerged woman into being through a leap of political will, by *imagining* her slow rise from the depths of the water or the rock to full visibility and representation. Thus, the sculpture does not so much represent the New Ukraine as it exhorts the viewer to participate in its creation.

Roti's sculpture at once demonstrates and enacts political emergence. It demonstrates it, through its figuration in marble, and enacts it, through its performative mode of production and display. This dual quality, being simultaneously demonstrative and performative, accounts for the sculpture's considerable im-

Figure 11. Cover artwork for Tetiana Domashenko's poetry *Heavenly Hundred Maidan Warriors*. Published by The Spiritual Axis, Kyiv, 2014.

Figure 12. Roman Bonchuk, Iconostasis of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes. Courtesy of the Museum of the Heavenly Hundred, Ivan-Frankivsk.

pact on the Maidan occupants and the broad public, their almost instinctive recognition that the sculpture expressed who they were and the meaning of their action, an identity and meaning now codified and anchored in the here and now by being carved in stone and given a name, *New Ukraine*. No wonder this artwork, too, was soon canonized as an iconic expression of the revolution.

Roti's sculpture is thus another of Maidan's absorbing image acts. Yet, the semiotic status of this artwork, as a material sign of the revolution's very meaning, does not prevent us from recognizing its conventional character. Female allegories are commonplace in the history of nationalism and political revolutions. In one sense, Roti achieved just another version of the brand, and from a stylistic point of view a rather trivial one. His sculpture of the New Ukraine alludes to the Slavic myth of the feminine spirit *Berehynia*, a female keeper of the hearth and the homeland, of water sources and riverbanks, whose popularity surged in the late 1980s when writers and artists transformed her into an idea of authentic Ukrainian femininity and national culture. Since 1991, she has been reproduced in numerous statues, murals, and popular prints, most notoriously as the gilded sculpture atop the Monument of Independence in Kyiv's Maidan.[37] Apparently, Roti's *New Ukraine* could not express its newness except by reconnecting to the old.

On the one hand, the sculpture evokes the people as a non-representable mass, a rectangular rock of pure potentiality because it can assume many shapes and forms. On the other hand, it shows the people as united and sovereign, embodied by the female figure who is about to step into history. Attempts to describe revolutionary agency unavoidably vacillate between these two, as the politically activated people will strive for an articulation that, however, negates their collective movement by binding it to a particular representation or form.

Through its title, Roti's sculpture provides the revolution

with a decidedly national character. The allusion to the mythic Berehynia turns it into a female incarnation of Ukrainian identity. As a result, the sculpture will unify the occupants and protesters only insofar as they identify themselves with Ukraine, thereby also separating themselves from any non-Ukrainian others, the most significant of which is of course Russia, which typically occupies the place of the rejected Other in Ukrainian culture and propaganda. With this closure of aesthetic signification, Maidan's universal Ocean is diminished to a Ukrainian Sea. The emotional register of nationalism, which has no firm hold on the drop, the piano, the *Yolka*, or Babylon'13's cinema of protest, appears in earnest in Roti's sculpture, devoted as it is to the imagined community of the nation.

Creating national martyrs

The first fatalities in the battles against riot police happened on Hrushevsky Street on 21 January. Many more followed, culminating a month later with the mass killings on the slopes along Institutskaya Street. It cannot be overlooked that the birth of the new Ukraine took place in a public space haunted by death. As the Revolution unfolded, the political emergence of the people was increasingly rendered through fiery nationalist iconography – patriotic and combative, grievous, and sacral. The poet Tetiana Domashenko codified this tendency. On February 21, 2014, the day of the public memorial service for the victims, she published a new poem, *Heavenly Hundred Maidan Warriors*, which sanctified the fallen ones, the "heavenly hundred" (in Ukrainian, *nebesna sotnia*).[38]

IN MANY REVOLUTIONS, aesthetic and cultural representations have been deflected in this manner. Revolutionary movements cultivate their legacies by honoring those who died for the cause. Yet, the Maidan Revolution is perhaps unique in the ways the cultural, aesthetic, and religious adulation of the dead heroes

has largely occluded the remembrance of Maidan as an experience of radical democracy.

Domashenko's poem sanctified the killed demonstrators as martyrs who had given their life and blood for the nation (figure 11). However, "heavenly hundred" is an insufficient translation of *nebesna sotnia*. It is worth dwelling on the connotations of this expression. A homonym with layered references, *sotnia* refers not just to the number 100. As mentioned above, it also designates a social, military, and administrative unit, somewhat like the Latin *centuria*, which refers to a military unit of roughly 100 men, as well as a voting unit in the assembly of the Roman Republic in antiquity and a land measurement unit. Although the etymology is tangled, it seems that the term for the cardinal number 100 at some point and in several languages–the old English *hundred* (a subdivision of a county), the German *Hundertschaft*, the Swedish *hundare*, the Ukrainian *sotnia*–extended its reference to also denote a geographical area or administrative unit consisting of 100 homesteads that could mobilize 100 men. In Ukrainian and Russian contexts, the word has been used as an organizational unit in military and civil administration, but it is also a way of naming any group involved in some kind of struggle or committed to a specific task. During Maidan in 2013–2014, demonstrators organized themselves in *sotni* tasked with self-defense and related logistics.[39]

THE GROUP OF KILLED activists mourned by the poem's "Ukrainian mother" is thus essentially a combat unit. A similar iconography – blending saintliness, martyrdom, military heroism, and Cossack allusions – characterizes several of the many paintings made in honor of Maidan's victims. Roman Bonchuk, a prominent visual artist, has devoted murals, an iconostasis, and an entire museum to the Heavenly Hundred heroes (figure 12). While Domashenko's eulogium is generally recognized for coining *nebesna sotnia*, or the "heavenly hundred," Bonchuk's paintings have been acknowledged for transforming the killed activists into Christian icons. Their respective artworks situate the dead in a religious-nationalist martyrology.[40]

Many Ukrainians have preferred to connect the revolution's tragic ending to a simple, heartbreaking folksong, *A Duck Floats on the Tisza* (*Plyve kacha po Tysyni*), which was performed during the Maidan memorial on February 21, 2014 and became an unofficial requiem for the victims. This old song of lamentation, first recorded in Lemkovina, Transcarpathia, in the 1940s, describes a mother duck bidding farewell to her offspring, who float down a dangerous river, never to be seen again and to be buried by "strangers" in a "foreign land." The lyrics about "Mother Duck" and her duckling are more modest than the zealotry of Domashenko's poem and Bonchuk's paintings. The standard reading of the folksong is that it is about a young soldier who goes off to war, leaving his mother in tears. But it is a song about *any* mother and *any* child: a recognition that departure and possible death are facts of life. Domashenko's allegory of

> **"REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS CULTIVATE THEIR LEGACIES BY HONORING THOSE WHO DIED FOR THE CAUSE."**

the Ukrainian mother speaks on behalf of Ukrainians, against enemies who kill her sons; "Mother Duck" speaks for everybody regardless of nationality.

This material thus presents us with two ideas of the Maidan Revolution that are at odds. In the perspective offered by the folksong "Plyve kacha," the revolution retains its universality even (or especially) in the face of disappearance and death. In the perspective offered by Domashenko's and Bonchuk's works, by contrast, the Maidan Revolution comes across as the realization of a heroic Ukrainian nationhood inscribed in Christian eschatology. This version of Maidan's legacy emphasizes its soldierly and self-sacrificial dimension, often rendered in idealized political iconography that ironically smacks of socialist realism. Meanwhile, it marginalizes most of the Maidan demonstrators, especially its female constituents who were advised to keep away from the barricades. In this register the Maidan Revolution is ultimately represented by the Heavenly Hundred, who through death dared complete a "pilgrimage from fear to dignity," and who voluntarily shed their "holy blood" to "sanctif[y] the freedom of Ukraine," according to Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.[41]

My point is that the aesthetic figure of the Heavenly Hundred helps us understand the process by which the nonviolent emergence of collective democracy during Maidan gradually gave way to a vigorous nationalist ideology, thus preparing itself for geopolitical conflict, Russian aggression, foreign occupation, and civil war. Put simply, the prevalent aesthetic figure of the Heavenly Hundred entailed what we may call an ideological containment, in which the democratic imagination that animated the Maidan Revolution was foreclosed or framed to fit a particular ideology.

THIS IS ONLY ONE SIDE of the process, however, for it must be recognized that the figure of the Heavenly Hundred is also a utopian figure that holds the promise of a community that offers the individual citizen a place within a larger whole. As Fredric Jameson once emphasized, no ideology can function unless it presents some utopian promise or reward to those who are interpellated by the ideology.[42] The popular embrace of the poetic figure of the Heavenly Hundred indicates that it resonates with people's experience. And although this experience goes far beyond the masculine and military ethos of the *sotnia*, it apparently still needs the mythic aura of fraternal solidarity and resistance to authority to make sense of itself. To cite one among thousands of similar statements, a female student said:

> **There were people from all parts of Ukraine. The collaboration was fantastic. It didn't matter what language you spoke. People did not think about themselves but about the other. They were willing to sacrifice their lives, so strong was the sense of community.[43]**

Testimony and artwork from Maidan express this sense of community sometimes as a mystical experience, a magnetic force-field, an all-encompassing devotion, or, in the words of Jurko Prochasko, an "enormous human solidarity."[44] As we revisit such testimonies and their multiform aesthetic articulations, we realize that the representation of the Heavenly Hundred as the epitome of the Ukrainian revolution is precisely an ideological figure that displaces the democratic universality of the revolution and highlights its nationalist elements, while at the same time embodying a revolutionary utopia of community and solidarity. As genuine as the Heavenly Hundred appears as an expression of the strength of the revolution, it is false as a description of its reality. We glimpse a more adequate description in a Facebook posting from late January 2014:

> We have a Sambir sotnia, "Afghan" sotnia, "Vidsich" sotnia. There is a Gandhi's sotnia (followers of the father of non-violent resistance – Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi) that protects civilians. How can we explain that to you, our European friends, that we have a Gandhi's sotnia? That we have priests, ultras [soccer fans], students, Cossacks, Afghans, left-wing-radicals, poets, alpinists, Buddhists, Hutsuls, Crimean Tatars – and they are all together![45]

Most of Maidan's *sotni* took part in the organized self-defense against the security forces, and some were responsible for cooking, emergency health care, fuel, supplies, and information. Artists and cultural workers also founded a *sotnia*, which organized art workshops and confronted the lines of riot police with poetry recitals. Other groups avoided or ignored the term, however. The graphic artists in *Strayk Plakat* did not identify as a *sotnia*. The members of the film community Babylon'13 considered the label irrelevant.[46]

IN LATE FEBRUARY there were 42 *sotni* on Kyiv's Independence Square.[47] Impressive as this is, it still means that most demonstrators were not members of any *sotnia* but contributed in countless other ways to the Revolution – another sign of its leaderless and multiform character. Meanwhile, it is telling that there had to be a Women's *sotnia*, for the simple reason that women were excluded from most other units of self-defense. A hand-written poster near the field-kitchen became infamous: "Women! If you see garbage – clean it up, the revolutionaries will be pleased." The *sotnia* is a mode of organization that tends toward a male homosocial and military ethos, in relation to which women are traditionally the keepers of the homeland, in accord with the gendered nationalism epitomized by the figure of Berehynia. The founders of the Olha Kobylianska Women's Sotnia saw

their initiative as a feminist critique of patriarchy, a counter-hegemonic intervention that promoted non-violent resistance and Ukraine's right to self-determination, while at the same time shunning nationalist symbolism.[48]

Again, this indicates how contrary notions of solidarity play against each other in the cultural imaginary of the revolution. Yet another understanding of solidarity is evoked in one of the films by Babylon'13, *The Citizen* (Hromadianyn). According to the members of the collective, it sums up the meaning of the Ukrainian revolution.[49] *The Citizen* consists of statements by activists (eight men and two women), each explaining why they joined the protests or, to be precise, "what they contribute to Maidan." A female IT worker explains: "I feel the reloading of human consciousness. I contribute to Maidan seven hours." A male entrepreneur asserts, "People have stopped looking for Messiah. We are ready to do everything ourselves," adding, "I contribute to Maidan all I have." Next, a builder, sculptor, retired soldier, agent of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, recreation therapist, designer, and filmmaker also state their reasons and display their contributions. One by one they lay down wooden signs on which they have written their professions and pledges, and at the end of the film the camera captures from above the mosaic of all the wooden signs that together form a map of Ukraine (figure 13). The seven-minute film closes with the summation, "Profession Citizen," and a quote from Dante: "The hottest fires in hell are reserved for those who remain neutral in times of moral crisis."

Notably, the plot of *The Citizen* has the same performative structure as Klubnikin's poster *I Am a Drop in the Ocean*. The aesthetic work represents what it performs, a pledge of allegiance to the collective. Individuals add themselves to the collective, identifying themselves as parts of a totality that they are in the process of reinventing by acting on it, and acting *in* it, together with others. Let us ask: Who or what is the beneficiary of their contributions? The people in the film give a straightforward answer: "Maidan."

What, then, is "Maidan"? In this context, it apparently signifies the emergence of the people as a democratic force outside existing systems of representation. Put differently, the term denominates a collective being and process that exist only so long as people give to it. It follows that Maidan was a being that was nothing more–and nothing less–than a collective of people unified by bonds of solidarity.

"PERHAPS THE ONLY tangible political idea that everyone involved in the Maidan had in common was the square itself," states Jessica Zychowicz in regard to Maidan's feminist movement.[50] She goes on to argue that the square emerged as a transparent space, or a negative space, which drew everyone into its center for what it might become. The square was a negative space of potentiality,

> "TESTIMONY AND ARTWORK FROM MAIDAN EXPRESS THIS SENSE OF COMMUNITY SOMETIMES AS A MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE, A MAGNETIC FORCEFIELD, AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING DEVOTION."

contesting the positive spaces of established power. "The square was sought, shared, and contested because of its polysemy. The defining measure of the moment was the square itself."[51]

This description contains an insight concerning the multiform collective of Maidan and how it became a magnet for political projects that otherwise shared little in terms of their respective political agendas. Yet, what the remark fails to observe is that "the square" is here a placeholder for democracy, not only in its fundamental sense, but also in literal terms: a place of assembly. Thus, what Zychowicz really refers to is perhaps not so much the square as a "political idea," but as a *practice* and *experience* of democracy expressed in numerous microhistories of solidarity. In retrospect, these histories are incompatible; in the moment of the uprising, they were not. What unites the microhistories is a profound sense of indebtedness, which prompts an urge to give, contribute, and make sacrifices. Such sacrifices are the fuel of revolution, consolidating and accelerating the collective movement. A speaker in Vorozhbit's *Maidan Voices* explains:

> There shouldn't have been anyone there, logically, but there were so many people there ... These people were busier than ants in a nest. I saw a disabled man, shoveling snow from his wheelchair. With a spade. And I decided to take an active part, because I felt so very thankful. I wanted to say how thankful I felt towards all these people. First of all I carried water, then sacks of snow, and I saw this man, he was limping, and holding a stick in one hand and a 12-litre bottle of water in the other. Although I was carrying 10–20 litres of water, my arms were falling off by the end. And again I felt tears in my eyes. I realized I'd chosen my position. That's exactly it: I wanted to give thanks to these people.[52]

The aesthetic expressions of the Revolution show how solidarity expands and contracts: on the one hand, a flurry of examples of Maidan's horizontal, leaderless, multiform, and spontaneous modes of articulation, its *heterarchic*–as opposed to hierarchic– pattern of action and expression;[53] on the other, and especially in the revolution's violent and tragic finale, a revival of historical heroes of Ukrainian culture and the Cossack myth, a recycling of martial imaginary in the form of homemade weaponry, combat gear, and militaristic emblems, and an iconography of nationalism and religion.

INTERPRETATIONS OF the Maidan revolution will therefore hinge on the question of the limits of solidarity. As Serhiy Kvit argues, no such limit existed at first. The revolution knew no boundaries: "The Euromaidan was ideologically friendly and open to everyone. There was no division based on language or ethnicity." Kvit even asserts that "[n]ot only were Russian-speaking Ukrainians welcome on the Maidan, but so were Russians and Russian flags."[54] Be this true or not for the first phases of the uprising, there then came a point where "the act of giving to Maidan" began to translate into an act of fundraising to support the armed *sotni* and other volunteers who in March transferred to Donbas

Figure 13. Babylon 13, *The Citizen*, 2014. Screenshot.

in order to fight the Russia-supported militias who had backed Yanukovych. In this process, Russian flags swiftly disappeared, as the "enormous human solidarity" which initially characterized Ukraine's democratic uprising transformed itself into that more ordinary yet enigmatic phenomenon which we call nationalism.

Concluding Remarks: **Solidarity between the Multiform and the Uniform**

According to political sociologist Robin Wagner-Pacifici, disruptive social events generate a continuous articulation of signifying practices through which the participants recognize the meaning of what they do together, and which gradually assume the form of a representation of the revolutionary event and process. The aesthetic works and testimonials that I have discussed in this article are cases or moments in such a cumulative process – which Wagner-Pacifici calls "political semiosis" – that infuse meaning into the collective experience, delineate the contours of the revolutionary community, testify to the revolution's significance for its participants, and contribute to its legacy. Cultural and aesthetic expressions that partake in this process of political semiosis enable those who participate to understand themselves as an emergent collective and sense the meaning of their actions. By giving form and meaning to what is multiform, such aesthetic acts also "organize" what appears to lack order, for instance, by privileging certain revolutionary agents and events over others.

If we briefly return to Sergei Loznitsa's film *Maidan*, we find a stunning illustration of such tensions between the multiform and egalitarian democratic praxis of the assembled people and what we perhaps too bluntly may call their ideological streamlining. The film is rhythmically sequenced – now displaying a profusion of everyday activities without central command and yet mysteriously coordinated, now conveying in powerful imagery how everybody is animated by a single collective will. As mentioned, the film's moments of unification have a particular acoustic quality as they are accompanied or even aroused by music, thus showing that aesthetic expressivity momentarily can turn many voices

into one, the multiform into the uniform. In this way, Loznitsa ultimately embeds all the sounds, noises, and explosions of the uprising into one song, the national anthem (see page 55).

Powerful aesthetic expressions are thus able to arrest the continuous process of political semiosis, capture the revolutionary event, and affix it to an image, story, ritual, or song. Such articulations inevitably inflect collective passions toward certain values and ideals. Arguably, this is what happened on Maidan beginning on February 21 as the myth and image of the Heavenly *sotnia* were put in place as an immovable figure and master narrative that re-oriented the Revolution toward past moments of nationalism, and which subsequently could be recoded for present purposes and help mobilize people in the revolution's violent and military aftermath. As Mychailo Wynnyckyj submits, "nationalist rhetoric and symbolism became the 'semiotic glue' for an *imagined community* formed and located in the *present* – not in the past."[55]

CAN WE CONCLUDE, then, that the Maidan revolutionaries eventually drew too much of their poetry from the past, to paraphrase Karl Marx? In the same text, Marx famously stated that people act and make history "under circumstances encountered, given and transmitted from their past."[56] Despite the cultural creativity, polyvocal aesthetics, universalist imagination, and democratic ingenuity by which the Ukrainian revolutionaries made themselves known in its present moment, and despite all the energy spent on creating something that did not exist before, they also conjured up, as Marx phrased it, "the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language".[57] Should we conclude, in other words, that the emergence of democracy in Maidan was overtaken by Cossack myths and national cults of male heroism and martyrdom? If so, how much of this is attributed to Russian aggression, and how much to a radical nationalism internal to Ukraine? Or will the future show that Maidan's return to traditions was preparatory, a run-up to the realization by Ukraine's people of more adequate models of democracy?

The answer will largely depend on the meaning Ukraine's historians and historical institutions ascribe to the Maidan Revolution in the long run. Ten years after the event, the choice between universalist and nationalist conceptions of solidarity remains a real one. Although the war today necessarily favors a narrow interpretation of war-time patriotism, future generations are likely to reopen the case and return to the Maidan that was: the political emergence of democracy and the struggle over its meaning. ❌

Stefan Jonsson is Professor in Ethnic Studies and Head of the Division of Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO) at Linköping University, Sweden.

references

1   Andrey Kurkov, *Ukraine Diaries: Dispatches from Kiev*, trans. Sam Taylor (London: Harvill Secker, 2014), 89–90.

2   Quoted in Molly Flynn, "'Maidan: Voices from the Uprising'. Molly Flynn interviews Natalya Vorozhbit about her new documentary theatre piece", *Central and Eastern European London Review – CEEL.org.uk*, May 19, 2014. [Available at: http://ceel.org.uk/culture/film-theatre/maidan-voices-from-the-uprising-molly-flynn-interviews-natalya-vorozhbit-on-her-new-play/?LMCL=MzyOcJ&LMCL=HppjH]

3   Quoted in Flynn, "'Maidan: Voices from the Uprising'."

4   [Sergei Loznitsa], "'Du bist Henne, Hahn und Gott!': Sergei Loznitsa macht Filme ohne Helden. Der ukrainische Regisseur spricht über Kritik, Russland und seinen Film 'Maidan'," *Die Tageszeitung (taz)*, May 7, 2015 [Available at: https://taz.de/Sergei-Loznitsa-ueber-Geschichte-im-Film/!5009323/]

5   Stefan Jonsson, *A Brief History of the Masses: Three Revolutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), Claude Lefort, 'La question de la démocratie'. In *Le Retrait du politique: Travaux du Centre de Recherches Philosophiques sur le Politique* (Paris: Galilée, 1983), 71–88; Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

6   Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* (London: Verso, 2012), 56–57.

7   For a more detailed exposition, see Stefan Jonsson, "Unfolding Political Emergence: The Knowledge of Visual Artworks in Peter Weiss's Aesthetics of Resistance", *New German Critique*, vol. 29 no. 3 (2022), 65–91; Stefan Jonsson, *Crowds and Democracy: The Idea and Image of the Masses from Revolution to Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

8   Mychailo Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine's Maidan, Russia's War: A Chronicle and Analysis of the Revolution of Dignity* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2019), 58–61.

9   Kurkov, *Ukraine Diaries*, 22.

10   Kurkov, *Ukraine Diaries*, 15.

11   Democratic Initiatives Foundation, "Maidan-December and Maidan-February: what has changed?" 6 February 2014. [Available at: https://dif.org.ua/en/article/maidan-december-and-maidan-february-what-has-changed]

12   Olga Onuch, "The Maidan and Beyond: Who Were the Protesters?" *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 44–51.

13   By contrast, party affiliation to some extent explains the counter protests, or anti-Maidan, which to a large extent were organized by the Party of Regions or wealthy donors sympathetic to its cause. Many participants in the anti-Maidan were offered a handout. See Petro Burkovskyi and Olexiy Haran, "Before and After the Euromaidan: Ukraine Between the European Choice and the Rusiian Factor," in *Ukraine After the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes*, ed. by Viktor Stepanenko and Yaroslav Pylynski (Bern, etc: Peter Lang, 2015), 76–80; Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine's Maidan*, 83.

14   Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine's Maidan*, 69.

15   Igor Lyubashenko, "Euromaidan: From the students' protest to mass uprising", in *The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention: Ukraine's complex transition*, ed. Klaus Bachmann and Igor Lyubashenko (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 68.

16   Oksana Forostyna, "How to oust a dictator in 93 days. Bankers, hipsters and housewives: Revolution of the common people", *Eurozine*, May 15, 2014. Originally published in *Visegrad Insight*, no.1 2014. [Available at: https://www.eurozine.com/how-to-oust-a-dictatorin-93-days/]; Lyubashenko, "Euromaidan", 76–85.

17   Myroslav Shkandrij, "Living with Ambiguities: Meanings of Nationalism

in the Russian-Ukrainian War", in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenge of Change*, ed. Olga Bertelsen (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2016), 124.

18   The movement was not limited to Kyiv but extended throughout Ukraine and abroad. As Olga Zelinska has shown, it encompassed hundreds of Maidans in cities and towns in Ukraine, all of them organizing their *viches* and issuing revolutionary resolutions that demanded people's rule and called for the establishment of people's councils (*Narodna Rada*), thereby moving toward the ideal of direct democracy.

19   Bertelsen, "Introduction", 20.

20   Bertelsen, "Introduction", 21.

21   Stefan Auer, "Carl Schmitt in the Kremlin: The Ukraine Crisis and the Return of Geopolitics", *International Affairs*, vol. 91, no. 5 (2015): 958. Quoted in Igor Torbakov, "Ukraine and Russia: Entangled Histories, and a War of Narratives", in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine*, 100.

22   Igor Torbakov, "Ukraine and Russia: Entangled Histories, and a War of Narratives", in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine*, 101.

23   Ilya Gerasimov, "Ukraine 2014: The First Postcolonial Revolution. Introduction to the forum", *Ab Imperio*, January 2014, 23.

24   For examples: Adam Balcer, "Borders within Borderland: The ethnic and cultural diversity of Ukraine," in *The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention*, 87–118; Myroslav Shkandrij, "Living with Ambiguities"; Laada Bilaniuk, "Ideologies of Language in Wartime", in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine*, 139–160; Viktor Stepanenko, "Ukraine's Revolution as De-Institutionalisation of the Post-Soviet Order," in *Ukraine after the Euromaidan*, 29–46; Pawel Kowal, "Oligarchy, Tyranny and Revolutions in Ukraine 1991–2014," *The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention*, 119–136; Igor Torbakov, "Ukraine and Russia"; Spasimir Domaradzki, "The Role of NATO and the EU in the Ukrainian Crisis," in *The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention*, 267–298.

25   Stefan Jonsson, "Art of Protest: Understanding and Misunderstanding Monstrous Events," *Theory & Event* vol. 24 no. 2 (April 2021): 511–36; see also Stefan Jonsson, *A Brief History of the Masses: Three Revolutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

26   Tamara Hundorova, "Ukrainian Euromaidan and Social and Cultural Performance", in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine*, 163–164, 169, 173.

27   Nazar Kozak, "Art Embedded into Protest: Staging the Ukrainian Maidan", *Art Journal*, vol. 76 (2017): 1, 27.

28   Dmytro Shevchuk and Maksym Karpovets, "The Performative Practices in Politics: The Ukrainian Maidan and its Carnivalization", *Symposion*, vol. 7, no.1 (2020): 94–96. [85–97]

29   Strayk Plakat. Facebook page. https://www.facebook.com/strikeposter/.

30   Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*. Vol. 1, *Théorie des ensembles pratiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985/2004), 449–511.

31   Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, new ed. (London: Verso, 2014), 180–208.

32   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard Univesity Press, 2012), 436–442.

33   Horst Bredekamp, *Der Bildakt* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2015), 59–64.

34   Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*.

35   Robert Schumann, *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*, ed. Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover, 1988), 114.

36   The films are available at https://www.youtube.com/@babylon13ua. My account is built on interviews with members of the film collective –

Volodymyr Tykhyi, Andrii Kotliar, Yuliia Hontaruk, Roman Liubyi, Denys Vorontsov – made in Kyiv, July 7, 2021.

37   Oksana Kis, "(Re)Constructing Ukrainian Women's History: Actors, Authors, and Narratives," in *Gender, Politics, and Society in Ukraine*, ed. by Olena Hankivsky and Anastasia Salnykova (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012), 152–179.

38   Lesya Voroniuk, ed., *Heavenly Hundred: Anthology of Maidan Poetry*. 2nd ed. (Chernivtsi: Bukrek Publishing House, 2014 [in Ukrainian]).

39   *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, entries for "Company" and "Company System". Available at https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com

40   Elżbieta Olzacka, "The Role of Museums in Creating National Community in Wartime Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers* vol. 49 no. 6 (2021): 1028–44.

41   Heleen Zorgdrager, "Patriotism, Peacebuilding and Patrons in Heaven: The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Times of War," paper presented at the conference "The Churches and the War in Ukraine" (Tilburg, Netherlands, April 4, 2015), 7.

42   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 281–99.

43   Quoted in Heleen Zorgdrager, "Epiphany between the Barricades: The Ukrainian Majdan as a Sacred Space," *Jaarboek voor liturgieonderzoek* 32 (2016): 178.

44   Quoted in Marci Shore, *The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 125.

45   Quoted from Nataliya Bezborodova, "Nebesna Sotnia: Formation of a New Narrative from Protest Lore to Institutionalized Commemorative Practice), *Ethnologies*, vol. 40:1 (2018): 101–138. Sambir is a town in the Lviv region. "Vidsich" refers to a civic movment against President Yanukovich and pro-Russian tendencies. Hutsul is an ethnic group centered in the Carpathian Mountains.

46   Members of the Babylon' 13 film collective, Volodymyr Tykhyi, Andrii Kotliar, Yuliia Hontaruk, Roman Liubyi, and Denys Vorontsov, interview, July 7, 2021.

47   Mykhailo Minakov, "Changing Civil Society After Maidan," Report at the Danyliw Seminar, Ottawa, October 30, 2014. [Available at www.academia.edu/9050237/Changing_Civil_Society_after_Maidan_2014?]

48   Sarah D. Phillips, "The Women's Squad in Ukraine's protests: Feminism, nationalism, and militarism on the Maidan," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 41 no. 3 (2014): 414–426. For a more wide-ranging analysis of the role of feminist art and activism in the political transformation in Ukraine: Jessica Zychowicz, *Superfluous Women: Art, Feminism, and Revolution in Twenty-First-Century Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

49   Babylon' 13 – Cinema of a Civil Protest, *The Citizen* (Hromadyanyn), January 25, 2014. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrUM1GUy5Xk; December 15, 2022.]

50   Zychowicz, *Superfluous Women*, 291.

51   Zychowicz, *Superfluous Women*, 291.

52   Vorozhbit, *Maidan Voices*, 36.

53   Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine's Maidan*, 250.

54   Serhiy Kvit, "The Ideology of the Euromaidan", *Social Health and Communication Studies Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2014): 31. (27–39).

55   Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine's Maidan*, 258.

56   Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (London: Electric Book Company, 2000). Accessed August 30, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central, 7.

57   Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 8.

MAIDAN, MEMORY, AND MUSEUM
Relations between aesthetics and revolution, 2014–2021

Figure 1. Independence Square or *Maidan Nezalezhnosti*.

by **Galyna Kutsovska**

abstract

This paper delves into the ways in which art and cultural expressions have helped to preserve the memory of the Ukrainian Revolution and how the Maidan Museum contributes to this effort. Specifically, the study explores the significance of the Maidan event in Ukraine's national memory culture and how it is being integrated into the country's historical narrative as part of the decommunization and decolonization processes. Additionally, the text examines how the politics of memory, as expressed through the museum's performances and aesthetics, can serve as a tool of collective and national resistance. Ultimately, the article argues that the Maidan event is not fixed but rather dynamic, and Maidan memory plays a critical role in Ukraine's ongoing transition away from a shared historical past with Russia.

KEY WORDS: Historical event, politics of memory, sites of memory, museums, Maidan.

Note: Images by the author, unless stated otherwise.

The memorialization of the Maidan Revolution and Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred has been uncertain, despite efforts from the public, activists, authorities, and the government. Although the Museum and Memorial complex remained unbuilt until the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, over eight years after the Maidan events, the memory of the Ukrainian Revolution has for the past decade been actively used to unite the nation against Russian aggression. As will be discussed in this article, the events of Maidan have been incorporated into the national resistance narrative, inspiring Ukrainians to strive for independence and freedom. Maidan has become a symbol of triumph and martyrdom for Ukrainians and the global community in the current context of the war. The Maidan Revolution case brings attention to the ongoing conflicts and tensions regarding memory culture in post-Soviet Ukraine, where actors reactivate collective memories. This shared understanding of the past is a living memory that evolves through art and commemorative activities.

It is important to note that the Maidan Revolution was immediately followed by the annexation of Crimea and the military

conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, which fundamentally affected the framework of Maidan memory. As a result, there have been ongoing efforts to reassess historical myths, memories, and symbols to reject the Soviet symbolic heritage and shared past. These efforts led to the adoption of the Ukrainian memory laws or de-communization laws in 2015, which sparked international debates around controversial historical figures and national heroes from Ukraine's dark past. Memory laws are often effectively adopted in transitioning societies, as a tool to define what is an acceptable past as a foundation for a national identity.[1] The decommunization laws of 2015 in Ukraine played a critical role in shaping the country's politics of memory. This included renaming over 50,000 streets, squares, cities, and other places with national-socialist names, marking the rejection of communist symbols and the dismantling of the former Soviet colonial system.

As pointed out by Tatiana Zhurzhenko, the Maidan Revolution, military conflict in Donbas, and Russian aggression led to the implementation of memory laws in Ukraine.[2] These laws were a long-awaited measure aimed at delegitimizing Soviet historical influence and promoting the European integration of Ukraine, using the argument of securitization and modernization. Furthermore, Georgiy Kasianov suggested that the annexation of Crimea and the war in the east increased anti-Russian military propaganda, drawing parallels between the historical fights for independence in 1918 and the current events in Ukraine.[3] Another turning point that disturbed the memorialization of the Maidan event was Russia's full-scale invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022.

THE PRIMARY FOCUS of this study is to explore how the Maidan Revolution is being commemorated through art and cultural representations. To do so, we must examine the correlation between aesthetics and revolution. This investigation takes place within the framework of the continuous memorialization and institutionalization of the Revolution's legacy. In this process, Maidan is perceived as a place of triumph and honor for the nation at the state level. Yet, it also symbolizes a place of vulnerability and sorrow for the families of the demonstrators and heroes killed during and after the Revolution. The question arises: How can we memorialize an event that brings both trauma to individuals and pride to the community? Moreover, how can art projects and aesthetic expressions contribute to this process and keep this memory alive?

Furthermore, part of the analysis discusses how museums and memorials become actors in the national-building process, more specifically, how museums and memorials not only serve as *passive* sites of memorialization, preservation, and representation of past events but also as *actors* in shaping a particular historical narrative in the present discourse, as a vital living source

of mobilization and resistance of the people. It moreover asks, what position does a museum take in the construction of national consciousness and ideology of a community in times when its integrity and independence are violated? Finally, the text reflects upon the future legacy of the Maidan event and memory.

This paper explores the politics of memory and memory culture surrounding Maidan in Ukraine, particularly after the Revolution from 2014 until 2021. The study draws upon empirical materials from various sources, including authorities, museum workers, intellectuals, artists, public actors, and victims' families. The material under analysis includes commemoration practices introduced by the Maidan Museum, Ukrainian authorities, and the public, in Kyiv, as well as objects that constitute part of the politics of memory, mainly exhibitions and memorial campaigns, architectural competitions, and literary, artistic, and cultural initiatives created during and after Maidan. The Maidan events sparked many spontaneous and collective remembrance activities, motivated by patriotic expressions, the demand for collective unity, and the need for mourning. This study will demonstrate memorial events with a close connection to the official state and public commemoration of the Revolution on the Maidan Square in Kyiv and those directly organized by the Maidan Museum.

The article starts with an overview of Maidan's politics of memory and memory culture over the past decade at both state and public levels. The content covers a political review of governmental activities, descriptions of art projects, commemoration campaigns, public initiatives, cultural and historical practices, and aesthetic expressions created by artists and the public. The first part of the text also briefly analyzes the memory site Maidan and its monumental objects. The paper's second section discusses the Maidan Museum's development process. It covers various steps, including efforts to establish a state institution dedicated to preserving memories of the Revolution, design projects of architectural competitions, and activities related to the historicization and museumification of Maidan.[4] The section also highlights the collection of art objects and historical recordings, exhibitions, cultural and historical activities, and commemorative practices.

> **"MAIDAN AS AN EVENT APPEARS IN A TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENT IN TIME FOR UKRAINE AND EUROPE, EMERGING FROM A DIFFICULT PAST AND UNCERTAIN FUTURE, REFLECTING THE EVENT'S IMPACT ON HISTORICAL PROGRESS."**

Theoretical reflections

This study is theoretically inspired by Robin Wagner-Pacifici's conceptual model, which aims to analyze the "complex lived experiences of events in the making."[5] Through examining several historical events, she explores how these events erupt and develop over time, space, and political authority.[6] Each event is shaped by certain forms, propositions, and agencies, and is built around interactions and transformations.[7] Wagner-Pacifici is in-

terested in identifying the underlying causes, significances, and outcomes of events, as well as what is at stake in their formation and flow.

Wagner-Pacifici argues that many studies in the field of collective memory suggest that once an event is memorialized, it is considered finished.[8] This means that forms of the event, such as memorials and museums, are not elements of the event itself. However, her conceptualization of the "ongoingness" of events or their "eventness" challenges this idea. Wagner-Pacifici explains that the field of memory studies sees the phenomenon of memory dealing with historical events from a distance.[9] Her criticism is directed towards the belief that memory only deals with what happens in the aftermath of a historical event, as she instead argues that memory including its aesthetic expressions or forms – museums, monuments, and memorials – are "congealed moments of the events." Using the 9/11 tragedy as an example, Wagner-Pacifici claims that the 9/11 Memorial and Museum constitute a form of the event since it cannot be considered finished. Thus, according to Wagner-Pacifici, memory is a fluid part of the event as it lives on in restless modes. Consequently, to analyze or "grasp" the event, we must understand their "restlessness" and "eventness."

IN HER BOOK, Wagner-Pacifici focuses on the evolution of events. This includes the grounds and backgrounds, a point of rupture, forms of the event, and finally its fixation in a particular time and space or struggle with achieving that. Accordingly, events emerge and take shape from the ground to a rupture eventually resulting in a figuration.[10] Wagner-Pacifici highlights the nature of the fluidity and uncertainty of the events, and how their flow is primarily influenced by cultural and political contexts and prerequisites in a specific society. So, what does a rupture mean in the Maidan event, and how does this rupture affect the memory of the Revolution? The Maidan Revolution was followed by the annexation of Crimea and the military conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014. We can observe that the Maidan event was "interrupted" by the Russian war that affected the development of Maidan memory over a decade. The war became a rupture in the Maidan event-in-the-making, a sudden and turning point in the historical event of the Revolution, which made it restless.

In the theoretical considerations, Wagner-Pacifici refers to the work of scholars Paul Ricoeur and William Sewell. Ricoeur asks how events affect the present, interrupt or end epochs, and alter the perceptions of the future.[11] The same questions are relevant for understanding the Maidan event in Kyiv, including how it erupted and developed, and what expectations it created. Maidan as an event appears in a transformative moment in time for Ukraine and Europe, emerging from a difficult past and uncertain future, reflecting the event's impact on historical progress. And as the Maidan event intersects with other historical

events within time and space, it remains potentially disruptive. Wagner-Pacifici draws on William Sewell's concept of "eventful temporality," which explains the interactions of events and historical "articulations."[12] The Maidan event goes beyond one time and space, and its temporality is extended and not yet defined, as will be shown in the present study.

According to Wagner-Pacifici's research, studies on collective memory have not given enough attention to the variety of memory forms and their relationship to content.[13] She stresses that the meaning of collective memory is formed through the interplay between the content of historical events and forms used to preserve and publicly represent them.[14] Thus, the aesthetic forms used to express memory are essential in molding the collective memory and its interpretation. This will be seen from the research on Maidan memory, which shows that memorials and museums, as aesthetic expressions, have a similar methodological impact on transforming memory.

IN ONE OF HER previous studies, Wagner-Pacifici analyzes the creation, design, and reception of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial.[15] The Memorial was built in 1982 to honor the soldiers who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. The process of building the Memorial posed methodological challenges for creating new commemorative forms that remember the past with uncertainty and ambivalence, leaving room for multiple interpretations. Sociologist Amy Sodaro notes that some historical events, such as the Holocaust and the Vietnam War, made it difficult to find cultural forms to remember and represent difficult pasts.[16] The Vietnam Memorial was seen as a transition in memory studies that emerged in connection to the politics of regret.[17] Four decades later, the memory, memorial, and museum of the Maidan event have the potential to draw a new methodological line in the field of collective memory. They could initiate modern discussions over which aesthetic forms of memory can reflect the meanings and significance of such a multifaceted event as the Maidan Revolution and which values it will promote.

In line with Wagner-Pacifici's analysis, we are interested in *where* the Maidan event starts and ends, *who* the participants involved in the event are, if we are *in* or *out* of this event, and *how*.[18] Wagner-Pacifici's research contributes to the scholarship on the historical past and theorization of events, their continuity, forms, and transformations. Events are preserved in objects across time and space such as museums, memorials, commemorations, speeches, and memorial stones. Wagner-Pacifici considers them as "congealed moments of the events" themselves.[19] The collective memory of the event is embodied in cultural forms that assign new meanings and significance to it.[20] The present study of Maidan memory delves into comprehending its forms and meanings, and Wagner-Pacifici's analytical model

> ## "EVENTS ARE PRESERVED IN OBJECTS ACROSS TIME AND SPACE SUCH AS MUSEUMS, MEMORIALS, COMMEMORATIONS, SPEECHES, AND MEMORIAL STONES."

explains certain aspects of this process while also raising new questions for future research.

Pierre Nora believes that memory is not just a mere representation of the past; it is a dynamic phenomenon that continues to evolve and can be distorted in the present.[21] The memory of Maidan is an example of how the past can be reinterpreted and reconfigured, affecting the historical consciousness and national identity of a community for the future. Historian Hayden White emphasizes that the historical past is a construction made by selecting a set of events from the human past that occurred at specific times and places and fitting them into diachronically organized accounts of a group's self-constitution over time.[22] Therefore, memorialization is not just about preserving and conserving the past but also recollecting it through interpretation and filtering. This involves reconstructing different versions of what happened in the past, with the resulting version being a compromise that incorporates a new interpretation of the event. Once institutions and historical accounts sanction this interpretation, it becomes the dominant one that overshadows other versions of the event. When this dominant interpretation is materialized in aesthetic forms of memory, such as museums, buildings, and monuments, the past may appear complete, and memorialization is considered finished.

THIS PAPER LOOKS at the theoretical aspects of memorial museums and their role in commemorating the past.[23] According to Amy Sodaro, memorial museums serve as a means of dealing with the past that memorials are unable to achieve.[24] In her book, Sodaro explains that while memorials offer spaces for remembrance and active sites for participatory memory, museums shape the history of past events by collecting artifacts and preserving narratives. They also serve as public spaces that can build national identities and foster a sense of belonging. Modern museums have evolved to become more "experiential" by providing visitors with education and immersive experiences. Sodaro notes that memorial museums built at the site of atrocities create a universal space with broader meanings through architectural and exhibition design. The Maidan Museum, which is still in the process of formation, will need to examine these theoretical aspects, particularly in terms of its approach, exhibitionary strategies, memorial techniques, and forms. In a broader context, the Maidan study aims to theoretically comprehend the responses of museums during times of conflict and war, emphasizing their role as national cultural institutions that preserve cultural heritage and create historical narratives.[25]

Finally, there is a significant amount of scholarly literature available on memory politics in Ukraine.[26] The main themes surrounding memory culture since the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 include memories of the Holodomor (Famine 1932–1933),[27] historical representations of the military units Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA),[28] and decommunization laws.[29] The contemporary memory politics in Ukraine constitutes part of the nation-building process and is accompanied by the process of de-Sovietization,[30] where the Maidan memory symbolizes a transition from the Soviet legacy to a democratic Ukrainian future.

Recent discussions on postcolonial Ukrainian culture have contributed to a wider understanding of the experiences of Ukrainian people under Soviet totalitarian and Russian imperialistic regimes.[31] This perspective is based on the belief that Ukrainian culture was oppressed and considered inferior by the Russian superior culture. Therefore, the postcolonial transition of the Ukrainian culture involves rejecting or dissociating itself from the Russian imperial heritage and Soviet myths. This process is also seen as part of anticolonial nationalism, where memory politics reject connections with imperial culture and establish new heroes and historical narratives that may lead to distortions of past events.[32]

The debates on understanding Ukraine's colonial experiences and "who colonized whom" were problematized in scholarly circles.[33] Some scholars considered the nationalization of Ukrainian history and culture, achieved through de-Sovietization or decommunization policies, as equivalent to the process of decolonization.[34] Therefore, the recent tendency toward decolonization of memory and historical narratives is a significant development in Ukrainian memory culture, particularly in light of the present anti-colonial opposition to the Soviet past. Theoretical debates on decolonization concerning the rejection of the Soviet legacy offer a deeper insight into the current memory politics in Ukraine. These circumstances influence the creation and progress of the collective memory of Maidan. Maidan has gradually become intertwined with the decolonization narratives, and its assessment cannot be separated from it.

So, regarding Maidan, ten years after the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014: What exactly was it, and what significance does it hold for Ukraine and the rest of the world today?

Maidan: Forum for popular assembly

As a central square, "maidan" historically served as a platform for civil discourse and democratic participation, where citizens can express their views and discuss social issues. Maidan square in Kyiv has played a significant role in Ukrainian history as a major site of the collective voice, a public space for *viche* and popular assembly.[35] After the Revolution of Granite in 1990 and Ukraine's independence in 1991, Maidan in Kyiv was officially named Maidan of Independence, also known as Independence Square or Maidan Nezalezhnosti.[36] It became a national location for public performances, demonstrations, and civic unity, where people can express their citizenship rights openly and democratically.[37] The square has been a center of significant political and social changes and cultural transformations for Ukrainians, with "Going out to the Maidan" signifying an expression of one's will and patriotic position.[38]

During the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014, also known as Euromaidan, Revolution of Dignity, or Maidan, people all over Ukraine gathered at maidans in Kyiv and other cities to protest and show their civic unity. In the aftermath of the Revolution, maidans became memory sites to commemorate the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred and the Revolution itself, symbolizing patriotism, nationalism, sacrifice, and the continuous fight for

independence. The choice of Maidan as an official site of the memory of the Revolution is in turn a symbolic act of national significance, demonstrating the recognition of the importance of popular assembly and its powerful impact on Ukrainian history, memory, nationalism, and national identity. Therefore, understanding and analyzing the phenomenon of Maidan is crucial for comprehending the past and viewing the future. Its memory needs to be preserved and represented.

From Memory to Memorialization

After the Maidan Revolution, there was a shared desire among Ukrainians to commemorate it. This period, also known as the "Euromaidan euphoria," highlighted the need for an official politics of memory, or memory culture. The memorialization process brought together participants from various social groups and locations, including authorities and state agents, cultural and historical institutions, artists, protesters, and even family and friends of those who lost their lives. While all were eager to honor Maidan and its victims and heroes, the commemoration practices also created alliances and divisions among the participants. They faced challenges in establishing a memory site that could address collective and individual grief and trauma without diminishing the national significance and dignity of the event. The following section describes some of these memorialization activities to shed light on the politics of memory of the Maidan immediately after the Revolution at the state and public levels and the challenges surrounding them.

> "MAIDAN SQUARE IN KYIV HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN UKRAINIAN HISTORY AS A MAJOR SITE OF THE COLLECTIVE VOICE, A PUBLIC SPACE FOR VICHE AND POPULAR ASSEMBLY."

IN RESPONSE TO consistent requests from relatives, the president of Ukraine posthumously awarded the Hero of Ukraine title to the renowned protesters in November 2014.[39] This was followed by the decision of the President to designate February 20 as the Day of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.[40] The decree also recognized the significance of an annual day of commemoration and associated activities supported by the government, such as holding memorial ceremonies, erecting monumental art and memorial signs and plaques throughout the city, renaming printing sites, and establishing a museum. In February 2021, Verkhovna Rada and the Prime Minister recognized Maidan as "one of the key elements of the Ukrainian state formation and an exponent of the national idea and freedom".[41]

Starting in 2014, memorial ceremonies were held in central locations and squares in Ukrainian cities to honor the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred. In Kyiv, major memorialization activities took place at the memory site, Independence Square (figure 1), Independence Monument (figure 2), and the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes (figures 3 & 4), which are all located in the territory of the future National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes. In March of the same year, a wooden memorial Cross was installed in memory of the Heroes (figure 5). A wooden memorial Chapel, built by the revolutionary participants themselves at the end of the events, and an honorary Stele (figure 6) with portraits of the perished protesters also stand next to the Cross. The site serves as a reminder of the Ukrainian Revolution and the sacrifices made by these heroes who were transformed into martyrs for their people's freedom.[42] It also reminds people of the ongoing war in Ukraine and the continued effort to fight the common enemy. The Cross, Chapel, and Stele became one of the main symbolic *lieux de mémoire* in Ukraine, where annual ceremonies are held and attended by authorities and the public. During these ceremonies, people lay flowers and wreaths, light icon lamps, give commemorative speeches, and offer prayers to honor the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred and soldiers protecting Ukraine in the ongoing war against Russia.[43]

ON DECEMBER 1, 2020, a Bell of Dignity was placed next to the Stele (figure 7). The Bell features an inscription, "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred!". This project was carried out at the President's order, with the joint efforts of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the Maidan Museum, and the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States. The Bell was installed to honor the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and soldiers who have fought for the independence and freedom of Ukraine since 2014. The families of the fallen Maidan activists were the first to ring the Bell and pay tribute to their loved ones. Since then, the Bell has become an essential part of the commemorative elements of Maidan. On February 20, the Bell is usually heard 107 times. Furthermore, on the birthday of each Heavenly Hundred Hero, their portrait is displayed, and the Bell is rung as many times as their age. According to Ihor Poshyvailo, the director of the Maidan Museum, "The Bell of the Heavenly Hundred will reinforce our national unity and strength, demonstrating our readiness to continue the struggle for our freedom, dignity, and future. The Bell is a unique ceremonial and symbolic item that will allow visitors to this memorial space to honor the memory of the fallen not only by laying flowers and lighting candles but also by transmitting a powerful message to them through time and space." [44] This Bell signifies both commemoration and mourning, as well as a call to victory and celebration that unites people from the past and present against a common enemy, which is critical in the context of the ongoing war. At the opening ceremony, Nataliia Boikiv, head of the Kyiv public organization Family of Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred, stated, "Ukraine has shed enough tears, but it still needs to triumph."[45]

Remembering the events of Maidan has remained an essential aspect of state politics, even after the full-scale invasion in 2022.

On the ninth anniversary of the Maidan Revolution and the Day of the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred on February 20, 2023, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy and First Lady Olena Zelenska paid tribute to the activists who lost their lives during the protests. They visited the Maidan site of memory, lit grave candles at the memorial Cross, and rang the Bell of Dignity.

State initiatives to honor the memory of Maidan were not limited to the capital. In multiple cities across Ukraine, municipalities and state agents have renamed various sites in tribute to Maidan, such as squares named after the Heroes. Between 2014 and 2016, official monuments were erected nationwide, with the tallest one, four meters high, constructed in Mykolaiv. In 2014 and 2015, the National Bank of Ukraine issued coins and memorial medals named after the Maidan Revolution and Heavenly Hundred. Additionally, a memorial complex was built in the town of Borshchiv, and the street on which it is located was named The Alley of the Heroes by the city council.

As social and cultural actors, state museums have also played a significant role in memorializing the event. For example, after the Revolution, museums such as the Ivan Honchar Museum, the National Centre of Folk Culture, the National Art Museum of Ukraine, and the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War in Kyiv created exhibitions dedicated to Maidan. In addition, the first Museums of the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred and the Revolution of Dignity and Freedom were established in Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil, respectively, in 2015 and 2016.

THE MEMORY OF Maidan has also gained recognition abroad through activities supported by Ukrainian diaspora members and local authorities. For example, the first monument to the Revolution was unveiled in Bloomingdale, US in 2015; a monument to the Heroes was also constructed in Braga (Portugal) in 2016; and 107 wooden memorial crosses depicting the Heroes were installed in Prague (Czech Republic).

Artists and intellectuals recognized the significance of the memory and adoption of the transformative event with thousands of books, poems, and songs glorifying the new era of cultural possibilities. Tetiana Domashenko wrote a religious poem called "Heavenly Hundred of Maidan Warriors" (*Nebesna Sotnia Voiniv Maidanu*) in honor of the fallen protesters, "who laid their soul and body for the Freedom." Her poem transformed the memory of the protesters and victims into the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and became integrated into the core of Maidan's memorialization. Other artists, such as Oksana Maksymyshyn-Korabel, wrote a poem, "Dear Mother, Don't Cry" (*Mamo, Ne Plach*), which later became a song by Tiana Roz. Artists expressed their solidarity and support through concerts all over the country, including the band *Tartak*'s song "Severe Winter" (*Liuta Zyma*), band BoomBox and Eurovision winner Jamala's "Storm" (*Zlyva*), Mad Heads' "Young Blood," and Yaroslav Zlonkevych and Iryna Chuiko's "Heroes Do Not Die!". In 2019, the Ukrainian band TNMK released "The History of Ukraine in 5 Minutes", a song that canonizes the main historical events of the independent Ukrainian state: Holodomor (Famine of 1932–1933), Maidan, the annexation of Crimea, and

Figure 2. Independence Monument.

Figure 3. Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.

Figure 4. Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.

Figure 5. Memorial Cross in Memory of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.

"ON THE BIRTHDAY OF EACH HEAVENLY HUNDRED HERO, THEIR PORTRAIT IS DISPLAYED, AND THE BELL IS RUNG AS MANY TIMES AS THEIR AGE."

military actions in Donbas. Multiple public exhibitions were opened, including the photo exhibition "Women of Maidan" by international photographers at Independence Square in 2014, and the "Maidan: Space of the Art" by the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture design students in Kyiv and Odesa in 2018.

In tandem with such institutional and artistic initiatives, the public has actively preserved and memorialized Maidan and its Heroes. After February 20, 2014, Instytutska Street in Kyiv became a gathering place for those who wanted to honor Maidan. The street later became the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes, where people left flowers, candles, and photos of the victims to pay their respects to Maidan and its activists. Over the last decade, public memory has continued to evolve (as represented in figures 8, 9, and 10). Commemorative practices, including creating improvised memorials and plaques and displaying artifacts, have transformed the Alley into a living memorial site decorated with art objects. Friends, family members, and comrades of fallen soldiers come to the Alley to leave flowers, candles, pictures, poems, and other memory bearers. The Alley has been transformed into a site with therapeutic qualities where commemoration is converted to healing individual and collective grief and trauma. This illustrates that the Alley, as a living memorial, symbolizes the public commitment to remember and honor the fallen heroes of Maidan and other battles for Ukraine. It also shows that the memory of Maidan is still in the process of formation.

From Memorialization to the Museum and Memorial

In the previous section, I described the broad context of political, literary, artistic, and cultural initiatives that all sought to situate the Maidan Revolution in public memory. Let me now move on to what soon became the central state institution in efforts to commemorate the victory and victims of Maidan and script its place in official Ukrainian history.

In January 2016, the Ukrainian government initiated a new organization to create a centralized institution devoted to Maidan memory, which in April became a national institution.[46] The long name of the new institution reflects the many expectations placed on it: The National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and the Revolution of Dignity Museum. The short form is simply the Maidan Museum. It is a realization of an initiative that emerged during the Revolution.

Ihor Poshyvailo, the Director of the Maidan Museum, explained in an interview with *New Eastern Europe* on September

4, 2020, that the idea to form a museum was prompted by the "dictatorial laws" issued on January 16, 2014, which turned the peaceful protest into a violent revolution. Museum professionals started to record witness accounts and collect objects as the revolutionary process unfolded. In September 2014, the activist group behind the Maidan Museum merged its operations with the Freedom Museum (or Museum of Liberty) to form a joint initiative, the Maidan Museum/Freedom Museum.

THE MAIDAN MUSEUM consists of three components related to Maidan: a memorial dedicated to the victims, a museum, and an educational center called the Freedom House.[47] The narrative of the Museum will be the history of the struggle of the Ukrainians for human rights, statehood, dignity, and future, hence also the tripartite ambition. The memorial complex will represent a public space to honor and remember, and at the same time, it will serve as a platform for a dialogue to make memory vocal rather than silent. The next component is the museum, which will realize its commemorative and educational mission through relevant programs and permanent and temporary exhibitions. Finally, the last component, Freedom House, is planned to be a democratic forum of open discussions for rethinking history and memorial and post-traumatic activities. The targeted audiences consist of the young generation of Ukrainians, teachers, researchers, intellectuals, museum specialists, artists, writers, journalists, and mass media representatives, not to forget the demonstrators and their families, as well as soldiers fighting for Ukraine.

To avoid displaying the Maidan Revolution through a binary story about "winners and losers," the Museum intends to expose different dimensions and relations towards the event to make the solidarity that existed during the Maidan Revolution inspire both remembrance and future aspirations. Through Maidan stories, the institution also wants to represent previous civil protest movements in the nation's past, narrating the history of the Ukrainians toward their freedom and independence. According to Poshyvailo, "the Maidan Museum should narrate not only about the Revolution of Dignity, but about the phenomenon of freedom in general."[48] Therefore, the main narrative will continue toward the future rather than trying to consolidate a specific representation of the past. In this way, the Museum construes itself as an innovative platform with the mission to serve the public, not the authorities.[49]

AS CAN BE SEEN, the initial idea of documenting and representing the event was enriched by plans to establish a platform for knowledge sharing, inclusive dialogues, promotion of human rights and democracy, as well as the presentation of Ukrainian collective identity and comprehension of the history of the national fight for freedom. By establishing and presenting the memory of the different events that took place during Maidan, the Museum intends to create a space for representing historical struggles by Ukrainians for their freedoms, dignity, and national independence.

How is this agenda to be accomplished? As we have seen, the

Figure 6. Honorary Stele with portraits.

Figure 7. Bell of Dignity.

Figure 8. Public Living Memorial.

Figure 9. Public Living Memorial.

Figure 10. Public Living Memorial.

Maidan Museum intends to be an institution that simultaneously expresses the spirit of democracy in some universal and inclusive sense and the spirit of national Ukrainian resistance against a common enemy. But these aspirations are more complicated. How should it negotiate between the open and universal character of the Maidan Revolution and the urgent legacy of the Revolution according to which collective memory should be mobilized by the Ukrainian nation in its struggle against Russia? The Museum partly intends to resolve these dilemmas by foregrounding artworks and artistic practices. Art projects served as an aesthetic form of non-violent participation during the Maidan events. They represented cultural and national expressions of the resistance and its hopes for a community based on democratic values of solidarity. Art was central to the Maidan event and, consequently, will be central to the Museum. Art manifested the Revolution but also helped to create a community of protesters. The Museum will be a projective reality that bears a historical memory which potentially makes the memorialized objects alive. The Museum wants to use art objects and aesthetic expressions in permanent and temporary exhibitions. For instance, a central position in the Museum will be devoted to the *Yolka*, the famous New Year's tree, weighing 40 tons and measuring 30 meters, which became a symbol of Maidan. Demonstrators transformed the metal frames of the tree into a collective art object, incorporating paintings, slogans, banners, and other artworks created by the protesters. In the future Museum, this spontaneous popular art will illustrate public participation in the Revolution while simultaneously encapsulating and preserving the collective memory of the event.

IN THIS CONTEXT, the Museum has managed to gather an impressive archival collection: more than four thousand artifacts, including oral history (circa five hundred audio and video interviews); documentation; books; protestors' garments and weapons; shields; air guns; a crushed car of the so-called "automaidan"; belongings of perished protesters; barricades; posters; leaflets; flags; a topographical collection (made by the mapmaker Dmytro Vortman); songs; poems; fiction; ornamental and fine arts; the marble sculpture *New Ukraine* by French artist Roti; a collection of photographs and video recordings, including those by the documentary filmmakers' association Babylon'13; a series of picturesque canvases *Ukraine of Dream* and *Faith in the Future of Ukraine* (dimensions 200x1000) that were painted during the protests by people in Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk; three scarecrows symbolizing guardians of the Mykhalivskyi outpost of Maidan; a catapult; the famous piano of "Piano Extremist"; as well as numerous art works, including Ukrainian artist Oleksii Beliusenko's *Diary of an Extremist*. The Museum has also collected artifacts from other mass protests in Ukraine, such as the Orange Revolution and the Revolution on Granite. Following the annexation of Crimea and armed conflicts in eastern Ukraine, the Museum also collected artifacts related to these events. Among others, those include the personal belongings of the soldiers (clothes, shoes, diaries, military equipment) and art projects created in the war zone. The collections continuously expand and

extend. As of 2021, most of the Museum holdings were preserved in institutional storage and partner museums in Kyiv.

TO ACCOMPLISH its complicated balancing act – remaining truthful to the historical past of the Revolution and at the same time responding to the patriotic expectations of the present – the Maidan Museum also draws inspiration and methods from a group of well-known institutions that seek to combine historical commemoration, recognition of the victims, and visions for democratic future. As explained by Poshyvailo, one of them is the European Solidarity Center in Gdansk, Poland, representing the trade union-based civil rights movement *Solidarnost*. Another inspiration is the Warsaw Uprising Museum, which commemorates the Polish underground resistance in 1944 against Nazi occupation symbolizing Polish identity and fight for independence. Two institutions in the USA are also important: the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, distinguished by its use of modern technologies and the symbolism of its building, and the 9/11 Memorial, which memorizes traumatic dimensions of the recent past, referring to the memory challenges of the Maidan Museum.[50]

Moreover, in cooperation with international Western museum experts, such as colleagues from the Gdansk European Solidarity Centre, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, the Maidan Memorial Complex in Kyiv intends to use the new methods of representing history and commemorating the event, as we shall see below. Some ideas are also motivated by well-known and successful projects memorializing historical events such as the Holocaust and World War II.

Ultimately, this will be a new museum adapted to the current needs of Ukrainian society, unlike its predecessors under the Soviet period, which were sites of authority and propaganda rather than mutuality.[51] While the Maidan Museum seeks to avoid such an authoritarian interpellation, it remains to be seen whether the new Memorial Complex will be able to represent different perspectives on the Revolution and other events in Ukrainian history and whether its narrative will be open and inclusive. At the intersection of conflicting legacies and contradictory expectations, the Museum is engaged in a struggle over the Soviet legacy while at the same time seeking to develop a democratic and inclusive collective memory in Ukrainian society. In this context, Maidan memory symbolizes the destruction of the country's totalitarian past. Yet, this past is still strongly present in Ukraine to the extent that it directly affects its future.

Logo as a vision of the Maidan Museum

The museum's logo (figure 15), created by the artist Mykola Honchar, embodies the central vision of the institution. It symbolizes Maidan as a site of political, social, and cultural transformations. The logo, hence, offers a concise summary of the official self-understanding and spirit of the Ukrainian Revolution, as perceived by those responsible for its preservation and legacy. Still, the logo not only manifests the meanings of the Maidan but also the complexities and conflicts inherent in its memorialization. Therefore, we can infer that the logo encapsulates the primary uncertainties surrounding the creation of the Maidan Museum and the establishment of its memory.[52]

The logo features a beautiful design of interlocking circles with a square in the center to represent the historic location, Maidan Square. Figuratively, the circle used in the logo holds symbolic and spiritual significance. It represents fate and the cyclical or revolutionary nature of history. Being a perfect sphere, it also symbolizes totality, infinity, and eternity. Unlike other shapes, circles have no angles, so they signify solidarity and safety that unite people. Furthermore, as a wheel, a circle is associated with the temporality of a life cycle, creating a structured space for society to evolve. It implies a sense of mystery, an idea of creation from nothing to everything, and mirrors the universe.[53] In architecture, symbols and images reflect people's cultural and spiritual needs and a circle symbolizes power.[54] Each circle is drawn around a fixed point, a sacred center that generates and organizes a community space. Independence Square or Maidan Nezalezhnosti serves as a center of historical revolutionary events essential in establishing Ukrainian independence. It is a temple or pantheon where civil society is formed, standing as a democratic laboratory of civic activism and collaboration between a museum and citizens.

INITIALLY, THE MUSEUM views five symbolic meanings behind the logo: the Independence Monument, a target, a drop in the ocean, a focal point or epicenter, and from sharp angles to mutual understanding.

First, the logo features Maidan Square with the Monument of Independence placed at its heart. The monument represents an empire, an old epoch of the independent but not genuinely free Ukraine. The five red circles surrounding a rectangle, the monument, symbolize the protesters who gathered around it to defend the values of independence, freedom, and democracy. We can observe that the rectangle disrupts the flow of the five circles, hindering the collective power of the revolutionary and democratic movements. Each circle closer to the rectangle adapts to it, acquiring slight angles on the sides, representing Ukraine's oppressive period when the state was adjusting to the Soviet regime. At this stage, the Monument of Independence needs to be retransformed, which is planned according to the architectural design described below. This decision will launch a new era of freedom for the Ukrainian nation, which no longer needs a monument that embodies the power and authority of the empire.

Second, as a spotter, the logo emphasizes that protesters became gun targets of the totalitarian regime, demonstrating the

> **"ART PROJECTS SERVED AS AN AESTHETIC FORM OF NON-VIOLENT PARTICIPATION DURING THE MAIDAN EVENTS."**

courage and sacrifice they had to make to protect their independence and freedom. At the same time, it emphasizes that Maidan was an inclusive shooting gallery where everyone became a target, regardless of gender, age, class, language, religion, or nationality. The target in the logo reminds us of the threats to democracy that appeared during Maidan and other historical struggles and tells the stories of the victims who were defenseless and exposed in front of firearms, consciously sacrificed for national freedom.

Third, the logo depicts a famous image of the Revolution, a "drop in the ocean."[55] It is a reminder that a revolution consists of the power of individuals coming together to create a global impact. Each member of the community is a vital drop, contributing to the impetuous wave (circle) that moves the ocean toward the target. The slogan "I am a drop in the ocean" acquired a new powerful meaning during the Revolution motivating participants to not be intimidated by the state's authority, but to realize that every individual matter because it is about collective *us*. This drop is about micro heroism, which makes each individual a hero and a driving force in a revolution. Thus, the logo symbolizes the rebirth of Ukrainian identity and the strength of the Ukrainian people as a nation.

Finally, the logo indicates that a museum and memorial complex will be built at the core of Maidan Square to honor the Maidan Revolution. It will stand at the heart of the historical events, making it an epicenter of the transformation and revival of the Ukrainian society and state, where Maidan is historically a central point of change and renewal. As a symbol of political and social transformations, the Museum will attempt to come from the sharp angles of the square to a mutual understanding of the flowing circles. Decisions made by the people in the center, Maidan, are spread across the country via circles of the *viche* and popular assembly. According to Jason Frank, "Popular assemblies are privileged sites of democratic representation because they at once claim to represent the people while signaling the material plenitude beyond any representational claim... Assemblies manifest that which escapes representational capture; they rend a tear in the established representational space of appearance and draw their power from tarrying with the ineffability and resistant materiality of the popular will."[56]

Architectural competitions

As the previous sections showed, public discussions on memorializing Maidan began immediately after the Revolution. There was a collective demand to define a concept, idea, and vision behind the memorialization and to determine how to transform the city center's public space into a memory site.

In April 2014, the preparatory stage of the open competition *Terra Dignitas* [Territory of Dignity] for the best idea for the memorial site to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes was organized by the Kyiv state municipalities and the public.[57] Accordingly, the

> **"THE LOGO SYMBOLIZES THE REBIRTH OF UKRAINIAN IDENTITY AND THE STRENGTH OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE AS A NATION."**

Maidan Museum was supposed to become the place for the development of Ukrainian democracy and the shaping of the nation. The competition was seen as an example of the "spatial utopian model" of the new Ukrainian society.[58] The Jury, led by a Swiss architect, Carl Fingerhuth, consisted of multidisciplinary specialists from different countries. A total of 478 applications from 40 countries, and 149 projects from 13 countries, were submitted.

The contest comprised four nominations: the Public Space of Maidan and Kyiv's City Core, Memorialization of the Revolution of Dignity and Commemoration of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes, the International Cultural Center "Ukrainian House on the European Square," and The Multifunctional Museum Complex "Museum of Freedom/Museum of Maidan." Public voting was conducted from April to May 2015 and all projects were displayed on Maidan Square from May to June 2015. The International Jury announced the winning projects for each nomination on June 16.

LET ME LOOK more closely at some aesthetic forms and ideas mobilized in this contest to commemorate the Revolution. The first nomination called for proposals that reflected the values of the Revolution for public space in the center of Kyiv. The project should reflect the sense of brotherhood and unity that society requires regularly, particularly in crisis periods. At the same time, the project should avoid excessive ideas of museumification, complex traffic and transportation solutions, advertisements, and commercial buildings that currently litter the space. Ukrainian architect Nataliya Kondel-Perminova emphasized that the area's character was reorganized in 2001 following popular movements such as the Revolution of Granite and "Ukraine without Kuchma."[59] As a result of the government's attempts to diminish the collective power of the *viche* or popular assembly of the Maidan, the area was intentionally transformed according to a spatial logic of disintegration rather than unification. *The Terra Dignitas* project aimed to restore the site from a busy and tense city center into an inclusive human space with prominence given to a path of memory of the revolution that would honor its Heroes. The Jury appreciated spatial, inclusive, and European-oriented ideas that minimized traffic, movement, and noise, providing a sense of deep tranquility and access to memory spaces. The winner was a project by a Taiwanese group of architects with the slogan "*Sous les pavés, la forêt*" [under the pavement, the forest], referring to a famous tagline of the May 68 uprising in Paris. The project offered to remove the Monument of Independence as an imperial symbol incompatible with democratic space and, instead, to transform the Kyiv city center into a public park for mass gatherings and cultural events.

In the second nomination of the competition, devoted to commemorating the Revolution and its Heroes, many projects aimed to connect the sorrow of loss with the hope for a better future. The natural process of stratigraphy inspired the winning

Figure 11. The winning design of the Museum.

ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN

Figure 12. Perspective view of the winning Museum

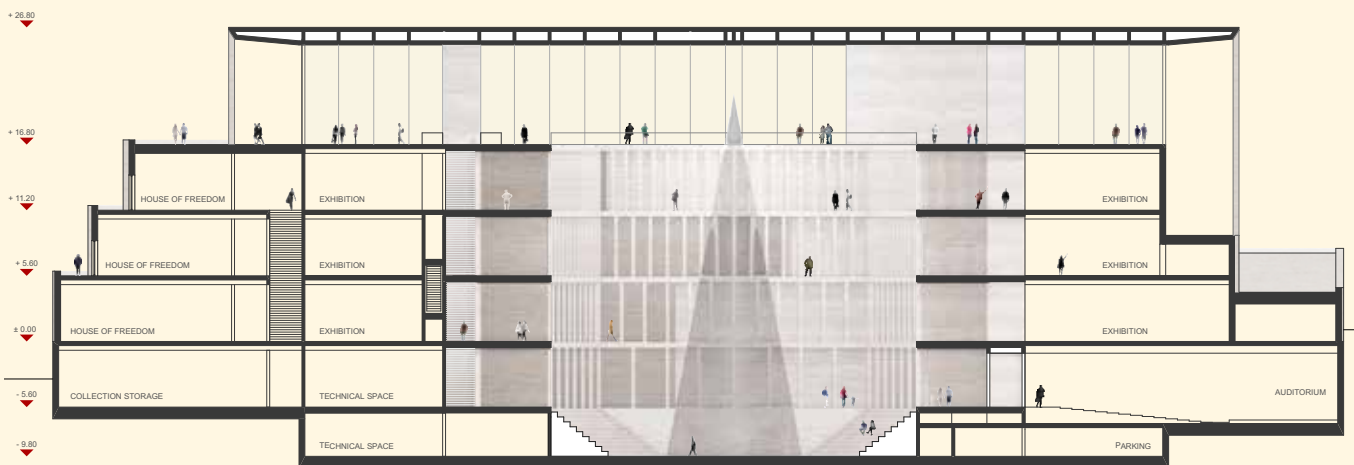ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN

Figure 13. Plan of the winning Museum.

ILLUSTRATION: © KLEIHUES + KLEIHUES ARCHITEKTEN

Italian project. The architects associated collective memory with the natural life of a tree. The tree's heartwood tells its story, and as it grows, new rings are added to the trunk. Symbolically, these rings would spread across the site of memory and the city center, creating a path of memory that connects existing historical elements with the new values formed by recent collective memory. Instytutska Street would be transformed into a forest, each tree having its own identity and dignity, coming together to create a living memorial. This concept would require regular care from the community, helping future generations understand the past and the present. It would teach the public that history should not only be preserved but shaped for a better future. The memorial would not be associated with death, like a cemetery, or fear but viewed as a life and inspiration. Planting trees is a common commemoration practice that symbolizes a shift from victim to martyr. Sometimes, a separate tree is planted in memory of each victim, while in other cases, one tree embodies a group. In the case of the Maidan Memorial Complex, trees planted in the name of the Heroes symbolize a revival of those who died in re-

Figure 14. The winning design of the Memorial by MIstudio.

ILLUSTRATION: MISTUDIO

Figure 15. Logo of the Maidan Museum.

SOURCE: MAIDAN MUSEUM

Figure 16. Site of the future Maidan Museum and Memorial Complex.

Figure 17. Information Panels on the Site of the future Museum and Memorial Complex.

sistance and struggle for the independence and freedom of their nation.

The third part of the competition focused on rethinking the Soviet legacy and replacing the former Lenin Museum. The winning Ukrainian project aimed to create a multipurpose space for social and cultural activities connecting Ukraine with Europe and an artistic hub that would showcase the values of European civilization. As for the fourth part, many proposals suggested that the future museum be located in the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes. The Jury prioritized ideas that respected the existing urban environment and decided not to award first and second prizes for this nomination. Instead, the third prize was granted to two architectural groups, from Ireland and Russia.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS typically evaluate and determine the most suitable aesthetic expressions for representing an event. In this way, art and culture preserve the event of the revolution and canonize its memory. The *Terra Dignitas* competition aimed at searching for the main principles of memorialization and significant sites to locate the museum and memorial. It paved the way for an international architectural competition for the best project proposal regarding a memorial and museum, announced by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine in October 2017.[60] The aim of this architectural competition was, in turn, to engage talented national and international architects to participate in developing the future memorial complex and choose the best project proposal. The competition was held in 2017–2018 and consisted of memorial and museum nominations. Both nominations were expected to be interactive and developed within an integrated project. The contest attracted 78 applications from 49 countries, 149 projects, 10,000 participants in a popular election, and winners from seven countries. The evaluation was done by an international jury of architects, writers, artists, historians, and museum specialists from five countries, the Minister of Culture of Ukraine, and the director of the Memorial Complex. The competition's democratic and inclusive nature was shown through various stages of discussions with the general audience and families of the Heroes. An exhibition in the House of Architects in Kyiv displayed all museum projects from both parts of the competition from July 13 to August 13, 2018. Eventually, President Petro Poroshenko presented the prizewinners with each nomination from the competition.

The Ukrainian-Dutch architectural bureau MIstudio based in Lviv won the Memorial nomination (figure 14). The project stood out for its focus on spatial and temporal unity and continuity, offering a space for contemplation and honoring. The area was divided into two zones: a transition part for memory and trauma and another part through the park that gave a feeling of relief, beauty, hope, and belief for a better future. The German architectural bureau Kleihues + Kleihues Gesellschaft von Architekten mbH won the Museum nomination (figure 11–13). This project transformed the museum into the Ukrainian Acropolis, from where one can observe the panorama of Maidan Nezalezhnost and Kyiv. This building will integrate well into the historical context of Maidan and create a center of freedom and dignity.

Making or unmaking the museum and memorial

The architectural competitions demonstrated the timeliness of the Maidan event in Europe and beyond. The contests resulted in project proposals for the Museum and Memorial Complex that will be located at the exact site where the Revolution occurred in Kyiv – the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.[61] This location holds great significance for the nation as a symbolic place of remembrance. A bridge will border the memorial space, outlining the complex and park areas, while a path will connect the museum and the memorial. Visitors will be guided along this path to see Maidan Square and the city before entering the building and ultimately proceeding to the memorial garden.

The central component of the Complex, connecting its various parts, will be a zigzag pathway that ascends from Institutskaya Street, leading from the Memorial to the Museum itself, and the Freedom House. This path symbolizes the struggles the Ukrainian people have faced in achieving their freedom and independence over numerous historical protests. The memorial place will thus be devoted to the Maidan event and ascribe a more comprehensive national symbolic meaning that refers to Ukrainian history. At the beginning of this path, a memorial stela in the shape of an arch will be erected, with stone slabs containing the names of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes. One hundred trees will be planted along the path, symbolizing the Heroes and embodying the choices made by the protesters as subjects and agents of the Revolution. The trees will also shape a memorial alley that ends in a wooden chapel, providing a space for silence. The path will culminate in the garden.

The museum building on a hill will symbolize the triumph of good forces over evil ones. The building's construction will feature sparse horizontal lines and open blocks of windows that allow natural daylight to illuminate the building. It will balance preservation and representation, resembling Greek and Roman Pantheons, which people once visited to celebrate the Gods and their dignity. The construction of the Maidan Museum will integrate into the surrounding urban context of the capital city center, similar to the Acropolis Museum in Athens. Therefore, the Museum will be a site where memory and history are spatialized,[62] highlighting modern tendencies in memory studies and museology.

The memorial complex's structure is planned according to three lines. The first line, Memorial to the Heroes – the territory of memory – contains the chapel, the square, the alley (a place of death but also a "river of memory"), the various monuments to the Heroes and participants of the revolution, an information and educational center, a memorial exposition, as well as office and administrative premises. The second line, the Maidan Muse-

um, is devised as a modern space with multimedia expositions, interactive experiences, and premises for research. This part of the complex will house a space for permanent and temporary exhibitions, archives, a scientific library, a children's museum, research and methodological centers, and administrative offices. The permanent exhibition will showcase objects from the museum collections telling the stories of the Ukrainian movements for independence and freedom in the 20th and 21st centuries, with a focus on the Maidan Revolution. It will also include histories of similar events worldwide using related artifacts. The exhibition will be structured thematically rather than chronologically. The third line is Freedom House – a cultural and educational center for generating and interacting new knowledge, having discussions, sharing opinions and activating initiatives and creativity. It will be a working and educational space for organizing workshops, research activities, meetings, and events.

> "THIS PROJECT TRANSFORMED THE MUSEUM INTO THE UKRAINIAN ACROPOLIS, FROM WHERE ONE CAN OBSERVE THE PANORAMA OF MAIDAN NEZALEZHNOSTI AND KYIV."

However, ten years after the Maidan Revolution, it is still uncertain what will become of the grand plan for the Memorial and Museum Complex. The Maidan Museum has been a state institution since 2016, but the physical facilities have yet to be built. Despite an approved design and allocated land on the site of the Revolution, as of 2021, construction has been delayed due to ongoing criminal investigations related to the shootings that killed many demonstrators. Additionally, there were conflicting opinions on how to remember the Revolution, with some families of the deceased Heroes opposing the construction of the Museum to preserve the site of the mass shootings.

FOLLOWING THE architectural competitions and the approval of a design, the Kyiv State Council decided in March 2018 to allocate territory for the construction of the complex on the site of the events, mainly on Maidan Square and the Alley.[63] However, the General Prosecutor issued letters during 2018–2019 postponing construction due to the ongoing investigations, which froze the development until the end of 2019.[64] As a result, the territory was seized and building works were not allowed. Additionally, some families of the Heroes and several Ukrainian architects wrote an open letter addressed to the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, the Institute of National Remembrance, and the Maidan Museum, opposing the realization of the project that would destroy the landscape of the places of mass shootings.[65] In other words, they do not want the memorial complex to be built on the site of killings. In February 2021, on the Day of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy assured that design and construction work on the Museum would begin that year.[66] The Verkhovna Rada and Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a decree and the plan for a series of measures to commemorate the Revolution between 2021–2025, which included the actual construction and functioning of the Memorial

Figure 18. The Maidan Museum exhibition *Toward Freedom!* at the Infocenter demonstrating news and media extracts, megaphone, Ukrainian flag, and audio stories.

Figure 19. The Museum Infocenter.

Figure 20. Map of the Maidan square in the Museum Infocenter.

"TEN YEARS AFTER THE MAIDAN REVOLUTION, IT IS STILL UNCERTAIN WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GRAND PLAN FOR THE MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM COMPLEX."

and Museum.[67] However, construction had not begun before the full-scale invasion in February 2022, and will probably not begin until Russian aggression is over. As of summer 2021, the future site of the Museum on the Alley was surrounded by markers and supported by information panels in Ukrainian and English describing the Museum and Memorial Complex project (figures 16 and 17).[68]

Sociologist Elżbieta Olzacka emphasized that nowadays museums are laboratories of civic activism and community engagement, where exhibitions are decisive in constructing national community and identity.[69] The narrative of museum exhibitions shapes national bonds and unites a diverse and multicultural society of Ukraine that resists a common enemy.[70] Through exhibitions, a museum communicates with the audience and mediates the representation of the event and its memory. Without permanent facilities for its operations, the Maidan Museum has still been able to realize its aims through numerous exhibitions and activities in different locations, including the Ukrainian House and the Trade Unions Building (*Budynok Profspilok*) on Maidan Square in Kyiv.

THE INFORMATION and Exhibition Center of Maidan Museum (Infocenter) is located on the first two floors of the Trade Unions Building. The first floor presents a temporary exhibition, *Toward Freedom!* (*Nazustrich Svobodi*), that offers the history of the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014 chronologically. This installation includes news and media extracts that show the preconditions and political climate in 2010–2013 leading up to the Revolution. Images from the demonstrations, accompanied by explanatory texts in Ukrainian and English with chronicles of phases of the Revolution, illustrate the realities of Maidan. Artifacts like a megaphone and a Ukrainian flag, audio stories, and memories of Maidan participants are also displayed (figure 18). The second floor of the Infocenter offers a multifunctional space for museum-related activities, such as public presentations, conferences, and movies (figure 19). This space also features a stylized map of Maidan (figure 20) with key events of the Revolution and relevant information boards in Ukrainian and English connected to the map sites. The map describes what happened on a particular street or by a specific building during Maidan. It allows visitors to witness past events as if they were unfolding in the present and see how they are connected to the city's geography.

Another example of the Museum's activities is a temporary outdoor exhibition, *Century of Undefeated*, installed by the Memorial Complex at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in 2021 (figure 21).
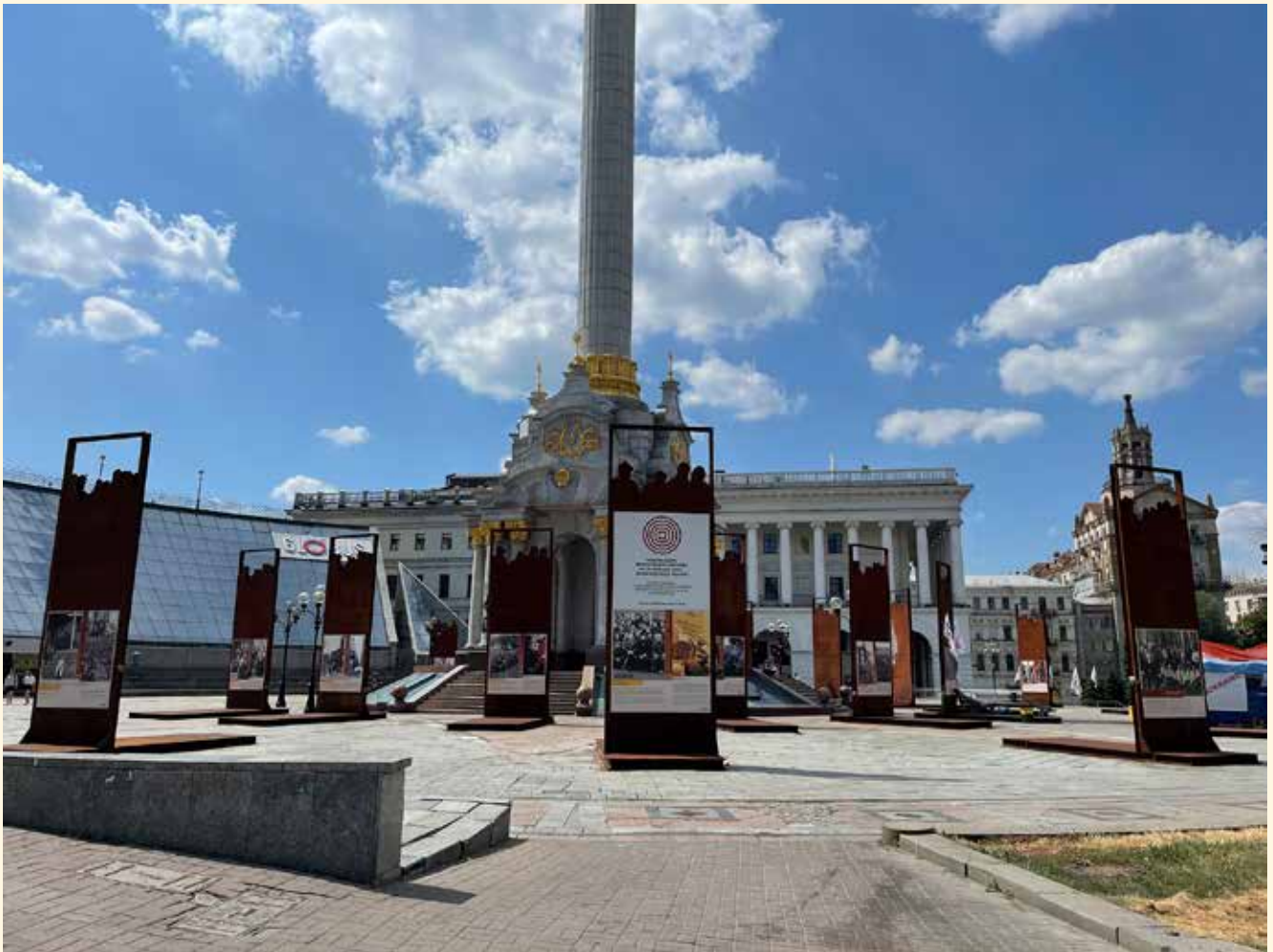
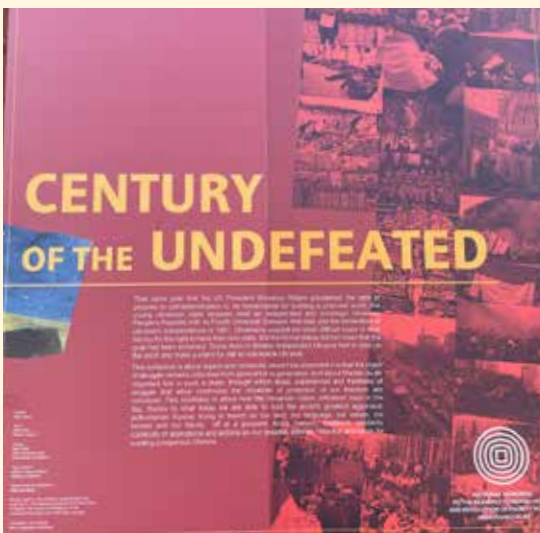Figure 21. Outdoor exhibition "Century of the Undefeated" at the Maidan.

Figure 22 (left). Outdoor exhibition "Century of the Undefeated".

Figure 23 (right). The "Century of the Undefeated" exhibition board illustrates the importance of the *viche*, collective protests and demonstrations on maidans a century apart.

Figure 24. The "Century of the Undefeated" exhibition board displays the historical demolition of imperial symbols in 1917–1922 and 2013–2014, as part of the decolonization and decommunization processes.

Figure 25. The "Century of the Undefeated" exhibition board demonstrates how the slogan "Glory to Ukraine!" was used by the UPA in 1942–1956 and during the Euromaidan.

The exhibition features extensive information boards in Ukrainian and English. The English description of the exhibit highlights its purpose:

"This exhibition is about legacy and continuity. It is important that the chain of struggle remains unbroken from generation to generation. And about Maidan as an important link in such a chain, through which ideas, experiences, and traditions of struggle that allow continuing the chronicle of protection of our freedom are conveyed. This exhibition is about how the Ukrainian nation withstood back in the day, thanks to what today we are able to hold the world's greatest aggressor, authoritarian Russia, trying to trench on our land, our language, our values, our heroes, and our future, off at a gunpoint. About memory, traditions, solidarity, continuity of aspirations and actions as our greatest defense resource and token for building prosperous Ukraine." (Figure 22.)

The installation aims to showcase Ukrainian national groups that have historically fought against the imperial regimes of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union to gain independence and freedom for Ukraine. The examples include non-violent and violent resistance displayed by concentration camp inmates, Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) members, dissidents, and soldiers of the military *sotnias* of the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen.[71] The exhibition also draws parallels between past events and contemporary ones from the Maidan chronicles or decommunization process. For instance, one board emphasizes the importance of *viche*, collective protests, and demonstrations in maidans occurring a century apart, as crucial steps in the journey towards democracy (figure 23). Another board demonstrates the demolition of imperial symbols and monuments during the Ukrainian People's Republic as part of the so-called *Leninopad* (figure 24). The exhibition also emphasizes the role of women as part of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen compared to the Maidan protests. Another board demonstrates how the slogan "Glory to Ukraine!", which was used by the UPA in 1942–1956, also found prominence during the Maidan event (figure 25). Still other boards showcase the importance of art, educational activities, and historical symbols, such as Shevchenko's, in the Ukrainian national resistance movements.

The exhibition highlights the importance of historical memory and events in shaping the memory of Maidan. By connecting the Revolution's memory to other historical movements and acts of collective resistance, its significance is amplified. However, it should be noted that some Ukrainian historical movements, symbols, and their glorification have a controversial legacy and have been subject to debate in national and international intellectual circles over the last decade.[72] Consequently, this historical heritage will be a matter of discussion of memory politics in Ukraine in the days to come.

AS WE HAVE SEEN, the Maidan Museum's focus goes beyond commemorating the Revolution by presenting tragic events that followed as integral to the narrative of historical Ukrainian national resistance for freedom and nationhood. The institution has organized exhibitions and public activities to honor Donbas War

soldiers as fighters for the country's independence. In light of the full-scale invasion in 2022, the Museum has been actively involved in commemoration and education devoted to Ukraine's ongoing resistance. Working closely with city and state municipalities, other museum institutions, human-rights centers, intellectuals, and activists, the Maidan Museum produces exhibitions, excursions, and publications, as well as organizes art events, public signings, and memorial ceremonies related to the ongoing war in Ukraine. The Museum also works to conserve culture and heritage under war circumstances and participated in the Heritage Emergency Response Initiative, collecting items from cathedrals and churches destroyed in previously occupied territories of Ukraine in 2022. As these activities demonstrate, the Maidan Museum is a vital agent in contexts that go beyond the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013–2014, as it is deeply entangled and compelled to engage in controversies typical of the politics of memory.

Conclusion

This article presents an analysis of how a past event continues to evolve and transform in response to dynamic social, cultural, and political changes. The study concludes that the Maidan event remains ongoing and unsettled, and its memorialization does not signify its end but rather its continual reactivation. The memory of the event grows into something new. Theoretically, the study is built on Wagner-Pacifici's conceptual model, which prompts us to reflect on our position *inside* or *outside* the Maidan event and *who* and *what* is inside or outside it. By viewing the commemoration of the event from this lens, we are compelled to scrutinize where it begins and ends. Ultimately, the case study of the Maidan event demonstrates that its memory is dynamic and constitutes part of the historical event-in-the-making, reflecting the ongoing struggles of the Ukrainian people.

This study highlights the importance of examining how memories and narratives of past events are adapted to the contemporary needs of society. It emphasizes how certain actors use memories to either downplay or elevate them, how events can shape the course of history, and how events are altered to align with specific versions of historical accounts. The paper argues that political agents often use memories to shape a narrative that mobilizes a nation and influences its sense of nationalism and identity. Contested memories can guide political groups and actions and can be used for political purposes by state institutions. In this way, history and memory become exclusive, cropped, and polished to align with nationalistic visions. Since the Russian invasion in 2014, Maidan memory has been utilized to promote a national agenda and has become a component of the broader historical narrative of the collective struggle of Ukrainians in the Ukrainian state.

Tim Cole highlights that "constructing a memorial is a conscious act of choosing to remember certain people and events and by implication choosing not to remember others. And that conscious act is political, meaning that it is about power over memory, power over the past, and power over the present."[73] Memorialization is a complex process that involves reconstructing different versions of events, which ultimately results in a compromise. Once the official memory and narrative are established and the museum and memorial are built in stone and steel, the memorialization process may seem complete as it achieves a particular form of authorized representation. However, this representation will inevitably be challenged because every representation displays an event in a specific way, leaving out certain parts and elements. Some things are given more prominence, while others will be relegated to the margins, making the representation limited and incomplete.

This struggle of memories takes us back to the Revolution, which had many different elements and forms. Memorialization involves choosing certain forms and elements as more significant than others. The Revolution served as a platform for artworks, but memorialization reconstructs their meanings. Artworks, in turn, reflect independently on them, resulting in diverse and heterogeneous forms of memory and identity. The case of Maidan memorialization demonstrates that instead of preserving the distinct values of the Maidan event itself, artworks and elements of Revolution memory are put in the historical context of the past and contemporary national struggles of the country due to the ongoing Russian aggression.

"THE MAIDAN MUSEUM IS A VITAL AGENT IN CONTEXTS THAT GO BEYOND THE UKRAINIAN REVOLUTION OF 2013–2014."

MUSEUMS PLAY AN important role in the nation-building process by actively producing myths about heroism and martyrdom. Revolutions, wars, and collective struggles for nationhood have become essential elements in museum narratives.[74] In Ukraine, the Maidan has gradually become a significant part of the nation's historical narrative of resistance against Russian imperialism. What started as a student protest with democratic values in 2013 has evolved into a powerful symbol of resistance for Ukrainians and the world. Maidan serves as a living memorial, where officials, individuals, families of heroes, and victims of the Revolution and ongoing war come to pay their respects. It incorporates national, cultural, and historical symbols of collective resistance, reinvigorating other historical protests and oppositions of Ukrainian people that were previously suppressed and marginalized. The Maidan Museum is a temple to this historical and modern national resistance, but also a democratic laboratory of civic activism and dialogue.

Maidan memory was initially unpredictable, but eventually, it became a tale of heroism, marked by shifts in symbols and meanings. The narrative of Maidan is still ongoing and being officially established. Initially, the memory of the Revolution focused on the stories of the grieving families of those who perished. Later, it became a glorification of the events through political power, using the memory of Maidan as a governmental project. The

Maidan event evolved from having no identity to embodying inclusive, universal, multilayered, and multivoiced values. It then continued to change as the memory of the Revolution became one of the elements in the creation of a new nationalism and the strengthening of Ukrainian identity.

In conclusion, this article suggests that the Maidan Museum and Memorial can serve as a significant cultural platform for both Ukraine and the world through three meanings: firstly, it showcases the struggle of Ukrainian democratic society for independence and freedom representing Ukrainian pride and dignity; secondly, it highlights the importance of memory and history for the present and future; and thirdly, it promotes the understanding of why protests, revolutions, popular assemblies, and *viche* are necessary and inevitable steps towards creating a democratic society.

The significance of Maidan is multifaceted, as it reflects both an event and a memory. Its meaning is influenced by historical understanding and the current political climate. The ongoing war in Ukraine, which began in 2014 and was followed by the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022, has consistently redefined the meaning of the Maidan event and memory, and this process will likely continue until the war concludes at last. Therefore, the ultimate narrative of the Maidan is yet to be seen. ❌

Galyna Kutsovska is a PhD student at the Department of History at Uppsala University.

references

1   Ilya Nuzov, "The Dynamics of Collective Memory in the Ukraine Crisis: A Transitional Justice Perspective," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* vol. 11 no. 1 (2017), 150–151.

2   Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Legislating Historical Memory in Post-Soviet Ukraine," in *Memory Laws and Historical Justice*, ed. Elazar Barkan and Ariella Lang (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 128.

3   Georgiy Kasianov, "Spaces of Memory," in *Memory Crash: Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s-2010s* (CEU Press, 2022), 262.

4   In this essay, *historicization* is understood as a process of transformation of an event into a historical narrative; *museumification* is interpreted as a process or strategy of turning objects into artifacts and transforming a space into a public institution of memory by using aesthetic expressions and practices. See also, Octave Debary, "Deindustrialization and Museumification: From Exhibited Memory to Forgotten History," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 595 no. 1 (2004): 122–133; Valentyna Kharkhun, "Museumification of the Soviet Past in the Context of Ukrainian Memory Politics," *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* vol. 4 no. 1 (2018); Talia Weltman-Cisneros, "From Objects to Subjects: the Museumification of Blackness in Mexico," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* vol. 13 no.1 (2020): 80–97.

5   Robin Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), ix. See also, Wagner-Pacifici, "Reconceptualizing Memory as Event: From 'Difficult Pasts' to 'Restless Events'," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 22–27; Wagner-Pacifici, "Theorizing the Restlessness of Events," *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 115 no. 5 (2010): 1– 36.

6   The main examples of the events analyzed by Wagner-Pacifici in *What Is an Event?* are: paintings *Et in Arcadia Ego* by Nicolas Poussin, *Intervention of the Sabine Women* by Jacques- Louis David, *Il quarto stato (The Fourth Estate)* by Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo, fresco *The Last Judgment* by Michelangelo, as well as the Paris Commune, French Revolution, and the 9/11 in New York.

7   Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?,* x.

8   Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?,* 5–6. See also the work on temporality, events, and process, Andrew Abbott, *Time Matters: On Theory and Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

9   Wagner-Pacifici, "Reconceptualizing Memory as Event"; Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?*

10   Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?*, 83.

11   Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?*, 5. See, Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative.* Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, and 1988).

12   William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

13   Robin Wagner-Pacifici, "Memories in the Making: The Shapes of Things that Went," *Qualitative Sociology* vol. 19 (1996): 301.

14   Wagner-Pacifici, "Memories in the Making," 301.

15   Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 97, no. 2 (1991): 376–420.

16   Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (Rutgers University Press, 2017), 21–22.

17   On the politics of regret, read, Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: on Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*, (New York: Routledge, 2007).

18   Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?,* 16–19.

19   Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?*, 5–6.

20   Wagner-Pacifici, "Memories in the Making," 301–302.

21   Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* vol. 26 no. 1 (1989): 7–24.

22   Hayden White, "The Historical Event," *Differences* vol. 19 no. 2 (2008), 10.

23   See also, Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007).

24   Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity,* 23–27.

25   On museums in times of conflict and war, see, Kate Hill, "Introduction: Museums and War," in *Museums, Modernity and Conflict: Museums and Collections in and of War Since the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Kate Hill (London: Routledge, 2020), 1–11; on museums in times of conflict in Ukraine, see, Elżbieta Olzacka, "The Role of Museums in Creating National Community in Wartime Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers* vol. 49 no. 6 (2021): 1028–1044; Olzacka, "War and 'Museum Front' in A Digital Era: The Ukrainian War Museum during the Russian Invasion of Ukraine," *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 17 no. 1 (2023): 1–18.

26   For a general overview on memory politics in Ukraine, consult, for example, Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Shared Memory Culture? Nationalizing the 'Great Patriotic War' in the Ukrainian–Russian Borderlands,"

in *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives*, ed. Pakier Malgorzata and Wawrzyniak Joanna (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 169–192; Andriy Liubarets, "The Politics of Memory in Ukraine in 2014: Removal of the Soviet Cultural Legacy and Euromaidan Commemorations," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* no. 3 (2016): 197–214; Serhii Plokhy, "When Stalin Lost His Head: World War II and Memory Wars in Contemporary Ukraine," in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. Julie Fedor, Tatiana Zhurzhenko, etc. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 171–188; Georgiy Kasianov, *Memory Crash: Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s-2010s* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2022).

27   Regarding memory politics of the Holodomor, see Georgiy Kasianov, "The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation," *Russian Politics & Law* vol. 48 no. 5 (2010): 25–47.

28   The controversies of the memory of the OUN-UPA were analyzed among others by Per-Anders Rudling, "Historical Representations of the Wartime Accounts of the Activities of the OUN-UPA," *East European Jewish Affairs* vol. 36 no. 2 (2006): 163–189; David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest, Hungary: CEU Press, 2007); Yulia Yurchuk, "Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN- UPA Memory Politics and Nation Building in Ukraine (1991–2016)," in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. Julie Fedor, Tatiana Zhurzhenko, etc. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 107–137; Georgiy Kasianov, "Nationalist Memory Narratives and the Politics of History in Ukraine since the 1990s," *Nationalities Papers* (2023): 1–20.

29   On decommunization, see Mykola Riabchuk, "Dekomunizatsiia chy Dekolonizatsiia? Shcho Pokazaly Politychni Dyskusiyï z Pryvodu Dekomunizatsiïnykh Zakoniv?" ("Decommunization or Decolonization? What did the debate on the 'decommunization' laws revealed?") *Naukovi Zapysky Instytutu Politychnykh i Etnonatsionalnykh Doslidzhen im. IF Kurasa NAN Ukraïny* no. 2 (2016): 104–117; Oxana Shevel, "The Battle for Historical Memory in Postrevolutionary Ukraine," *Current History* vol. 115 no. 783 (2016): 258–263; David R. Marples, "Decommunization, Memory Laws, and 'Builders of Ukraine in the 20th Century'," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* no. 39 (2018): 1–22; Zhurzhenko, "Legislating Historical Memory"; Georgiy Kasianov, "In Search of Lost Time? Decommunization in Ukraine, 2014 – 2020," *Problems of Post-Communism* (2023): 1–15.

30   On de-Sovietization, see Liubarets, "The Politics of Memory in Ukraine in 2014"; on the nation-building process, see, Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik and Janusz Kowalczyk, "Nation-Building in Post-Maidan Ukraine," *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* no. 3 (2016): 91–105.

31   See for example, Tamara Hundorova, "Postcolonial Ressentiment – the Ukrainian Case," in *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective*, ed. Janusz Korek (Stockholm: Södertörns högskola, 2007), 103–113; George G. Grabowicz, "The Soviet and the Post-Soviet Discourses of Contemporary Ukraine: Literary Scholarship, the Humanities and the Russian-Ukrainian Interface," in *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective*, ed. Janusz Korek (Stockholm: Södertörns högskola, 2007), 61–82; Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Yuliya Yurchuk, "Memory Politics in Contemporary Ukraine: Reflections from the Postcolonial Perspective," *Memory Studies* vol. 12 no. 6 (2019): 699–720.

32   Törnquist-Plewa & Yurchuk, "Memory Politics in Contemporary Ukraine," 701–702.

33   On the debate regarding colonial and postcolonial Ukraine, see, Timothy Snyder, "Integration and Disintegration: Europe, Ukraine and the World," *Slavic Review* vol. 74 no. 4 (2015): 692–707; Yaroslav Hrytsak, "The Postcolonial Is Not Enough," *Slavic Review* vol. 74 no. 4 (2015): 732–37; Roman Horbyk, "Ideologies of the Self: Constructing the Modern

Ukrainian Subject in the Other's Modernity," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* no. 3 (2016): 89–90.

34   On the matter of nationalization of Ukrainian history, see also Georgiy Kasianov, "'Nationalized History: Past Continuous, Present Perfect, Future…" in *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, ed. Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2009), 7–24; Kasianov, "The 'Nationalization' of History in Ukraine," in *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*, ed. Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (Budapest, Hungary: CEU Press, 2012), 141–174; Törnquist-Plewa & Yurchuk, "Memory Politics in Contemporary Ukraine," 703–705.

35   *Viche* is historically a public meeting or popular assembly in the Kyivan Rus, where citizens expressed their democratic opinions to the authorities. On public space in post-socialist states and making Maidan a space for public protests and collective representation, read, Igor Tyshchenko, "A Return to Public Space," in *Urban Studies, Volume 3: Public Space and Its (Dis)contents*, ed. Svitlana Shlipchenko and Igor Tyshchenko (Kyiv: Vsesvit PH, 2017); on popular assemblies and revolutions as political aesthetics of democracy, see, Jason A. Frank, *The Democratic Sublime: On Aesthetics and Popular Assembly* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

36   Previously named Khreshchatyk, Parliament, Soviet and Kalinin Square, Square of the October Revolution

37   Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 129.

38   On the evolution of the Maidan meaning as a space, read, Roman Cybriwsky, "Kyiv's Maidan: from Duma Square to Sacred Space," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* vol. 55 no. 3 (2014): 270–285. On historical and architectural transformations of the Maidan square in Kyiv, see, Igor Tyshchenko and Svitlana Shlipchenko, "MAIDAN: From the 'Space of Protests' to 'Urban Commons'. Urban Eu/Utopia in the Making," in *Urban Studies, Volume 3: Public Space and Its (Dis)contents,* ed. Svitlana Shlipchenko and Igor Tyshchenko (Kyiv: Vsesvit PH, 2017); Nataliya Kondel-Perminova, "Maïdan vid Chasu Zhovtnevoho Perevorotu do Revoliucïï Hidnosti," in *Khreshchatyk – Komunikator Mizh Chasamy* (Kyiv: Varto, 2021): 316–370.

39   Decree No. 890/2014 of November 21, 2014

40   Decree No. 69/2015 of February 11, 2015

41   Decree No. 112-p of February 17, 2021

42   On the concept of "martyrdom" in Ukrainian and post-Soviet contexts, see Uilleam Blacker, "Martyrdom, Spectacle, and Public Space: Ukraine's National Martyrology from Shevchenko to the Maidan," *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* vol. 1 no. 2 (2015): 257–292; Uilleam Blacker and Julie Fedor, "Soviet and Post-Soviet Varieties of Martyrdom and Memory," *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, vol. 1 no. 2 (2015): 197–215.

43   On the analysis of the religious connotations of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes, read, Serhy Yekelchyk, "The Heavenly Hundred: Fallen Heroes of the Euromaidan in Post-Revolutionary Ukraine," in *The Political Cult of the Dead in Ukraine: Traditions and Dimensions from the First World War to Today,* ed. Guido Hausmann and Iryna Sklokina (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 273–298.

44   "ANONS: Na Alei Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni Vidkryvaiut Dzvin Hidnosti," *Istorychna Pravda*, December 1, 2020, accessed May 25, 2021, https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2020/12/1/158583/

45   "Na Alei Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni Vstanovyly 'Dzvin Hidnosti,'" *Ukrainskyi Instytut Natsionalnoi Pamiati*, December 1, 2020, accessed May 25, 2021, https://uinp.gov.ua/pres-centr/novyny/na-aleyi-geroyiv-nebesnoyi-sotni-vstanovyly-dzvin-gidnosti

46   Decree No. 138/2016 of April 12, 2016.

47 On the mission and vision of the Museum, see https://www. maidanmuseum.org/en/node/352

48 Anastasiia Levkova and Danylo Pavlov, "Ihor Poshyvailo: 'Nove dlia Ukrainy Yavyshche – Muzei, shcho Stavliat Skladni ta Nezruchni Pytannia'," *The Ukrainians*, March 16, 2021, accessed June 15, 2021, https://theukrainians.org/ihor-poshyvajlo/

49 Tomasz Lachowski, "Memory Should be Directed at the Future," *New Eastern Europe* no. 5 (2020), accessed May 25, 2021, https://neweasterneurope.eu/2020/09/04/memory-should-be-directed-at-the-future/?fbclid=IwAR1T7MxiPi2MiHi9jIYkmhJpuzG1Q8Cd0ptf1BCBY3pekbu7RZETl4EHNI8 or https://maidanmuseum.org/en/node/1163

50 More about inspirations, read interview with the Museum director, "Ihor Poshyvailo: 'Nove dlia Ukrainy'"

51 Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000).

52 See more on the logo on the Museum's website, https://www. maidanmuseum.org/en/node/1269

53 Michael S. Schneider, *A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe: The Mathematical Archetypes of Nature, Art, and Science* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 4.

54 Nazli Efe and Emine Özen Eyüce, "Circle as a Symbol of Power in Architecture," *Istanbul: DAKAM (Eastern Mediterranean Academic Research Center)* (2019).

55 On emergence and transformation of the symbol "a drop in the ocean" during the Maidan, see, Stefan Jonsson, "The Aesthetics of Protest on Kyiv's Maidan: Reflections on Political Emergence and the Twenty-First-Century Crowd," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* vol. 90 no. 2 (2023): 381–389; and Jonsson, "What Art Knows about Democracy: The Aesthetics of Revolution in Ukraine 2013–2014," *Baltic Worlds* no. 1 (2024).

56 Frank, *The Democratic Sublime*, 14.

57 More information about *Terra Dignitas* see on the contest's official website, accessed March 30, 2021, https://terradignitas.kga.gov.ua/en/about-the-competition. Additionally, see, Nataliya Kondel-Perminova, "Mizhnarodnyi Konkurs Terra Dignitas: Perezavantazhennia Arkhitektury y Dyzainu v Ukraini," *Suchasni Problemy Doslidzhennia, Restavratsii ta Zberezhennia Kulturnoi Spadshchyny* no. 11 (2015): 144–175; Nataliya Kondel-Perminova, "Pereosmyslennia Khreshchatyka Pislia Podii Revoliutsii Hidnosti: Konkursy 2015–2018 Rokiv," in *Khreshchatyk – Komunikator Mizh Chasamy* (Kyiv: Varto, 2021): 374–395.

58 Tyshchenko & Shlipchenko, "MAIDAN: From the 'Space of Protests' to 'Urban Commons'".

59 Kondel-Perminova, "Mizhnarodnyi Konkurs Terra Dignitas," 147–148.

60 More about the international design competition, see the official website of the architectural contest, accessed March 30, 2021, http://www.competition-maidan-ukraine.org/projects_competition-maidan-ukraine_home_e.htm. Additionally, see, Kondel-Perminova, "Pereosmyslennia Khreshchatyka," 396–411.

61 See the official website of the Maidan Museum for their description of the architectural competition's winner and view of the museum building, "Oholosheno Proekt-Peremozhets u Nominatsii "Muzei Revoliutsii Hidnosti," June 28, 2018, accessed March 14, 2021, https://maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/472

62 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 25.

63 Order № 363/4427 of March 22, 2018.

64 "Henprokuratura Zaboronyla Budivnytstvo Muzeiu Revoliutsii Hidnosti na Vulytsi Instytutskii," *TCH*, July 18, 2018, accessed April 5, 2021, https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/genprokuratura-zaboronila-budivnictvo-muzeyu-revoliuciyi-gidnosti-na-vulici-institutskiy-1181553.html; "Shcho Vidbuvaietsia na Alei Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni," May 12, 2019, accessed April 5, 2021, https://www.maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/751

65 "'Zupynit Znyshchennia Alei Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni' – Zaiava Rodyn Zahyblykh Maidanivtsiv," *Radio Svoboda*, March 19, 2019, accessed April 2, 2021, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-memorial-nebesna-sotnia/29829850.html. For review of the official Museum's response to the Letter of the families, see, "Chomu Same Takyi Memorial Nebesnoi Sotni Postane u Kyievi? Vidpovid Muzeiu Maidanu na Vidkrytyi Lyst", March, 21, 2019, accessed April 2, 2021, https://www.maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/698

66 "Prezydent: U tsomu Rotsi Rozpochnutsia Roboty zi Stvorennia Muzeiu Revoliutsii Hidnosti," *President of Ukraine* official website, February 20, 2021, accessed May 20, 2021, https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-u-comu-roci-rozpochnutsya-roboti-zi-stvorennya-muz-66657

67 Decree No. 112-p of February 17, 2021

68 Museum's summary of the construction background, challenges, and plans, see at the Museum's website, "Budivnytstvo Memorialu Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni u 2018–2020 Rokakh," November 25, 2020, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.maidanmuseum.org/uk/node/1236

69 Olzacka, "The Role of Museums," 1028–1029.

70 Olzacka, "The Role of Museums," 1035.

71 *Sotnia* from Ukrainian means one hundred, and historically refers to the Cossack and Ukrainian People's Army (UPA) military units. During the Maidan events, protesters divided themselves into self-defense units "*sotnias*" that after the Revolution became a collective name "Heavenly Hundred" (*Nebesna Sotnia*). Tetiana Domashenko's poem "Heavenly Hundred of Maidan Warriors" (*Nebesna Sotnia Voiniv Maidanu*) glorified the killed protestants as martyrs and eventually coined the term "Heavenly Hundred." See also, Nataliya Bezborodova, "Nebesna Sotnia, Formation of a New Narrative from Protest Lore to Institutionalized Commemorative Practice," *Ethnologies* vol. 40 no. 1 (2018): 101–138; Jonsson, "The Aesthetics of Protest on Kyiv's Maidan," 389–394; and Jonsson, "What Art Knows about Democracy." On religious meanings of the *sotnia* and Heavenly Hundreds, see Yekelchyk, "The Heavenly Hundred."

72 On the discussions regarding the controversial military groups OUN-UPA and debates surrounding the decommunization laws, read Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, and Marples, "Decommunization, Memory Laws, and 'builders of Ukraine in the 20th century'," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* no. 39 (2018): 1–22. Additionally, on the contentious issues of memory and difficulties of Ukraine in "confronting the past" or "coping with a difficult past," see, Yurchuk, "Reclaiming the Past," 107–137. Furthermore, on heroes of the nationalist movements and discussions about reconciliations, see Kasianov, *Memory Crash*, particularly, 249–263, 319–349. See also, Zhurzhenko, "Legislating Historical Memory," 114–115.

73 Tim Cole, "Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory: Holocaust Memorials in Budapest, Hungary, 1941–1995," in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 273.

74 Olzacka, "The Role of Museums," 1039.

The Polish Eastern Policy Conference convenes annually since 2005, bringing together a diverse array of experts, journalists, activists, local government officials, and decision-makers. Images from the 2023 conference.

The Eastern policy

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLISH GEOPOLITICAL CODE

by **Michał Wawrzonek**

abstract

The aim of the article is to examine what is called the "Polish Eastern policy". This concept covers certain conceptual foundations on which subsequent governments in Warsaw have tried to build their relations with their neighbors from the post-Soviet area. The topic has already been widely described and discussed. Due to the limited volume of the article, this issue will be considered mainly in the context of the example of Polish-Ukrainian relations. The starting point will be a description of the circumstances in which Poland was the first country in the world to recognize the independence of Ukraine in 1991. Then, the motives of Polish decision-makers will be characterized. This applies both to 1991 and to the way they behaved during subsequent "Ukrainian crises." For this purpose, Colin Flint's concept of "geopolitical code" will be used.

KEYWORDS: Polish-Ukrainian relations, the Eastern policy, dissolution of the USSR, geopolitical code

Following the partially free parliamentary elections in Poland in 1989, the first non-communist prime minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, became head of government. At that time, Poland's eastern neighbors were still the Soviet republics. Relations with them developed on two parallel levels. The first was official foreign policy and related diplomatic activities. The second can be characterized as "public diplomacy".

"Traditional diplomacy" was created by the government, and above all by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Krzysztof Skubiszewski. Both Skubiszewski and Prime Minister Mazowiecki came from the camp of the democratic anti-communist opposition. However, especially during the first months, the Mazowiecki government pursued a very cautious policy towards the East. With regard to relations with the USSR, immediately after taking over as prime minister, Mazowiecki declared that in his policy he intended to "seek solutions" that would help reconcile Poland's sovereignty with the "interests of a great power", i.e. the USSR.[1]

When analyzing such behavior at the level of "traditional diplomacy", it is worth paying attention to the significant limitations that hampered the government in Warsaw. To create foreign policy, it had at its disposal infrastructure adapted to the Yalta order that had prevailed in recent decades. Soviet troops

were still on Polish territory. The structures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were dominated by people who were accustomed to Poland's status as a satellite of the Soviet Union.[2] The habits inherited by the administrative apparatus responsible for the practical implementation of foreign policy tasks continued to have a significant impact on the work of diplomacy. For example, a report on relations with the USSR was prepared in May 1990 in which the author or authors still argued that the Soviet Union was the "guarantor of Poland's independence."[3]

A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT situation occurred at the level of "public diplomacy". In the eastern direction, groups associated with the opposition Solidarity trade union played a particularly important role. After the 1989 elections, the Citizens' Parliamentary Club was established in parliament. It gathered members of the lower and upper houses of the Polish parliament. Its members began to establish contacts with representatives of independence circles in the Soviet republics very early on and supported such political aspirations. These were mainly "Sajudis" in Lithuania[4] and the People's Movement of Ukraine.[5]

Ukraine has always held a key place in Polish Eastern policy. The first Congress of the People's Movement of Ukraine was held in Kyiv between September 8 and 10, 1989.[6] Its participants also included a delegation of newly elected members of the Polish Sejm on behalf of Solidarity. The first to speak was one of the leaders of the Polish democratic opposition, Adam Michnik. He concluded his speech with the words "Long live free and democratic Ukraine." In response, the delegates gathered in the audience gave a standing ovation that lasted several minutes.

The Polish delegation had no official status. This was an example of activities undertaken as part of the above-mentioned "public diplomacy". Nevertheless, years later, Michnik recalled that the then Polish prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki held a grudge against him because the trip had not been agreed with the government. Mazowiecki allegedly stated that "you cannot conduct foreign policy in such a spontaneous way".[7] The Polish prime minister was still afraid of Moscow's reaction. Moreover, Michnik himself admitted that in backroom talks he warned his Ukrainian interlocutors "against excessive radicalism." However, these warnings were not about the goal itself, i.e. independence, but about the tactics that were intended to lead to it.

ON JUNE 16, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine. Around the same time, other Soviet republics also decided to take a similar step. In connection with these events, at the end of July 1990, the Polish Sejm adopted a special resolution that supported the aspirations of the peoples of Ukraine and Belarus

"for freedom".[8] It can be assumed that such a quick reaction of the Polish parliament to the dynamic development of the situation in the post-Soviet area resulted from the intensive (as far as possible, of course) contacts that its representatives developed as part of the above-mentioned "public diplomacy". Importantly, the content of the resolution was agreed between all parliamentary groups at that time.[9] This means that a consensus was reached on this matter between the Solidarity and the post-communist sides.

The process of disintegration of the USSR was progressing, which also posed new challenges for Polish diplomacy. The answer to this was a new tactic in the form of the "two-track policy". It was to consist in maintaining parallel relations with the USSR and its emancipating republics. Thanks to this diplomatic formula, Poland could respond flexibly to the development of the situation in the USSR, which was changing very dynamically at that time.

IT IS WORTH COMPARING this Polish approach with the policy towards the USSR pursued by one of the key players in the international arena at that time, i.e. the USA. Its essence is quite well illustrated by George Bush's visit to Kiyv. On August 1, 1991, the American president appeared before the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). His speech went down in history as the "Chicken Kyiv Speech". Bush assured his listeners that "We support the struggle in this great country for democracy and economic reform".[10] At the same time, however, the entire speech showed that the US president did not in any way take into account a scenario in which Ukraine and other republics seceded from the USSR. Bush admitted that "some people have urged the United States to choose between supporting President Gorbachev and supporting independence-minded leaders throughout the USSR" but at the same time he stated: "I consider this a false choice".[11] Bush was convinced that thanks to Gorbachev's reforms, the Soviet Union would transform into a genuine federation – like the USA. He argued that as pushed by Gorbachev: "the nine-plus-one agreement holds forth the hope that Republics will combine greater autonomy with greater voluntary interaction -- political, social, cultural, economic -- rather than pursuing the hopeless course of isolation".[12]

The US president concluded that "it should be obvious that the ties between our nations grow stronger every single day". However, as it turned out, he meant "Soviet people". He treated his listeners primarily as "Soviet citizens". Bush said: "The peoples of the USSR have entered a great enterprise, full of courage and vigor. I have come here today to say: We support those who explore the frontiers of freedom".[13] The "frontiers of freedom" emerged quite clearly from all the statements – the USSR was supposed to survive and freedom had to be sought within its borders. Bush emphasized that: "Yet freedom is not the same as

> ## "THE ENTIRE SPEECH SHOWED THAT THE US PRESIDENT DID NOT IN ANY WAY TAKE INTO ACCOUNT A SCENARIO IN WHICH UKRAINE AND OTHER REPUBLICS SECEDED FROM THE USSR."

Gathering of People's Movement of Ukraine at the October Revolution Square (now Maidan Nezalezhnosti) during the raising of the Ukrainian flag in Kyiv on July 24, 1990.

PHOTO: M. YAKOVENKO, V. BILETSKYI WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

US President George Bush and the chairman of Ukraine's parliament, Leonid Kravchuk, during talks on August 5, 1991.

independence". The pursuit of independence was linked in the American president's speech with attempts to replace a far-off tyranny with a local despotism and "a suicidal nationalism based upon ethnic hatred".[14]

THE QUOTED SPEECH by G. Bush demonstrated the specific helplessness of the president himself and his advisors and experts in the face of the ongoing process of disintegration of the USSR. "The nine-plus-one-agreement" for which Washington had such great hopes turned out to be the final nail in the coffin of the Soviet state. It is true that on August 1, 1991, members of the USRS parliament Supreme Soviet of the USSR gave President Bush a standing ovation after his speech. However, just over three weeks later, they still passed the resolution on Ukraine's independence.

Of course, the catalyst for these events was the coup in Moscow, which took place between August 19 and 21, 1991. The coup attempt ended in failure, and a few days later, on September 5, President Bush received a memorandum from the assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Brent Scowcroft, on "developments in the USSR".[15] Scowcroft focused in his report on a conflict between Gorbachev and Yeltsin. He concluded that "Ukraine is the wild card in this". He asserted that "both Yelstin and Gorbachev feel that Ukraine must stay in the Union. It is a huge economy tightly integrated with Russia, and an abrupt separation would be disastrous". Although the presidential adviser admitted that "Ukrainian independence is the one cause uniting virtually all political factions in that republic", he was convinced "that Ukraine will stay in the union, primarily as a way to try to control Russia".

In his analysis, Scowcroft completely downplayed the fact that on August 24, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada had adopted the declaration of independence of Ukraine and that a referendum on this matter was scheduled for December 1, 1991. It is true that the presidential adviser noted that the elections for the president of Ukraine were scheduled for the same day. However, he predicted that "Kravchuk will not win the key December elections". Moreover, even though, along with the adoption of the declaration of independence, the USSR parliament adopted a resolution to establish its own Ministry of Defense and the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Scowcroft informed President Bush that "the republican leaders seem to understand that an army under centralized operational control, but with effective oversight by authorities chosen by the republics, makes the most sense."

IN GENERAL, the presidential adviser still believed after the coup in Moscow that a new agreement on a trade union would be signed. He predicted that even if this treaty "will give the republics the right to conduct their own official relationship with foreign countries", then it will basically only concern "lower-level diplomatic issues" – such as issuing visas.

Around the same time, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommended to the then prime minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki that Ukraine be recognized as independent. As the date of the Ukrainian referendum approached, a clear position on its results crystallized in Polish decision-making circles. As a result, they were not a surprise for Warsaw, and the next day Poland became the first country in the world to recognize Ukraine's independence. Meanwhile, in the USA, both before December 1, 1991, and in the following weeks, the administration of President Bush was still unable to get over the fact that the USSR was finally falling apart. The United States finally recognized Ukrainian independence on December 26, 1991. The diplomatic services of other Western countries (except Canada) faced similar problems as in the case of the United States.

In the following years, there were several more key moments in which Polish actions determined or significantly influenced the way in which the post-Soviet area, especially Ukraine, was treated by Western policymakers. We could mention here, first of all, events related to the Orange Revolution, the Eastern Partnership project and finally support for protesters during the Euromaidan. Poland's role as an actor that mobilized

Warsaw October 31, 1991. Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki in his study.

Western partners to actively support Ukraine turned out to be particularly important after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. In particular, during the first weeks of the war Poland played a "leading role in the European response to Putin's invasion".[16] Closely related to this is the issue of energy security and the coherence of Western policy in this field.[17]

Numerous Polish warnings against Europe's too far-reaching dependence on Russia were downplayed in all the years after 1989. Polish policymakers sought understanding among their partners in the EU for the priorities related to Eastern policy. However, most often they were the source of accusations of historical complexes and Russophobia. This second accusation in particular was extremely effective in neutralizing any Polish initiatives in this regard in the European forum.[18]

ONLY RUSSIA'S full-scale invasion of Ukraine prompted at least some Western politicians and analysts to revise their current attitude towards concepts related to "Polish Eastern policy". British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss concluded on April 5, 2022: "Poland has always been clear eyed about Russia. You have understood Putin's malign intent. You were right".[19] In turn, one of the German Christian-Democrats leaders, Wolfgang Schaeuble, stated in mid-November 2022: "I should have looked at what Russia was doing in Chechnya. Or listened to the then president of Poland, Lech Kaczyński. He warned in a speech after Russia's invasion of Georgia: first Georgia, then Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltic countries, and then Poland. He was right".[20] Looking back, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said: "Our Polish friends and our Baltic friends were right – they were saying all along that Russia thinks differently, that its logic is different than ours. And we should have listened to them".[21] The politicians' statements were reflected in numerous comments from analysts and publicists.[22] In this context, the conclusion of Daniel Fried and Aaron Korew from the Atlantic Council shows quite well the change in mood related to the Polish position on Eastern policy: "Poland stands on the frontier of war. Its international profile and potential weight have grown due to its leadership in support of Ukraine and its prescience in warning of Russia's revanchist intentions.

So, when its government delivers a formal and comprehensive foreign policy statement, as Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau did in presenting his "Exposé" to the Polish parliament last month, it's worth a close look".[23]

A tacit power of the geopolitical code

Interestingly, the American authorities were wrong in their assessment of the situation in the USSR in 1990–91, even though they had highly developed diplomatic contacts and were supported by an entire army of experts and intelligence. The presidential administration also maintained numerous personal contacts with representatives of the Soviet establishment.

Polish decision-makers had no experience in "big politics" and no analytical background. Despite all these shortcomings, they managed to accurately assess the processes taking place in the Soviet Union and make the right decisions in time. How was it possible?

When looking for an answer to this question, it is worth reaching for Colin Flint's concept of "geopolitical codes". This is a particular way of how "a country orientates itself toward the world".[24] Such a geopolitical code is indicated by answers to a set of basic questions. According to Flint, these are: a) who are our current and potential allies? (b) who are our current and potential enemies? (c) how can we maintain our allies and nurture potential allies? (d) how can we counter our current enemies and emerging threats? and (e) how do we justify the four calculations above to our public, and to the global community? This constitutes a fundamental set of questions, one that can be enriched with an array of additional inquiries. These might include, for instance, inquiries about the international standing of "our country," the advantages of our geographical position, the ways in which politics and geopolitics operate to our advantage or detriment, the historical role we are destined to fulfill, how our partners perceive us, and how our adversaries view us.[25]

HOWEVER, WHEN IT comes to answers to the above-mentioned set of questions, it has its significant limitations, which substantially restrict the number of possible answers. This is because geopolitical codes are "a form of social awareness, a tool for implementing social frameworks of memory and social imagination"[26] and are a component of national identity. In other words, the answers to the above-mentioned questions largely depend on the configurations of "knowledge/factography about the geographical and physical properties of the code (signs), values that have metaphysical elements (meaning) and the mythical narrative, i.e. the way dissemination of the myth and the form of its transfiguration in social consciousness."[27] On the basis of these configurations, "mental maps" are formed, i.e. social ideas about geographic space and ways of valuing it, which are somehow "overwritten on geographical and political maps" and relatively independent of them.

According to the Flint's concept, "an essential dimension of a geopolitical code is the way that a country's decisions and actions are justified. A convincing case for why a country is a "threat" or not, and what should be done about it, must always

be made not only to a country's own citizens, but also to the international community".[28]

Polish Eastern policy can be defined as a set of ideas and concepts regarding relations with states and societies in the post-Soviet area. What makes it unique is its specific cultural and civilizational dimension.[29] It concerns territories where two models of political culture clash – European and imperial Russian. The differences between them concern the ways of understanding freedom, individual rights, the relationship between the individual and society, state power and its limitations, and the relationship between the private and public spheres.

IN THE LIGHT OF the assumptions of the Eastern policy, the geographical scope of these two models of political culture is of existential importance for Poland. This means that the further east the European model reaches, the better is Poland's geopolitical position. However, the closer to its borders the Russian model operates, the worse the situation is. Importantly, the geopolitical code that determines this perception of one's international position is deeply rooted in the past. The answers to the "basic questions" contained therein were formulated at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. They could be reconstructed as follows:

Who are our current and potential allies? – European countries (the West). Who are our current and potential enemies? – Russia. How can we maintain our allies and nurture potential allies? – by offering our support for nations suffering from the Russian despotism and imperialism. How can we counter our current enemies and emerging threats? – by supporting the emergence of independent states between us and Russia. How do we justify the four calculations above to our public, and to the global community? – by turning to a principle of struggle "for your freedom and ours", searching for a common historical and cultural legacy with "captive nations", and recalling the idea of a European community of values.

On the basis of these answers, three basic concepts to which Polish Eastern policy referred were shaped. These are: Intermarium, Prometheism and the "Jagiellonian idea". According to the Intermarium concept, a coalition of Central and Eastern European countries should be established in the space between the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black Seas. It was assumed that its members would act together to determine the geopolitical situation in the region. So far, they have only been part of *Mitteleuropa*, i.e. the area that was the object of expansion by Germany or Russia (or both at the same time). According to the assumptions of the Intermarium concept, it should enable the participants of the mentioned coalition to gain real agency in the international arena.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the assumptions of the "Jagiellonian idea", the states that were established in the area of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth are united not only by a common heritage of the past, but also by a community of interests. Hence the concept of an alliance of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, which together would constitute a significant power in the region and would be able to oppose Russia's imperial aspirations. It refers to the tradition of the Jagiellonian dynasty, which sought to create a strong zone of influence stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Poland would play a leading role in this network.[30]

The Intermarium was intended to help regain and maintain Poland's independence in 1918. Ukraine played a key role in this puzzle. However, an attempt to create an independent Ukrainian state in 1918 failed. The Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) troops were finally driven out of Ukraine by the Bolsheviks in 1919. The leader of the UNR, together with the rest of his army, found himself in exile in Poland. In this situation, Józef Piłsudski, who was the head of the Polish state, decided to support Ukrainians in their fight for independence. For this purpose, he formed an alliance with Semen Petliura. Pursuant to its provisions, the Polish and Ukrainian armies moved together to take power in Ukraine. Ultimately, however, the plan failed. Poland betrayed its Ukrainian allies and concluded a peace treaty in Riga in 1921, under which the lands that Ukrainians considered as a potential part of the territory of their would-be state were included within Poland's borders, and the Bolsheviks gained legitimacy to take over the remaining part of Ukrainian lands. The failure of the Polish-Ukrainian alliance was one of many reasons why the implementation of the Intermarium project was not possible in the interwar period.

THE POLISH AUTHORITIES, or at least that part of the elites who were associated with Józef Piłsudski, had no illusions about the durability of the peace concluded with the Bolsheviks in Riga. It was assumed that the increasingly revolutionary Russia – resorting to the weapon of communist ideology, unfortunately very popular in many political circles in the West – would sooner or later threaten Poland again.[31]

It was believed that any action that would weaken the USSR would help postpone the expected attack from the east. Therefore, there was an idea to support captive nations that found themselves in the Soviet empire against their will. It was not only about Ukrainians, but also about the nations of Central Asia, Georgia, and the North Caucasus. This is how the Promethean idea was born. Its originator, it is assumed, was a Polish soldier, Colonel Tadeusz Schaetzel, a military intelligence officer and then a high official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[32]

The concepts of Prometheism remained only in the sphere of ideas. It is true that they were developed with the support of state structures, i.e. military counterintelligence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thanks to this, the so-called environment was created by "Prometheists", but they never actually gained

> "POLISH EASTERN POLICY CAN BE DEFINED AS A SET OF IDEAS AND CONCEPTS REGARDING RELATIONS WITH STATES AND SOCIETIES IN THE POST-SOVIET AREA."

any influence on the current policy pursued by the Polish state.[33]

Some of the group emigrated to Western Europe after World War II. Very quickly, a small town located on the outskirts of Paris – Maisons-Laffitte – rose to become one of the key centers of Polish political thought. The editorial office of the *Kultura* magazine was based here. Its creator and editor-in-chief was Jerzy Giedroyc, who had belonged to the Promethean movement in the interwar period. Giedroyc managed to integrate a group of collaborators around his journal who developed the basic doctrinal assumptions of the post-war Polish Eastern policy. To simplify somewhat, it can be said that in the pages of *Kultura* the concepts of Intermarium, the "Jagiellonian idea" and Prometheism, as known from the past, were adapted to the realities shaped by the Yalta conference and the Cold War. The most important elements of Polish Eastern policy, which were developed in the *Kultura* circle, are:

1) maintaining the post-war shape of borders in Europe;
2) support for the independence and democratization of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus (ULB) and refraining from Polish-Russian competition for domination over these three countries;
3) maintaining good relations between Eastern European countries;
4) reducing tension in the region – so that Russia's role as a "gendarme" disappears, as well as its fear of invasion from the West;
5) liberalization of Russia.[34]

IT IS WORTH SUPPLEMENTING this catalog with one more important point, i.e. the independence and autonomy of Polish political concepts in relation to the West. An important element of the geopolitical code on which the model of Eastern policy developed by the *Kultura* community was based was the link between the issue of Poland regaining full sovereignty and the establishment of an independent Ukrainian state.

The addressees and readers of *Kultura* were not only emigrant circles, but also Poles in communist-ruled Poland. The magazine shaped the way activists of the democratic anti-communist opposition perceived the issue of relations with eastern neighbors. After the breakthrough associated with the "Round Table" and the elections of June 4, 1989, as parliamentarians or employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they gained influence on current foreign policy. Thanks to this, Poland became the first country in the world to recognize Ukraine's independence.

In the following years, the topic of Eastern policy became a permanent element of political discourse in Poland. Throughout this discourse, the key point of reference for its participants was the intellectual legacy of the Giedroyc's circle.[35] Policymakers who created and were directly responsible for the eastern vector of Polish politics very often relied on the authority of the Parisian *Kultura* community in their speeches. This applied to representatives of both the right and left sides of the political scene. For example, in December 2004, during the Orange Revolution, the then President of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, explained Poland's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine in this way: "We defined our policy, Polish policy in Ukrainian affairs, after the democratic transformation 15 years ago. We are guided by the concept that was far-sightedly formulated by Mieroszewski and Giedroyc in the Parisian *Kultura*."[36] In turn, less than a year later, Paweł Kowal of the Law and Justice party proudly stated that the "intellectual foundations of Polish Eastern policy" are based on "the Polish tradition of thinking about the East." The future deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Poland had in mind the reflections of Włodzimierz Bączkowski and Jerzy Giedroyc.[37]

THE MOST SERIOUS attempt to revise the principles on which Polish Eastern policy was to be based took place in 2007–2014. It was the period of government of the Civic Platform and Polish People's Party coalition. On the one hand, at the level of declarations, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski, declared that "there is no dispute about Giedroyc".[38] And indeed, at the time in question, the Polish government supported Ukraine's European aspirations. Moreover, Sikorski tried to involve the "European center" – mainly Germany – "in the affairs of Eastern Europe".[39] At the same time, however, the ruling team in Poland at that time set itself the goal of improving relations with Russia. The line of action of the Polish side in this matter was determined by the declaration of Prime Minister Donald Tusk submitted to the Sejm in November 2007. The Polish Prime Minister stated that "the lack of dialogue is not good for either Poland or Russia. It spoils interests and reputation of both countries in the international arena" and therefore, "although we have our own views on the situation in Russia, we want dialogue with Russia as it is".[40] The government in Warsaw continued this strategy even though the Kremlin was already openly communicating its neo-imperial aspirations (Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007) and demonstrating its readiness to implement them (the war with Georgia in 2008).

Ultimately, this new course in Eastern policy did not bring any tangible results; on the contrary, in exchange for a number of concessions, the Polish side suffered "a number of humiliations and demonstrations of hostility" from the Kremlin.[41] A special moment in Polish-Russian relations was the crash of the plane carrying the Polish delegation, in which on April 10, 2010, among others, President Lech Kaczyński and his wife, numerous deputies of the Polish Parliament and the highest commanders of the Polish army died. Immediately after this tragedy, there were "far-reaching and difficult-to-explain demonstrations of the Polish government's trust in the institutions of the Russian Federation." Their validity was questionable from the very beginning, and "in the following years it was subjected to severe verification".[42] Importantly, such a policy has inevitably seriously undermined Po-

> **"THE MOST SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO REVISE THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH POLISH EASTERN POLICY WAS TO BE BASED TOOK PLACE IN 2007–2014."**

land's credibility as a local leader and ally of Eastern European countries in matters of their security.

After the events related to the Revolution of Dignity (annexation of Crimea, Russia's aggression against Ukraine), the reset option in relations with Russia has become obsolete.

The turning point for Eastern policy was the full-scale invasion. Poland has become a European leader in military aid to Ukraine and has made its territory available as a logistics base for supplies of equipment to the Ukrainian army from other countries. In the political dimension, it is worth noting several important events that have symbolic meaning. Poland was the only country that did not withdraw its diplomatic representation from Kyiv at a time when there was a real threat that the Ukrainian capital would be occupied by Russian troops. Polish prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki and the leader of the ruling party Jarosław Kaczyński, together with the prime ministers of the Czech Republic and Slovenia, were the first European leaders to visit Ukraine after February 24, 2022. The event took place on March 15, 2022, when Kyiv was attacked by Russian missiles, and there were still fighting going on in the Kyiv Oblast.

These examples alone show that promoted by Giedroyc imperative of "There is no free Poland without a free Ukraine" is deeply rooted in the consciousness of Polish policymakers. Closely related to it is a deeply rooted sensitivity to manifestations of Russian imperialism. In December 1926, Józef Piłsudski, in a secret speech delivered at a meeting of the Committee for the Defense of the Republic of Poland, warned that "in Russia, a huge majority of the population does not want war, just like all over the world. The people of Russia are exhausted – they lost most during the war – and they also experienced a revolution." However, "there is a group of people in Russia who cannot live peacefully. These people, who form the upper layers of the state, are able to move and lead Russia wherever they want".[43] Less than 100 years later, this diagnosis remains extremely accurate. The Russian invasion once again updated the entire geopolitical code contained in this formula. Previously, this code could be reconstructed mainly on the basis of the discourse around Eastern policy. After February 24, 2022, similar reconstruction will be able to be carried out primarily based on specific political decisions.

IT IS WORTH REMEMBERING that during each "Ukrainian crisis" – whether in 2004, 2013/14, or finally after February 24, 2022, Ukrainians received active and extensive support from Polish society in their clashes with Russian neo-Soviet imperialism. Charitable actions, demonstrations of support and, above all, spontaneous help provided to Ukrainian war refugees who arrived in Poland after the full-scale invasion created a new dimension of public diplomacy through which Eastern policy was implemented.

Ideas related to the traditions of Polish Eastern policy are still embedded in public debates. This includes attempts to reconceptualize the heritage related to the *Kultura* environment,[44] as well as direct references to selected concepts related to it. So it's no coincidence, as Daniel Fried and Aaron Korew noticed, that Polish

Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, speaking in his exposé in the Polish parliament in May 2023, encouraged a "permanent cooperation" between Poland and Ukraine by recalling "the best republican and multi-national traditions of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that included most of present-day Ukraine".[45] Moreover Fried and Korew asserted that "Rau's approach rests on decades of Polish rethinking about Ukraine, including a largely successful effort to turn aside nationalist narratives; importantly, this view is shared across the Polish government and within most of the political opposition, excepting only the hard right".[46]

The core elements of the Polish geopolitical code

What elements of the doctrine of Eastern policy and the related geopolitical code were the basis for Poland's at least temporary success in the international arena? They can be reconstructed on the basis of the writings of two key figures who are responsible for the archetype of this doctrine, i.e. Juliusz Mieroszewski[47] and Włodzimierz Bączkowski.[48]

Poland between the East and the West

Bączkowski fought "for the primacy of eastern affairs" in Polish foreign policy. This means that Poland's political priority was not involvement in world politics or fighting for this or that interest in the West, but a well-thought-out and courageous Eastern policy, based on the idea of solidarity with the subjugated nations of the USSR.[49]

Mieroszewski emphasized that Poles' relations with the East will only be able to improve when they review their attitude towards the West.[50] Poles have always had a strong sense of a bond with the West. Mieroszewski called it "Western patriotism".[51] He wrote that this patriotism "is expressed in an irresistible pull towards the West", which very often "contradicts the line of basic national interests".[52]

Bączkowski explained that Poles in the West are constantly faced with a lack of understanding of the issue of Eastern policy. In 1953 he wrote: "Although the issue of understanding Russia is a topic of paramount importance for the West, any full and in-depth analysis of Soviet policy and the processes taking place in Russia is received with disregard and suspicion."[53] In the same text, Bączkowski concluded that "the Soviet moves, which are incomprehensible and surprising to the West, on the one hand, cause consternation and a large waste of time for mutual consultations, and on the other hand, as planned tricks, they put the West in a situation forcing it to continue to defend itself with half-hearted solutions".[54] As a consequence, "the mistakes of Western policy towards Russia have become a permanent and natural phenomenon and will last as long as the dynamism of Western civilization does not begin to prevail over Soviet communism."[55]

Mieroszewski explained the specific "incapacitation" of Western Polish politics by the "psychology of the bulwark" common among Poles. "The bulwark," he wrote, "which comes from the word 'wall,' implies isolation and a state of permanent defensive war".[56] "Psychology of the bulwark" works well in times of war, but in times of peace it can bring downright disastrous conse-

quences. It makes Poles' Western patriotism passive, focused on defending themselves against the East, not influencing it. Mieroszewski postulated that instead of a "bulwark", Poland should become a "bridge", a "span" between the West and the East.[57]

It should be noted that for the London correspondent of *Kultura*, it was already obvious in 1955 that if Poland was to actually pursue an active policy in Eastern Europe, there must first be a "full Polish-German understanding". In his opinion, this matter "can neither be avoided nor erased".[58]

The issue of understanding sovereignty

Mieroszewski had already stated in the mid-1950s that the concept of sovereignty should be reevaluated. We should say goodbye to the traditional understanding of this term. "The last commander of the sovereign Polish army was Marshal Rydz-Śmigły," Mieroszewski claimed. "If we regain freedom and Russia withdraws from Poland," he wrote in 1955, "our army will become part of the European army and will be subject to one or the other "Atlantic" or "European" command."[59] According to his analysis, other countries in the Central-Eastern Europe region – including Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus – were in a similar situation to Poland. They had two options – either to unconditionally accept the status of client of one of the great powers, or while becoming associated with it, at the same time to tighten contacts and cooperation between themselves. This cooperation would not be an alternative to the patronage of this power. However, it would allow the countries to make the most of the opportunities to pursue their own national interest, limited by quasi-sovereignty. Mieroszewski pointed out that in Central and Eastern Europe the idea of building "sovereign" and "independent" states – in the traditional sense of the word – would only benefit Russia. These countries would always have a lot of grudges against each other – and this, in turn, would allow Moscow to maintain control over this region.

In other words, in the mid-1950s the émigré writer and publicist already believed that the way of understanding Poland's sovereignty should be adjusted to the geopolitical situation in which it found itself after World War II. He was convinced that the collapse of the Soviet empire was only a matter of time. At the same time, however, he believed that Poland and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would still need support in a broader alliance.

"Pragmatism" versus "romanticism"

In 2007, the most serious attempt so far to correct the principles of Polish astern policy took place. According to the advocates of this correction, the "Giedroyc Doctrine" was intended to make this policy based on anachronistic assumptions and "romantic" illusions. Instead, a turn towards "pragmatism" was proposed. It imposed a specific way of interpreting the social reality beyond Poland's eastern border and the processes taking place there. Sławomir Dębski described it as "optimistic determinism".[60] According to this approach, European societies are divided into "less highly" and "more highly" developed. The former were "behind in development" and the only way for them to advance in civilization would be integration with NATO and the EU. The

motivation for this integration would be the material well-being enjoyed by its participants.

It is true that the Kremlin tried to implement an alternative "development model". However, in 2006, Dębski optimistically predicted that "in a dozen or so years its effectiveness will also be questioned in Russia" – as was already happening in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus.[61] As a consequence, post-Soviet countries stimulated by the desire to achieve material well-being would also start to follow the example of the "most developed countries of the continent" – that is, implement Western models into their political systems.[62]

It is easy to notice that "pragmatism" understood in this way was based on a kind of paternalism towards Eastern European societies and greatly reduced the processes of state-building, nation-building, democratization and de-colonization taking place in them at the same time. First of all, it was permeated with an attitude that Mieroszewski described as "ideology-free". The London correspondent of *Kultura* argued that it is impossible to implement ambitious plans without great slogans, visions and ideas. He emphasized that "no one can be captivated by the idea of economic growth or the slogan of color television in every home and a car in front of every house." He claimed that while "everyone wants cars – no one is willing to die for cars and color TVs." He argued that "people die for often wrong but fervently held ideas" and that people without ideas are completely defenseless against violence and are perfect slave material.[63]

Conclusions

According to Flint, every country has a geopolitical code.[64] This means that in the USA, Western European countries and Poland, the answers to questions related to this code are slightly different. In addition, "for many countries their main, if not sole, concern is with their immediate neighbors".[65] Poland's relations with its eastern neighbors are indeed bilateral in nature – Polish-Russian, Polish-Ukrainian or Polish-Belarusian – but their quality, depending on the given context, is also important for the entire region of Eastern Europe, and in the case of Polish-Ukrainian relations, for the entire European international order.

Basics of the Polish Eastern Policy was written at the beginning of the 20th century and in the interwar period. Then they were updated during the Cold War by the circles associated with Jerzy Giedroyc and the *Kultura* magazine. After the fall of communism, the concepts of "Eastern policy" evolved, but they were based on the same geopolitical code. Attempts to break with this code in 2007–2013 under the slogan of "pragmatism", which was mainly intended to concern relations with Russia and adapting to the Western European mainstream, ended in failure.

Mieroszewski, Bączkowski and Giedroyc believed that Poland would gain a strong position in relations with its Western partners if it was able to pursue an ambitious, active, and independent policy towards its eastern neighbors. The radical change in the attitude of the United States and Western countries towards Poland after Russia's full-scale invasion against Ukraine seems to confirm the validity of this approach.

Integration with Euro-Atlantic structures was a key challenge

for Polish foreign policy after 1989. Membership in NATO and the EU was a great success. However, from the point of view of the security not only of Poland, but of the entire Central and Eastern Europe, problems related to the processes taking place in the post-Soviet area are still of fundamental importance. Hence, in the case of Poland, the vital importance of the ability to properly formulate assumptions and implement an adequate Eastern policy.

Unfortunately, Poland was not effective in justifying the image of Russia as a threat to the European community. The Polish position became credible towards Western partners only when rockets began to fall on Ukrainian cities. As Wojciech Łysek rightly noted, excessive reliance on EU instruments in eastern foreign policy may paradoxically limit or even deprive Polish politicians of the opportunity to actively create an Eastern policy.[66]

The adequacy of Polish policy towards such problems as the recognition of Ukraine's independence, subsequent crises related to the Ukrainian revolutions and, finally, towards the actual goals of the Kremlin's policy not only towards Ukraine, but also towards Europe – especially at the beginning – was not the result of an efficient analytical base that Polish policymakers had at their disposal, but precisely the geopolitical code that imposed adequate answers to key questions about Poland's international position.

> ## "IN 1991, POLAND IMMEDIATELY, WITHOUT LOOKING AT OTHER COUNTRIES, RECOGNIZED THE INDEPENDENCE OF UKRAINE."

An important element of "Eastern policy" is "public diplomacy". It allows us to take advantage of the sensitivity of Polish society as a whole to the events in Ukraine. People were involved in this "diplomacy", or simply put, various forms of assistance for Ukraine and Ukrainians, especially after February 24, 2022, regardless of their political sympathies. This was an issue beyond the current political divisions that often paralyze the Polish political system on a daily basis.

In 1991, Poland immediately, without looking at other countries, recognized the independence of Ukraine. In 2022, Poland unconditionally, again without regard to its Western partners, supported Ukraine after the Russian full-scale invasion. Seemingly, these actions went far beyond the possibilities resulting from its status in international relations and from the potential of power at its disposal, understood in realist terms.

This happened because in both cases, Polish decision-makers were guided by the geopolitical code on which the "Polish Eastern policy" is built. This code contains answers that are key to making these types of decisions. These answers are the result of intuitive choice rather than rational calculation. This choice is made on the basis of references to the past that are part of the collective identity. At least this was the case with the "Eastern policy" pursued by Poland after 1989.

In 2003, Timothy Snyder stated that the "Eastern policy" in the formula given to him by the *Kultura* community had been successful. According to its demands, independent Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus were established, and its culmination was the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the EU. From that moment on, according to Snyder, the concepts developed by Giedroyc and Mieroszewski became "redundant", because "once this integration is complete, the entire eastern question will be posed anew, with different, and perhaps higher, stakes".[67]

The Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Euromaidan in 2013/14 seem to show that integration won't be complete without Ukraine. Moreover, these new "different, and perhaps higher, stakes" still concern largely the same problem – Russian neo-Soviet imperialism. On the eve of Poland's accession to the EU, Snyder underlined that traditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth "remain salient in a new world of European Union".[68] The events in Ukraine show that the same applies to the legacy of the "Eastern policy" related to Giedroyc and Mieroszewski, which is so strongly associated with the "Jagiellonian idea". Therefore both of them "await a new generation of interpreters, diplomats, and citizens who relish a challenge".[69]

After the elections in October 2023, there was a change of power in Poland. The government was formed by the former opposition. Donald Tusk became prime minister. In the expose delivered in Parliament on December 13, 2023, the new head of the Council of Ministers emphasized that "the task of Poland, the task of the new government, but also the task of all of us is to loudly and firmly demand full determination from the entire Western community to help Ukraine in this war. I will do this from day one."[70] Radosław Sikorski, as the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the new government, paid his first visit to Kyiv. Shortly afterwards, Prime Minister Donald Tusk also arrived in the capital of Ukraine.

At first glance, the political declarations made regarding Eastern policy, especially the policy towards Ukraine, seem clear. They can be understood as an announcement of the implementation of a consistent Eastern policy using the possibilities and potential of the so-called "collective West". However, they may also mean that the new coalition government that took power in Poland after December 13, 2023 does not actually have a specific vision of such a policy, and instead intends to return to practicing "Western patriotism", which Mieroszewski once criticized. ❌

Michał Wawrzonek is a Professor in the Institute of Political and Administrative Sciences, at Jesuit University in Cracow.

references

1   A. Gil, T. Kapuśniak, eds., *Polityka wschodnia Polski. Uwarunkowania. Koncepcje. Realizacja* [Poland's eastern policy. Conditions. Concepts. Implementation], (Lublin-Warszawa: IEŚW, 2009); Paweł Kowal, *Testament Prometeusza* [Testament of Prometheus] (Warszawa-Wojnowice: Kolegium Europy Wschodniej, 2019); Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Polska polityka wschodnia 1989–2015. Wymiar narodowy i unijny* [Polish eastern policy 1989–2015. National and EU dimensions], (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2016); Mariusz Maszkiewicz, *Między bezpieczeństwem a tożsamością. Rosyjskie, ukraińskie i białoruskie interpretacje idei i koncepcji w polskiej polityce wschodniej (1990–2010)*

[Between security and identity. Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian interpretations of ideas and concepts in Polish eastern policy (1990–2010)], (Wrocław: Kolegium Europy Wschodniej, 2013).

2   Marcin Orzechowski,"Stosunki pomiędzy PRL/RP a ZSRR/FR w latach 1989–1991" [Relations between the PRL/RP and the USSR/RF in the years 1989–1991] in A. Gil, T. Kapuśniak eds., *Polityka wschodnia Polski. Uwarunkowania. Koncepcje. Realizacja,* [Polish Eastern Policy. Conditions. Concepts. Implementation], (Lublin-Warszawa: IEŚW, 2009), 51.

3   The internal report that Krzysztof Skubiszewski received when he became the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed that the staff he took over had so far been under the strict supervision of the communist party, and moreover, the vast majority of the ministry's employees were in fact also officers of the communist secret services. According to the author of the report, among the ministry's employees there was a "satellite mentality" and "attitudes that were servile towards the empire, contemptuous towards other allies and hostile towards the West"– Paweł Kowal, *Testament Prometeusza* (Warszawa-Wojnowice: Kolegium Europy Wschodniej, 2019), 468.

4   Robert Kupiecki, *Stopniowa rewolucja – Krzysztof Skubiszewski i początki polskiej drogi do NATO // Dziedzictwo Krzysztofa Skubiszewskiego w polityce zagranicznej RP* [Gradual revolution – Krzysztof Skubiszewski and the beginnings of Poland's path to NATO // The legacy of Krzysztof Skubiszewski in the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland] eds.), A. Bieńczyk-Missala, R. Kuźniar (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar 2020),125.

5   Agnieszka Małgorzata Kastory, "Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny wobec sytuacji na Litwie w latach 1989–1991 w świetle dokumentów Archiwum Senatu i Biblioteki Sejmowej" [Civic Parliamentary Club towards the situation in Lithuania in the years 1989–1991 in the light of documents from the Senate Archives and the Sejm Library] *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne* [Scientific Journals of the Jagiellonian University. Historical Works.] vol. 142, no. 3 (2015): 526–533.

6   Paweł Kowal, *Testament,* 462–465.

7   More on People's Movement of Ukraine: Vladimir Paniotto, "The Ukrainian Movement for Perestroika – "Rukh": a Sociological Survey" *Soviet Studies* vol. 43, no. 1, 1991, 177–191; Ігор Поліщук, Народний Рух України: причини виникнення та наслідки діяльності [People's Movement of Ukraine: causes and consequences of activity] *Acta de Historia&Politica: Saeculum XXI* no. 1 (2019): 58–71.

8   Yuriy Savytskyi, "Це було пробудження України" – легенда польської "Солідарності" Адам Міхнік про перший з'їзд Руху [It was the awakening of Ukraine" – the legend of the Polish "Solidarity". Adam Michnik about the first congress of the Movement]**.** Available at: https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30155180.html

9   Uchwała Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 28 lipca 1990 r. [Resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of July 28, 1990] *Monitor Polski* no. 30 (1990): 267.

10   Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 37 posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniach 26, 27, 28 lipca [Shorthand (or Stenographic?) report from the 37ᵗʰ session of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on July 26, 27, 28], (Warszawa 1990), 384. Available at: https://eli.gov.pl/eli/MP/1990/234/ogl

11   *Remarks to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of the Ukraine in Kyiv, Soviet Union 1991-08-01.* Available at: https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/3267

12   Ibid.

13   Ibid.

14   Ibid.

15   Ibid.

16   *Memorandum from Scowcroft for the President: "Developments in the USSR",* September 5, 1991. Available at: https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/22493-1-memorandum-scowcroft-president

17   Diane Francis, *Poland is leading Europe's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine,* (Atlantic Council, January 28, 2023). Available at: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/poland-is-leading-europes-response-to-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine/

18   Peter Teffer, "Tusk: Nord Stream II doesn't help", December 18, 2015, *euobserver.* Available at: https://euobserver.com/green-economy/131605 ; Gabriela Baczynska, Alissa de Carbonnel & ed. Philip Blenkinsop, "Duda says Nord Stream 2 pipeline undermines EU solidarity", January 18, 2016, *Reuters.* Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/poland-energy-eu-nordstream-idUSL8N1521WW ; "Polish PM Calls Nord Stream 2 'Weapon' Of Hybrid Warfare", May 28, 2018, *RadioFreeEuropeRadioLiberty* (rfrl). Available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/polish-pm-calls-nord-stream-2-weapon-of-hybrid-warfare/29255392.html

19   More on this issue see: Michał Wawrzonek, "Poland and the Russian Question Prior to the 2014 Crisis: Between Naïve Pragmatism and Accusations of "Russophobia" in ed. T. Kuzio, *Russian Disinformation and Western Scholarship. Bias and Prejudice in Journalistic, Expert, and Academic Analyses of East European, Russian and Eurasian Affairs* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2023), 297–337.

20   *Poland and UK support for Ukraine: Foreign Secretary's statement to Warsaw press conference,* April 5, 2022. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/poland-foreign-secretarys-statement-to-warsaw-press-conference

21   Anna Widzyk, Polityk CDU: Lech Kaczyński miał rację [CDU politician: Lech Kaczyński was right], November 18, 2022, *dw.* Available at: https://www.dw.com/pl/polityk-cdu-lech-kaczy%C5%84ski-mia%C5%82-racj%C4%99/a-63810508

22   "'We should have listened to Poland about Russian energy': Finnish PM", November 18, 2022, *Polskie radio.* Available at: https://www.polskieradio.pl/395/9766/artykul/3073002,we-should-have-listened-to-poland-about-russian-energy-finnish-pm

23   One of examples is a commentary from The Economist: "Polish leaders have long pushed their partners in NATO and the EU to forge closer ties with Ukraine, warning of the risk of Russian aggression, only to be dismissed as paranoid. Russia's murderous and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has proven them entirely right. Polish denunciations of Russia's imperial ambitions, which Americans and western Europeans once pooh-poohed as post-communist stress disorder, have now become standard NATO talking points. But it is not just Poland's view of Russia that is being taken more seriously; it is Poland's role in the world. In a matter of a few weeks, the country has become the linchpin of the Western effort to defend Ukraine and deter Russia" – *Why Poland has become NATO's linchpin in the war in Ukraine,* https://www.economist.com/europe/poland-will-play-an-outsized-role-in-western-efforts-to-assist-ukraine/21808064; "The Wall Street Journal" noted: "And after warning about Russian imperial ambitions for more than a decade, Poland is now in a position to play a pivotal role in shaping the NATO defense policy and the West's response to Russian President Vladimir Putin. [...] "Now we can see that these people we've looked down on for so long actually know a thing or two," See Ian Lovett, Drew Hinshaw, Natalia Ojewska, "For Years, Poland Warned of the Russian Threat. Now, the West Is Listening", *Wall Street Journal,* Available at: https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-years-poland-warned-of-the-russian-threat-now-the-west-is-listening-11648140891

24   *Poland makes its case.*

25   Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics*, (London, New York: Routledge 2006), 55.

26   Piotr Lewandowski, "Kod geopolityczny – koncepcja teoretyczna i metodologiczna" [Geopolitical code – theoretical and methodological concept], *Politeja"* vol. 61 no. 4 (2019): 302.

27   Ibid., 312.

28 Ibid., 303.

29 Colin Flint, *Introduction*, 79.

30 More on this issue: Timothy Snyder, "Federalism and Nationalism in Polish Eastern Policy", *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Winter/Spring, vol. 4, no. 1 (2003):111–118; Melchior Szczepanik, "Between a Romantic 'Mission in the East' and Minimalism: Polish Policy Towards the Eastern Neighbourhood", *Perspectives. Special Issue: Identity and Solidarity in Foreign Policy: Investigating East Central European Relations with the Eastern Neighbourhood*, vol.19, no. 2 (2011): 45–66; Siobhan Doucette, "The uses of history by the Polish democratic opposition in the late 1970s", *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2018): 341–357.

31 Marek Kornat, "Ruch prometejski – ważne doświadczenie polityki zagranicznej II Rzeczypospolitej" [The Promethean movement – an important experience in the foreign policy of the Second Polish Republic] *Nowa Europa Wschodnia*, no. 2 (2008): 82.

32 P. Libera, ed., *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu prometejskiego*, (Warszawa, 2013), 16.

33 More on this issue: Marcel Radosław Garboś,"An Alternative Internationalism: The Main Lines and Legacies of Polish Sovietology, Promethean Orientalism and the Soviet 'Southern Borderlands 1926–1939". *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 71 no. 9 (November 2019): 1584–1608.

34 Tomasz Kamiński, Marcin Frenkel, Aktualność tzw. "doktryny Giedroycia" w kontekście polityki Unii Europejskiej wobec Rosji [Currentness of the so-called "Giedroyc doctrine" in context European Union policy towards Russia], *Przegląd Europejski* vol. 2 (2019):69–83 (72).

35 *Polska Polityka Wschodnia* [Polish Eastern Policy] Full transcript of the discussion organized by the Foundation. Stefan Batory and the editorial office of "Tygodnik Powszechny" on March 1, 2001. Available at: www.batory.org.pl/ftp/program/forum/ppw.pdf

36 *Konferencja prasowa Prezydenta RP* [Press conference of the President of the Republic of Poland]. Available at: http://www.kwasniewskialeksander.pl/int.php?mode=view&id=2116

37 *Polska polityka wschodnia. Materiały konferencji zorganizowanej w dniach 28–29 października 2005 roku we Wrocławiu* [Polish eastern policy. Materials of the conference organized on October 28–29, 2005 in Wrocław], eds., A. Kondek, Z. Smyk, (Wrocław, 2005), 34.

38 Marcin Frenkiel, "Polityka wschodnia ministra spraw zagranicznych Radosława Sikorskiego – kontynuacja czy odejście od koncepcji paryskiej 'Kultury' [Eastern policy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski – continuation or departure from the concept of the Parisian 'Culture'], in eds., M. Pietrasiak, M. Stelmach, K. Żakowski *Polityka zagraniczna Polski. 25 lat doświadczeń* [Polish Foreign Policy. 25 years of experience] (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2016), 111.

39 Marcin Frenkiel, *Polityka wschodnia*, 108.

40 Transcript of the parliamentary session from November 23, 2007, 24. Available at https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/StenoInter6.nsf/0/6372FE4B9619C1 27C125739D0053E245/$file/2_a_ksiazka.pdf

41 Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Polska polityka wschodnia 1989–2015. Wymiar narodowy i unijny* [Poland's eastern policy 1989–2015. National and EU dimensions], (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2016), 63.

42 Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Polska polityka*, 64.

43 Marek Kornat, *Ruch prometejski*, 82.

44 Giedroyc and Mieroszewski for revision. Available at: https://agencja-informacyjna.com/kultura/giedroyc-i-mieroszewski-do-rewizji/; Wojciech Konończuk, "Why Poland needs a post-Giedroyc doctrine towards Ukraine", *New Eastern Europe*, March 22, 2018. Available at: https://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/03/22/poland-needs-post-giedroyc-doctrine-towards-ukraine/; Tomasz Kamiński & Marcin Frenkel. *Aktualność tzw. "doktryny Giedroycia"* [Currentness of the so-called "Giedroyc's doctrine"], 77–80.

45 Daniel Fried and Aaron Korewa, *Poland makes its case for European leadership*, Atlantic Council, May 5, 2022. Available at: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/poland-makes-its-case-for-european-leadership/

46 *Poland makes its case.*

47 Juliusz Mieroszewski's biography, *Kultura*. Available at: https://kulturaparyska.com/pl/people/show/juliusz_mieroszewski/biography

48 Włodzimierz Bączkowski's biography, *Kultura*. Available at: https://kulturaparyska.com/pl/people/show/wlodzimierz_baczkowski/biography

49 Marek Kornat, *O polsko-ukraiński dialog polityczny. Idee programowe "Biuletynu Polsko-Ukraińskiego" (1932–1938)" Giedroyć a Ukraina. Ukraińska perspektywa Jerzego Giedroycia i środowiska paryskiej "Kultury"* [For Polish-Ukrainian political dialogue. Program ideas of the "Polish-Ukrainian Bulletin (1932–1938)" Giedroyc and Ukraine. The Ukrainian perspective of Jerzy Giedroyc and the milieu of the Parisian "Kultura"], eds., M. Semczyszyn, M. Zajączkowski (Warszawa-Lublin-Szczecin: IPN, 2014), 39.

50 Juliusz Mieroszewski, *Na ruinach* "przedmurza" [On ruins of the Antemurale]in J. Mieroszewski, *Finał klasycznej Europy*, [Final of the Classical Europe] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 1997), 206

51 Ibidem, 207.

52 Ibidem.

53 Włodzimierz Bączkowski, *Istota siły i słabości rosyjskiej. Pisma o Rosji* [The essence of Russian strength and weakness. Writings about Russia,], (Kraków-Warszawa: Centrum Dialogu im. Juliusza Mieroszewskiego, 2022), 135.

54 Włodzimierz Bączkowski, *Istota siły*, 136.

55 Ibidem.

56 Juliusz Mieroszewski, *Na ruinach*, 206.

57 Ibidem, 208.

58 Juliusz Mieroszewski, "Polityka narodów zdeklasowanych" [Politics of Declassed Nations] in J. Mieroszewski, *Finał klasycznej…*,162.

59 Ibid., 160.

60 Sławomir Dębski, "Polityka wschodnia – mit i doktryna" [Eastern Policy – Myth and Doctrine] in *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* [Polish Diplomatic Review] no. 3 (2006): 14.

61 Ibid., 17.

62 Ibidem.

63 Juliusz Mieroszewski, "Rosyjski 'kompleks polski' i obszar ULB" [The Russian "Polish complex" and the ULB area] in J. Mieroszewski, *Finał klasycznej*, 360.

64 Colin Flint, *Introduction*, 58.

65 Ibidem, 58,

66 Wojciech Łysek, Między "Polską Jagiellońską a ' Polską Piastowską'. Recepcja i aktualność koncepcji ULB w polityce wschodniej koalicji PO-PSL" [Between "Jagiellonian Poland and ' Piast Poland'. Reception and validity of the ULB concept in the eastern policy of the PO-PSL coalition] *Przegląd Geopolityczny* vol. 8 (2014):116.

67 Timothy Snyder, "Federalism and Nationalism in Polish Eastern Policy", *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Winter/Spring, vol. 4, no. 1 (2003): 112.

68 Ibid., 112.

69 Ibid., 118.

70 *Stenogram expose premiera Donalda Tuska*, [Transcript of Prime Minister Donald Tusk's expose] https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/stenogram-expose-premiera-donalda-tuska

ESTONIA: MARRIAGE EQUALITY MADE REAL – DESPITE OPPOSITION FROM THE RELIGIOUS ELITE

by **Alar Kilp**

Since January 1, 2024, same-sex marriage is legal in Estonia, making it the first ex-Soviet, second post-socialist (after Slovenia) and 20th overall country in Europe to establish marriage equality. According to the law, marriages are contracted by two adults, including same-sex couples, who also have a right to jointly adopt children.

The law is an outcome of two decades of public controversy and political divide. The Estonian political elite (the current government coalition and MPs of Parliament) initiated and adopted the Registered Partnership Act on October 9, 2014 and the Act Amending the Family Law Act and Related Acts on June 20, 2023.[1] The main civil society opposition for both Acts has been from the religious elite - the Estonian Council of Churches (ECC) representing ten mainstream Christian Churches[2] and religious affiliations of about one quarter of the Estonian population.

ON APRIL 17, 2014, after the right-wing coalition government was replaced by the coalition of the Social Democrats and the Reform Party, 40 members of the Estonian Parliament submitted a Registered Partnership Act regulating financial, inheritance, care and visitation rights for cohabiting couples regardless of their sex. The Estonian Parliament legalized the Registered Partnership Act on October 9, 2014 (the Act entered into force on January 1, 2016).

Although some media outlets claimed that Estonia legalized gay marriage already in 2014,[3] the Act adopted did not address the term 'marriage', and its implementing acts remained unadopted because the following government coalitions included either a center-right party – the national conservative Fatherland ("Isamaa") – or the center-left Centre Party ("Keskerakond") – both of whom are committed to social conservative values in this area of family policy.

Both the abovementioned Acts were adopted by Parliament during government coalitions that included both Social Democrats and the Reform Party. The Social Democrats were the first parliamentary party after Estonia's accession to European Union to endorse same-sex partnerships and promise "to modernize the legislation of family relationships so that the rights of all types of family will be guaranteed", which they did during the 2011 parliamentary elections. They were also the first to endorse marriage equality (from November 1, 2020).

The term "marriage equality" was properly introduced to the public media agenda (where online daily papers added the related tags to the articles) in October 2020, when the extra-parliamentary party Estonian Greens started a petition calling for the legislation of same-sex marriage.

In April 2023, Prime Minister Kaja Kallas formed her third government consisting of three liberal parties (the Reform Party, the Social Democratic Party, and Estonia 200). The coalition agreement for 2023–2027 included a promise to establish as quickly as possible marriage equality (to change the Family Law Act so that marriage will be contracted between two adults) and adopt the implementation acts of the Registered Partnership Act.[4]

> **"IN SEVERAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS, THE ESTONIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES HAS CONSIDERED HOMOSEXUALITY A SIN THAT SHOULD NOT BE PROMOTED BY THE STATE."**

Public opinion regarding both Acts changed significantly during last decade. In 2014, the poll by the national broadcaster ERR indicated that 58% of the population were against the Registered Partnership Act.[5] By April 2023, however, 53% of Estonians supported same-sex marriage. The significant turning point in public opinion occurred in 2021, when 47% of Estonians were shown to support same-sex marriage (up from 34% in 2012) and 64% same-sex registered partnerships.[6]

IN SEVERAL PUBLIC statements, the Estonian Council of Churches has considered homosexuality a sin that should not be promoted by the state; they also oppose the recognition of same-sex partnerships as families and view the establishment of marriage equality as an attempt to redefine the meaning of family. In an address to the Estonian Parliament on April 30, 2014, the ECC argued that the adoption of the Registered Partnership Act could become a serious security threat, because it encourages those who do not agree with the abandonment of traditional European values to seek support from the culture area and the state, where marriage and family are continually honored as sacrosanct.[7]

In December 2017, the ECC released a public statement calling for an addition to the Estonian Constitution defining marriage as between one man and one woman.[8] Before the elections of 2019 and 2023, the ECC published its expectations for the political parties running for parliament.

In 2019, ECC expressed its wish to enshrine the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman in the Constitution.[9] Thereafter, the second government of Jüri Ratas (which lasted from April 2019 until January 2021) included the homophobic EKRE (Conservative People's Party of Estonia), which pushed for a public referendum where citizens would have been asked whether the Esto-

Supporters of same-sex marriage protesting in Tartu, October 4, 2020.

nian Constitution should define marriage as the "union of a man and a woman." That coalition collapsed on January 13, 2021, when the related bill was passing its second reading. Prime Minister Jüri Ratas resigned because his Centre Party was suspected of "criminal involvement" in an influence peddling scandal.

In its 2023 pre-election address to political parties, the ECC maintained its position that legislation should not blur or undermine the meaning of marriage as "a union between one man and one woman."[10] Thus, as of Spring 2024, Estonia lacks a Christian church that would welcome homosexuals and would endorse the collective religious rights of same-sex couples.[11]

BOTH ESTONIA AND Sweden have historically been Lutheran societies. In both, marriage equality is guaranteed. According to Eurostat statistics from 2018, in both countries 54.8% of "live births [occur] outside of wedlock,"[12] which indicates similarities in social attitudes and practices. However, the lack of liberal attitudes in the official positions of the Estonian Christian churches remains the fundamental difference. ❌

Alar Kilp is a Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia.

references

1   Riigi Teataja. Perekonnaseaduse muutmise ja sellega seonduvalt teiste seaduste muutmise seadus [Act amending the Family Act and Other Acts Related Thereto], RT I, 06.07.2023, 6. https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/106072023006.

2   Member churches of the Estonian Council of Churches (http://ekn.ee/english.php) are: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Union of Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches of Estonia, Estonian Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church, Estonian Conference of SDA (Seventh-day Adventists) Church; Estonian Congregation St. Gregory of the Armenian Apostolic Church; Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople); Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchy; Charismatic Episcopal Church of Estonia.

3   Estonia first ex-Soviet state to legalise gay marriage. October 9, 2014. *BBC News*, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29559012. Charlotte Mcdonald-Gibson, "Estonia becomes first former Soviet state to legalise gay marriage." *Independent*, October 9, 2014. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/estonia-becomes-first-former-soviet-state-to-legalise-gay-marriage-9785869.html.

4   Government of Estonia. Coalition Agreement 2023–2027. https://valitsus.ee/valitsuse-eesmargid-ja-tegevused/valitsemise-alused/koalitsioonilepe.

5   Alo Lõhmus. "Kooseluseadus tuleb panna rahvahääletusele." ["Registered Partnership Act should be decided on referendum"] *ERR*, August 6, 2014, https://www.err.ee/517677/ alo-lohmus-kooseluseadus-tuleb-panna-rahvahaaletusele.

6   Estonian Human Rights Centre. 2023. "Attitudes towards LGBT topics in Estonia." https://humanrights.ee/en/topics-main/equal-treatment/attitudes-towards-lgbt-topics-estonia/.

7   Estonian Council of Churches, April 30, 2014, "Arvamus kooseluseaduse eelnõu 650 SE I kohta" ["Statement regarding the Registered Partnership Act 650 SE I"], http://www.ekn.ee/uudis/140.

8   Estonian Council of Churches. "Kirikute Nõukogu peab vajalikuks põhiseaduse täiendamist abielu määratlusega." [The Estonian Council of Churches considers it necessary to supplement the Constitution with a definition of marriage]. December 14, 2017. http://ekn.ee/inc.uudis.php?id=300.

9   Estonian Council of Churches. "Eesti Kirikute Nõukogu ettepanekud erakondadele seonduvalt Riigikogu valimistega." [Proposals to political parties in connection with the Riigikogu elections]. September 5, 2018. http://ekn.ee/inc.uudis.php?id=372.

10 Estonian Council of Churches. "EKNi ettepanekud 2023. aasta Riigikogu valimisteks." [ECC's proposals for the 2023 Riigikogu elections]. November 22, 2022. http://ekn.ee/inc.uudis.php?id=648.

11 Alar Kilp. "Estonia: Religious Association Restrictions of Same-Sex Couple Religious Rights," in: *Religion in the Context of Globalization: Legal aspects of the functioning of religious organizations,* eds. Ekaterina Elbakyan, Liudmyla Fylypovych, Henryk Hoffmann, Anna Ksiazek (Krakow: NOMOS, 2017), 84–97.

12 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/home.

THE CULTURE WAR
AND
THE ACTUAL WAR

by **Hansalbin Sältenberg**

Introduction

At a time where many public debates are informed by the ongoing full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, we thought it would be important to further explore the relation between controversies of gender, sexuality, reproduction – what can be labelled the "culture war" – and the actual military war. Four scholars on feminist and anti-gender politics were invited to discuss this topic from various angles on the roundtable "Exploring the links between the culture war and the actual war" at CBEES Annual Conference 2023 on the war and its effects. Participating researchers were Maryna Shevtsova, Emil Edenborg, Jenny Gunnarsson-Payne, and Elżbieta Korolczuk. The roundtable was connected to the project CCINDLE Horizon, that Korolzcuk and the roundtable's moderator Hansalbin Sältenberg are part of.

The discussions shed light on important aspects not only of the political and discursive landscape in Russia and Ukraine, but also in Western Europe and Sweden. In doing so, some of the connections between "West" and "East", as well as between the "cultural" and the "material", became more obvious to us present at the discussion.

To share the insights, two questions were sent to all the panelists to briefly follow-up the roundtable discussions. ☒

Hansalbin Sältenberg holds a PhD in Gender Studies, Södertörn University

From the perspective of your research expertise, what is your take on the relation between the cultural war and the actual war in Ukraine?

MARYNA SHEVTSOVA, Postdoctoral Fellow at KU Leuwen, Belgium:

"Since its start in 2014, Russia's war on Ukraine has evolved into a discursive battleground between Russia and the imaginary West, increasingly seen not simply as a geopolitical power struggle in the region but as a clash of fundamental values. The Western perspective champions liberal ideals, emphasizing LGBTQ rights and gender equality. In contrast, Russia positions itself as a guardian of what it terms 'traditional family values' and Orthodox Christian morals.

It is noteworthy that this discourse, initially crafted and propagated by Russia, has now permeated both sides. There are clearly certain gains from this shared adoption of the narrative; for example, it created windows of political opportunities for LGBTQ and women rights activists in Ukraine (as well as in Moldova and Georgia) to push for more liberal legislation for sexual and gender equality. At the same time, I believe that there is a risk of putting too much emphasis on this specific discourse and ignoring or not paying enough attention to the complex dynamics at play.

When countries are seen as either modern and progressive or conservative and backward, with progress evaluated through an external lens of perceived LGBTQ-friendliness that is measured by law and policy adoption only, such an oversimplified portrayal not only reinforces divisions but also obscures the nuanced realities within each nation, be it Ukraine and Georgia or Hungary and Poland. Consequently, this discourse becomes a tool for fostering animosity and reinforcing preconceived notions, hindering the potential for understanding and possibly dialogue."

EMIL EDENBORG, Associate Professor in Gender Studies at Stockholm University:

"Russian leaders use a gendered geopolitical discourse, justifying the war as a fight for 'traditional values' against Western 'pseudo-values'. LGBTIQ rights are portrayed as a threat to Russia's national security. My research looks into what consequences this has for activism and queer people in Russia. I have conducted interviews with Russian LGBTIQ activists, some in exile, some remaining in Russia. The interviewees describe a significantly more aggressive political climate from 2021 onwards, where queer and trans people are represented as 'national traitors'. New laws such as the 2022 expanded 'gay propaganda' ban, and the decision in late 2023 to declare 'the international LGBT movement' as extremist, in practice makes LGBTIQ activism illegal. Moreover, economic sanctions on Russia makes it dif-

Kyiv Pride 2019.

ficult for activists to access Western funding, which has been crucial to developing LGBTIQ organizing in Russia. Many activists and non-affiliated queer and trans people have left the country, while others are staying due to family circumstances, lack of resources or other reasons. The activists who continue working in Russia emphasized the need to preserve what is possible of the community infrastructure that has been developed in the last decades (e.g., safe meeting spaces) and strengthen horizontal forms of solidarity."

JENNY GUNNARSSON-PAYNE,
Professor in Ethnology at Södertörn University:

"I think most of us can agree that the politics of so-called 'traditional values' is used to frame and justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine, by framing it in terms of 'security' and 'protection' against a degenerated West. Emil Edenborg has written insightfully on how Russia weaponizes anti-lgbtq-politics. I warmly recommend his accessible text in *Boston Review* (see: https://www.boston-review.net/articles/putins-anti-gay-war-on-ukraine/).

What interests me in particular is just how potent 'the Culture War' has proven to be not only for drawing political fron-

"RUSSIA POSITIONS ITSELF AS A GUARDIAN OF WHAT IT TERMS 'TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES' AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MORALS."

tiers in so many different countries, but also to form geopolitical alliances. Antigender politics is a central component to this. The dividing line between the two geopolitical camps is astutely discussed by Laurie Essig and Alexander Kondakov in terms of 'the Sexual Cold War', in which, what they have named Homosexualism and Heterosexualism (conceptual cousins to homonationalism and anti-gender politics) represent the two sides. Importantly, although they may come across as each other's opposites, they have in common that they are both: first, central for the creation of national and regional identity (generally manifested in the figure of 'the people'); second, that they *both* view same-sex desires as an *exception* either to

be 'tolerated' (Homosexualism) or to be 'repressed' or even extinguished (Heterosexualism). Acknowledging the latter is important, as shall serve as a reminder to avoid romanticising 'the West'."

ELŻBIETA KOROLCZUK,
Associate Professor in Sociology at Södertörn University and the American Studies Center at Warsaw University:

"The outbreak of a war is usually understood and explained by experts as the result of political developments, geopolitical tensions, or economic shifts. Rarely it is interpreted through the lens of socio-cultural change, such as the change in gender norms and identities. My claim is that Russia's aggression on Ukraine shows the key role that struggles over norms and values play in contemporary politics. And it shows that the struggles around gender – identity, family, and reproduction – are one of focal points in today's global politics. In Russia the attack on Ukraine has been framed as a legitimate response to colonial aggression by the West and its allies in the region, a form of self-defense. This position was voiced by both political and religious leaders, including Putin himself and Patriarch Kirill who ex-

Catholic anti-gay protesters during a 2018 equality march in Rzeszów, Poland.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

plained the necessity of the Putinist 'special operation' by the need to defend the people of Donbas from the 'gay parades'. This ideological framework posits that the post-1989 transformation in the region is a consequence of the liberal West's dominance, resulting in a series of humiliations for the East. This rhetoric – the narrative of 'rising from our knees', defending sovereignty, resisting globalism, and refusing to be mere imitators – is not specific to Russia. In Russia's context, however, this narrative is further tinged with imperial nostalgia and megalomania, as the country refuses to face its own colonial politics and seeks to be seen as the savior of the people in the East.

The narrative promoted in Russia portrays the West as a colonial power, which aims to conquer post-Soviet spaces through imposing a set of values and lifestyles that are false and empty: individualism, consumerism, and sexual freedom. While the West is a corrupt and degenerate entity, it remains a mighty power, able to lure and subdue the ordinary people on the East who fall pay to the 'colonization by gender'. Russia on the other hand is a source or moral renewal and order, and as such it has a great civilization mission to fulfill: the task is to protect the people from Western influence, and in a

"WHILE OPEN ANTI-SEMITISM IS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE BROADER SOCIETY, 'GENDER' HAS BECOME IT'S EQUIVALENT."

longer run to save the West its own moral collapse. As shown by Emil Edenborg, Russia envisions itself as the repository of values and norms that are key to European Christian tradition, including patriarchy, natural sexual order, and dominance of religion. Thus, she is obliged to promote them on its own territory and beyond. Opposition to 'gender ideology' peddled by the West and its false prophets including Marx and Freud, as well as feminist, and LGBT movements becomes the civilization mission of Putin's Russia. This narrative establishes a connection between the communist era's distrust and disdain for the West and the post-1989

trauma that coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union, imbuing it with a significant emotional dimension."

What further topics or perspectives in relation to the above would you say are relevant to be explored by researchers?

MARYNA SHEVTSOVA:
"Unfortunately, it is too early to speak about the end of the war; nevertheless, the process of rebuilding Ukraine is ongoing, and the question remains: who guides this process, and who is at the table when the rebuilding is discussed, and priorities are set? While the responsibility lies with international organizations and governments to ensure the representation and inclusion of all societal factions, it is equally imperative for researchers to scrutinize the contributions of various groups, including women, LGBTQ individuals, Roma people, and others, to the reconstruction efforts. Examining the experiences of these groups and amplifying their voices becomes crucial in shedding light on their distinct perspectives, understanding this war, and dealing with its consequences."

EMIL EDENBORG:
"It is crucial to continue researching what forms LGBTIQ activism takes as Russia has entered a new phase of authoritarianism and repression, both in exile and in the country. Of course, this research must be conducted in ways that are safe for the research participants, and ultimately aim to benefit these communities. Beyond that case, I find it fascinating how shifting geopolitical realities and discourses impact the politics of gender and sexuality, as shown for example in growing support for LGBTIQ rights in Ukraine in the wake of Russia's invasion. But what are the long-term consequences of such geopoliticization?"

JENNY GUNNARSSON-PAYNE:
"As Essig and Kondakov have argued, Homosexualism and Heterosexualism are best understood as 'imaginary sexual economies' insofar as that they both communicates what makes a society 'good' or 'bad'.

I agree but want to add that to properly understand their potential to 'grip' subjects (and thus gain broad political support) they must be understood as fantasies in the psychoanalytic sense. Put in the words of Slovene psychoanalytic philosopher Slavoj Žižek's they provide the 'coordinates of our desire' and are central for processes of identification. Only thus we can understand why they are so powerful, and how they both have the potential to justify violent acts. Against this background, we need to explore further not merely the violence conducted by our most obvious political opponents, but also closer to home."

ELŻBIETA KOROLCZUK:

"The global anti-gender movement is entangled with global politics and while its representatives usually employ non-violent methods to fight against women's reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, sex education and gender studies, its discursive strategies and campaigns should be further analyzed as possible conveyor belt to engagement in violence. Thus, we need to explore the links between anti-gender ideology and authoritarian militarism, having in mind the ultimate outcomes of such discourses.

We should also explore further the links between the anti-gender worldview and fascism. Fascist legacy is clearly visible in the ways in which the anti-gender actors seek to re-establish a binary hierarchical gender order as the basis of a healthy nation. It is much more obvious in countries such as Russia where gay people are prosecuted or in Poland where local municipalities established 'LGBT-free zones', but the obsession with the dangers of sexual decadence and moral purity can be discern also in other contexts. Secondly, as shown by Agnieszka Graff, there are also clear elements of anti-Semitism in anti-gender discourses. It can be argued that especially for fundamentalist groups within the Catholic Church gender functions as a stand-in for Jews: a malevolent force sexualizing the innocents, corrupting the nation from inside. While open anti-Semitism is no longer acceptable within the Catholic Church and the broader society, 'gender' has become it's equivalent." ❎

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN TIMES OF WAR AND REPRESSION

THE ROUNDTABLE "Universities at War", held in Vienna on September 27, 2023, provided a panorama of case studies analyzing how universities have been implicated and affected by wars and conflicts. The speakers reflected on the way academic communities have been affected and the role of European academic institutions as sites, agents, collaborators, resisters, and victims of military conflicts from the Second World War to Russia's war against Ukraine.

Introduction

PHILIPP CHRISTOPH SCHMÄDEKE is Political Scientist at the Federal Agency for Civic Education, Berlin, director of the Science at Risk Emergency Office.

"Hello everyone, really happy to have you here. Very shortly regarding myself, I'm also director of the Science at Risk Emergency Office. We are helping scholars at risk from Ukraine, but also Belarus and Russia. The full-scale Russian invasion into Ukraine also affects scientists there. We can help 100 Ukrainian scholars and students at risk. But the situation is, in many ways, really, really horrible. Students and academics are at war. Many are fighting at the front, and some are even dying in the war. We see a brain drain of women academics from Ukraine. They are moving all over the place, but mostly Europe. We do not know if they're coming back and when it would be possible. The present situation in Ukraine for academia is alarming. It's quite impossible to have normal teaching, researching, and learning. The efforts to hold online courses are admirable but when there is no electricity it isn't really possible.

And at the same time we are experiencing repression, on a scale we haven't seen since the Soviet Union. The repression is not only in Russia, but also in Belarus where the number of political prisoners is 189 per one million habitants. We are facing an extreme situation that we need to deal with and understand how best to tackle together.

The good thing is that there is a big wave of solidarity aiming to help scholars at risk. We are thus doing what we can together with other European academics who are helping with their own means, with few resources. But the official structures are helping less than 1% of scholars at risk from the region, less than 1%. And we are facing the problem that there's not enough help for 99% of scholars at risk

> **"BUT THE SITUATION IS, IN MANY WAYS, REALLY, REALLY HORRIBLE. STUDENTS AND ACADEMICS ARE AT WAR."**

in this war and under the current repression. And there are no long-lasting structures for the few we do manage to help. There are no big universities in exile, there's nothing. And this is why we are here today having this conference. And this is the topic we are talking about this evening, how we can tackle this situation jointly. This is the reason why there are so many great people are sitting here. Let me now present them all:

KIRSTINE ARENTOFT will begin by telling you about the project University of New Europe and the mentoring program. Then we will have Svitlana Telukha, she's online now. She will tell us about the projects in Ukraine, and we are having great cooperation with Svitlana on a great project. Andrea Petö will then give us another perspective about wars at the European or global level about gender studies, this will also be very interesting. Then we have Alexander Etkind here, he will talk about the situation for universities in Russia, or rather the failure of today's universities in Russia. Last but not least, Dina Gusejnova will go back into history more and tell us something about universities in exile in a historical context. We will have these five inputs and then we will open the discussion. We are looking forward to having a good discussion, all together." ✖

Roundtable speakers

"The idea of the University New Europe's mentoring program is to connect students, scholars, and cultural workers at risk with resourceful mentors in their respective field"

KIRSTINE ARENTOFT is currently a master's student in Comparative Literature at the University of Vienna, working with the University New Europe's mentoring program.

"Good evening, everyone. I am very grateful for this opportunity to share insights into how mentoring networks can serve as a relevant case study in the context of universities facing the challenges of war. Before introducing the program, let me introduce the University of New Europe, in short, UNE. UNE is an academic solidarity project run by a team of scholars, and a support team of assistants and volunteers of which I am also a part. The mentoring program was founded by Dorine Schellens and Ellen Rutten in collaboration with Akademisches Netzwerk Osteuropas (AKNO), an organization that, like UNE, emerged in response to political suppressions in Belarus (as well as Russia) in 2021.

The idea of the University New Europe mentoring program is to connect students, scholars, and cultural workers at risk with resourceful mentors in their respective fields. Mentoring consists of various support forms, including practical assistance such as finding relevant positions, networking, proofreading applications, and very importantly, providing emotional support. One important resource that we offer is the UNE-database, which gathers information on relevant positions, fellowships and other types of support in one place. This database was developed by Dorine Schellens, who regularly updates it. Unique for this database

The University of New Europe is a solidarity program run by a team of scholars, and a support team of assistants and volunteers.

is its focus on options in humanities and social sciences, as well as its inclusivity for various at-risk groups across Central and Eastern Europe.

TO DATE, the program has matched around 800 people, half of them mentors, half of them mentees. Several mentees have acquired PhD-positions, fellowships, and even permanent positions thanks in part to their mentors. Most of our mentees are Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarusians. These are disparate groups, experiencing very different situations of fleeing from war and political repression. Reaching out to these different groups is not easy. It requires awareness that Ukrainian peers deserve especially acute attention, and that this is not the time for reconciliatory attempts. One of the strengths of the personal contact that is established through mentorships, however, is that every ques-

"IT REQUIRES AWARENESS THAT UKRAINIAN PEERS DESERVE ESPECIALLY ACUTE ATTENTION, AND THAT THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR RECONCILIATORY ATTEMPTS."

tion is solved on an interpersonal basis between mentors and mentees. This approach enables us to navigate the difficult problem of offering support to Ukrainians and Russians alike.

From internal surveys we learned that the success rate of the mentorships varies a lot, from short contacts to intense help with one acute question to very fruitful, longer relationships. This variation is of course due to many things, but we have found that the precision of matches is an important factor in the success rate of mentorships. In the first days of war, when physical safety was the biggest concern for most mentees, we primarily focused on providing mentees with mentors quickly. Having a supportive mentor who could provide guidance from a place of safety was very valuable to many mentees.

HOWEVER, WITH the sad reality of war becoming an integral part of everyday life for many mentees, the character of support also needed changes. Now we have more time to reach out to mentors with a profile that best matches the person at risk and follow up on relations as well. We are still discovering the best ways to do this and wish to learn more about how mental health issues impact the mentees as displaced academics as well as how mentoring can help mentors cope with feelings of powerlessness and isolation.

One structural problem that UNE as a university-in-the-making identifies is that the amount of people who need support to think freely is too big to fit into existing organizations. In a way this is exactly the work that our mentoring program offers: finding mentors, who can help their mentees, to find suitable existing institutions for them to continue their work.

Mentoring as a form of academic first aid has been and continues to be instrumental in assisting in the relocation and remote support for academics and cultural workers at risk in meaningful ways. But it also caters into the broader context of UNE's ambition to create new networks across Europe, and we wish to see how mentorship relations can grow into sustainable networks.

We have already seen signs of this transformation. More mentees have become mentors after having participated in the program and having succeeded in finding a way to continue their work. They are important bridge figures that help imagine what support can look like. Other productive mentoring outcomes are initiatives in which the resources of mentees are made visible to broader communities. One relocated mentee currently teaches a Ukrainian language program at the University of Amsterdam. Others educate broader audiences about the region in public seminar series. The mentorship program works best when it amplifies the voices of mentees.

With the above, I aimed to offer some concrete suggestions on how our mentoring work with UNE – and mentoring in general – can act as tools in tackling academic war challenges. Thanks for your attention." ❌

"We collect these stories through the prism of Kharkiv residents' favorite places"

SVITLANA TELUKHA, PhD in History, is a lecturer at the National Technical University Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute and fellow of the Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO). She is also editor of A Wounded City Residents of Kharkiv Talk About the Attack on Their City.

"My name is Svitlana, thank you for the invitation. I would like to say a few words about our project 'Kharkiv is my favorite city', which is a part of my life and work. The team creating and implementing this project consists of myself, a historian, as well as another historian, a designer and a developer. I want to start describing why we started doing it: it was when the full-scale invasion of Russia against Ukraine began. We could not just sit and do nothing, just stay in the bomb shelter or in the hall. We felt that we had to do something,

The project "A Wounded City – Residents of Kharkiv talk about the attack on their city" has a website with an interactive map where places are complemented with interviews.

whatever we could. When you are in this whole situation, when you see that people are dying every day, buildings are being destroyed, monuments are being destroyed, everything is being destroyed and so on, you need to do something. So, we started recording. The stories from Kharkiv's citizenship were unique. We started this project 'Kharkiv is my favorite city'. We collected stories about Kharkiv residents, their lives told through stories about their favorite places in Kharkiv, and could preserve memory in this format. These stories were about what happened, about the everyday life during the war in the constantly bombarded Kharkiv, and about their favorite places surrounding the biographical narrative of our storytellers. The main idea of the project is to create a website, put an interactive map on it and complement all these places with these oral history interviews. And we add some information about these favorite

"SO, WE STARTED RECORDING. THE STORIES FROM KHARKIV'S CITIZENSHIP WERE UNIQUE."

The campus of the V. N. Karazin National University in Kharkiv consists of eight dormitories housing more than 5,000 students and postgraduates. It is Oleksandrs K's favorite place.

The V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University is one of the most important universities in Ukraine. It is Kateryna I's favorite place.

The Burevisnyk Sports Complex was badly damaged during the major offensive by Russian troops. A heavy air raid on March 5, 2022 caused the roof to collapse. It is Valerij S's favorite place.

Velyka Danylivka is a suburb in the north-east of Kharkiv. Most of the houses here are detached, and there is a forest, a lake and several schools. It is Anton D's favorite place.

A wounded city

All images come from the project A wounded City. Residents of Kharkiv Talk About the Attack on Their City. Since the beginning of the war, the NGO Young Kharkiv has been conducting interviews with residents of the city, which has been subjected to ongoing and massive shelling attacks from day one. The aim of this project is to build up an archive of interviews with contemporary witnesses in order to record their personal experiences of the war, as well as stories about places of remembrance in this heavily destroyed metropolis.

The Barabashovo Market is located in the Saltivka district, the part of the city that has been most devastated by the war. Iryna Skyrda writes about the metropolis at war.

On March 25, 2022, the dachas of Pawlowe Pole and the nearby Ukrainian Orthodox church of the Kharkiv Diocese were severely damaged. It is Oleksandra I's favorite place.

places of Kharkiv's residents to present their stories as a complete picture. We collect these stories through the prism of Kharkiv residents' favorite places.

OUR COLLECTION included both sites, like well-known sites in Kharkiv, or little known places of memory for the citizens of Kharkiv. And in our collection we have different buildings, different monuments, different cafes, or parks or some other things. And there are also some mental peculiarities of the city, not about actual places, but about people related to these places. And we actually recorded all these stories. Our project becomes possible, thanks to the support of the Vienna teams and the Institute of Human Science, who are connecting it to their larger project "Documenting Ukraine". And actually, our focus is related to this big project. And it's an honor for us to be a part of it. And as a result, over the past year and a half, we have recorded more than 100 unique digital records of Kharkiv residents living there from February 24, 2022, up to today. Our audience is those who see their mission to share their experience through our project. Our narrators are students, educators, volunteers, soldiers, and doctors.

When we collected these stories, we actually ended up with something more than we wanted: several themes reproduce and continue because field research is always spontaneous and always deeper than we can imagine. One such emerging theme is that the perceived future, for many young people, is strongly connected to the university. Actually, we are talking about young people who became students in the pre-war years or earlier. And I will quote Kateryna Ilchenko, she is a student of the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics at one of the most famous universities in Kharkiv (Kharkiv National University by Vasyl Karazin):

> In fact, I'm a Kharkiv resident who doesn't know her city very well, but after I got to Karazin, I started to stay more in the center and in principle, because I got to know different people, I studied the city more. But if to allocate

"THIS IS LIKE A BIG REQUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES OF ACTUAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE HISTORY OF UKRAINE."

> one place, it's banal, but it's our university, because there I spent, well, every day, and, like, different parts, yes, and inside the classroom and, like, the place in front of the main building, there. Because of the fact that I spent a lot of time there, it's significant for me.

She told us in her story about some special places that play an important role, a very important role, and show university and student life in Kharkiv today. And she went to thve university, which was a new world for her, as you can see in this quote, and she got to know the city, the code; she made new social contact. Indeed, many young people in their stories talked about how they are rethinking and changing their attitude towards education in general. After the coronavirus, the situation changed; they had this opportunity to go to the university physically, have a personal conversation, attend lectures and feel the spirit of the university. And the importance of this often came up in a lot of the stories that we've recorded to this date.

I added these photos to demonstrate how our universities look today. For example, this is the main one's university building. Here you can see a very important laboratory with very huge equipment, but today it is not working because it has no water, no light, and they actually have no windows as you can see. Here is a fresh photo from another building of the university located in the center of Kharkiv.

AND IN FACT, in this report, I want to emphasize that many students told us about the value of knowing as much as possible about Ukraine, and many stories highlight

exactly this as if highlighted with a red line. This is like a big request for knowledge and values of actual knowledge of the history of Ukraine. And I believe that this is a positive trend.

And at the end of my speech, I add this quote from that Kateryna that I mentioned earlier, and I think it's an optimistic and very positive quote from a speech that talks about the future of Ukraine and Ukraine's entry into the European Union, along with a little joke:

> A happy future, I hope. No, actually, well, of course, the first thing is that we will win, the second thing is that we will have to rebuild, so, well, as if we will return, stabilize our economy, resources. Of course, this will take time, here. Then we will develop, blossom. Perhaps we will be accepted into the European Union, I don't know, into NATO..., rather we will take NATO, as they joke now. But, as it is, I think that everything is the best.

Do you have any plans for the future?

> Well, as if, first of all, I want to get higher education, it seems to me from this point it will be easier for me to decide..., well, first of all, to look at the world and understand my possibilities, I may already have some, well, financial cushion. And, like, while I have, well, the goal is so, maybe so, not particularly interesting. But I'm trying to follow this path and enjoy life at the same time.

We try to add this as a positive point." ✖

"Now we are living in the third phase of the gender wars"

ANDREA PETŐ is a Professor at the Department of Gender Studies at Central European University in Vienna, a Doctor of Science of Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

"Thank you very much for organizing this conference, this is really an important event. And the roundtable is about universities of war, right? And we already heard a talk about how to handle and how to react to that historical moment when history knocks on the door. Then we heard a fantastic presentation about an event and how to react to that on the spot. And what I would like to talk about, I'm a professor at the Central European University, and this is the university, which, as you know, had to move into exile in Austria. Thanks again to the Austrians that they accepted us and offered us a new home. But it already shows that these wars with universities are happening inside what we call the European Union. What I will be talking about is a little bit about the global context, namely the gender wars.

In 2017, when the two-year master's program in gender studies had been deleted from the accredited study list in Hungary, that was a litmus test. And then gender studies professionals were already saying that watch out, these bad things are coming in higher education. But the main point is that when academic gender studies had been attacked, more attacks on academic freedom were coming.

RECENTLY, THE ARD, the German Public Broadcasting Channel introduced a new episode of *Call Police 110* titled: *Little Boxes*. But what is worth mentioning here is that this recent episode explores the murderer of a postdoctoral fellow in the postcolonial studies department at a German university. I would like to draw attention to a specific aspect of this story, how state public television portrays post-colonial and gender studies as scholarly disci-

plines in German universities in primetime public German media. The episode, much like the illiberal forces in Germany, presented these academic fields in an extremely distorted manner. The storyline takes an interesting turn when this professor is accused of murder, but they have an alibi, an evening lecture about Judith Butler delivered at the same time of the murder. This episode of a popular crime fiction series conceals and ridicules the real battles and real problems occurring in European and global higher education today and presents them as a caricature or a page from the DeSantis, Erdogan or Putin playbook.

I TITLED MY TALK Gender Wars because this conflict has its roots in the late 19th century when militarized language was very much legitimate. It started when women with privilege, and the girls educated as boys, fought for access to higher education. As far as the second part of the title is concerned with gender, it is crucial to consider how we define gender as a biological sex, or simply replace the women and men binary or connect it to stereotypes or social structures, or simply make it an identity. These four definitions of gender have evolved during history, and they are not teleological, but entangled layers. This first gender war was waged by these women, mostly from privileged backgrounds, who were admitted to universities, but faced numerous obstacles, starting with the lack of female toilets and other serious obstacles. And these women or girls educated as boys tried to fit in and often failed. And this war is still continuing.

> **"IN THE 1960S AND 1970S, THE SECOND GENDER WAR EMERGED AS A PART OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE WESTERN PART OF EUROPE."**

In the 1960s and 1970s, the second gender war emerged as a part of the civil rights movement in the western part of Europe. In the Soviet Bloc, the official "statist feminist" policy expected to bring gender equality to academic structures together with knowledge production. Neither of them happened. This phase aimed to widen access to higher educational institutions for a wider social stratum to democratize society and knowledge production. But the newcomers also reshaped these institutions, redefined science, and knowledge, and challenged academic authority. New universities were established, and norm entrepreneurs introduced gender and cultural studies. They offered courses in their own departments and then inside universities using the existing structures to create certificate programs and then departments in new fields in social sciences and humanities. However, this phase brought very mixed results, especially in Germany, where the number of female professors remains low today. The lower the prestige of higher education in a certain country, the lower the pay for the professors, and the more women are employed by these professors as professors, like in South and Eastern Europe.

NOW WE ARE living in the third phase of the gender wars. But let me stress that the first gender war never disappeared. The actors, the institutions and the issues may have already existed, but were less visible. Until the poly crisis, liberal governments are actively intervening in higher education, taking away academic autonomy, controlling curricula and funding, and attacking critical knowledge production. This third war is cruel; it happens on social media and takes different forms depending on the country. It can be life-threatening, like in Russia or in Turkey, where academics are fired or imprisoned, also like in Mexico or in the US. As a matter of fact, one of my colleague's office windows was replaced by the administration with a bulletproof window, to avoid legal liability and not react quickly to the challenges. The recent incident in Sweden involving a far-right social influencer who alone destroyed the critical race studies program of a university high-

An episode of the German state public television crime fiction series *Call police 110* called "Little boxes" portrays post-colonial and gender studies at a university in an extremely distorted manner, said Andrea Pető.

"LITTLE BOXES IS DANGEROUS, AS IT NORMALIZES AND CARICATURES A VIEW OF POST-COLONIAL STUDIES, GENDER STUDIES, AND CRITICAL RACE STUDIES."

lights how gender wars are transforming academics beyond securitization and militarization. This influencer enrolled in a course on critical race studies in one of the Swedish universities and started to report on his experience in this course, and then sued this public university to release emails by the professor who was teaching this course on critical race studies. The emails were all released as the university professor was handled as a normal public servant so they are all subject of a freedom of information act. This ongoing story revealed tension between academia together with the legal and academic vulnerability of public institutions in the face of populist challenges. The reactions to these challenges are different in different contexts, and it is necessary to stick together for those who have the same enemies.

I WILL EXPLAIN how these gender battles are shaping higher education in five ways. And then I will conclude. First, it is changing the relationship between public and private higher education. I have been reported twice to the rector, the current rector of the CEU, which is a private university, by relatives of those whom I actually write about, saying their grandfather was not a Nazi. In both cases, the previous rector and the president of CEU responded saying that this is something only the profession can judge, that is, the quality of the work; it cannot be done by someone outside academia. I'm not sure if I had been appointed to a public university that I would have been given the same answer. Secondly, challenging the academic authorization system, questioning who is being appointed as a professor, and how and who the appointed experts are, is another battle. The populist challenge poses a major obstacle. Third, questioning the role of higher education as a public good in society is becoming an issue, as certain groups are excluded from higher education. If I go back to this ARD movie, it's obvious that those students with migration backgrounds have no other space in German education besides area studies. Fourth, rethinking the relationship between the national and transnational is vital. The German crime story episode sounds like a national story, but this is actually a chapter from the transnational know-how about how to undermine the authority of higher education. Now it has been employed in this context and also in the Swedish context because this is the strategy that the far right is using to undermine higher educational institutions in this war. The fifth battle is to recognize that we are in a New Cold War. The new Cold War is not waged between different blocks of states but rather among different members of the national constituency about the monopoly of producing knowledge. The field where this Cold War is waged is gender studies. And we all know that Putin's Russia started to promote the so-called traditional values as a site for preparing for this war. And that's why I decided to address this topic in this roundtable.

THE GERMAN CRIME film *Little Boxes* is dangerous, as it normalizes and caricatures a view of post-colonial studies, gender studies, and critical race studies, undermining its social importance and the ability to create a vision for a better future, and what actually attracts students. However, it gives a portrayal that what is happening in higher education is a question of life and death. It is a war. The liberal forces aim to return to hierarchical knowledge production, which is very clearly illustrated by the example from Sweden, and they see academia as a strategic field to control hearts and minds, setting the stage for more gender wars in the years to come." ×

"In 2010, not a single Russian university made it into the top 200 of the world's best schools"

ALEXANDER ETKIND is a Professor of History and since 2022 at the Department of International Relations at Central European University in Vienna.

"I'm really happy that we could come and compare some Russian experiences with Ukrainian experiences and Hungarian-Austrian experiences. That's really important because of all this Russian uniqueness, which is apparent nowadays more than ever, we need to compare and contrast. This is what scholars do.

Like in Ukraine during the democratic revolution, students, intellectuals and IT workers dominated the Russia protest movement. This was before the invasion of Crimea in 2011, 2012. It was a really important movement in Moscow and in some other Russian cities. It had political consequences. While the students, intellectuals and people of goodwill won in Ukraine, they lost in Russia. And this had enormous consequences.

IN RUSSIA, the protest manifested itself in a full distrust of the state which had cheated them, but they did not succeed in claiming their rights and overturning the rule of the state. Samuel A. Greene described this dynamic as retreat from the public space, but the private sphere was really able to give refuge to these people after their defeat in 2012. The hope was for the new generation that had to be educated in some kind of new way. In 2003, before those events, Russia joined the Bologna Process, which involved the restructuring of higher education programs according to European standards. Some reforms were made, and lots of money was invested and largely misused. The international rankings of Russian universities refused to improve. In 2010, not a single Russian university made it into the

top 200 of the world's best schools, according to the Times Higher Education.

In 2012, the government launched the so-called project "5:100". Five universities were selected, and they were to increase the global rankings of these five leading Russian universities by pumping money into them. And one of the inventions was making professor salaries variable and dependent on the citation index of these professors. So, the higher the citation index for a particular year, the higher your salary will be next year. And the difference was actually significant. I heard this story, not sure it was true, from the Higher School of Economics, that they created a particular kind of office for converting the citation index into a salary. And there were like 18 officials, highly paid, I guess. And they operated an equation with 18 members of the mathematical department for a conversion of citation index into the salary numbers. Despite all this, the multi-year program was a failure.

IN 2021, the accounts chamber, the Chief Russian auditor, concluded that not a single Russian university had made it into the top 100. In the meantime, the auditors and then the newspapers reported the salaries of directors of certain universities, including those five, which were higher than those of the professors by an order of magnitude, or in some cases, this difference was just enormous; it was like 20 times higher, 30 times higher, a hundred times higher in some provincial cases. Now, like when you see these numbers, of course, which very few could actually verify, this was just outlandish. The situation with the established universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, the major

> ## "WHILE THE STUDENTS, INTELLECTUALS AND PEOPLE OF GOODWILL WON IN UKRAINE, THEY LOST IN RUSSIA."

state-owned schools with some tradition and reputation, was still fine, with some traditional instructors with very high salaries. These universities have exploited their prestige and imitated scholarships for decades. The most successful, however, were the newly established institutions; some of them were really big, and they said that they had become the biggest universities in Europe, for example, the Highest School of Economics, which was established in the post-Soviet period from scratch and became one of the biggest land owners in Moscow. Or the so-called Presidential Academy, which had 55 provincial branches and said it had the largest contingent of students in Europe.

HOWEVER, **UNIVERSITIES** were not the only homes of Russian science and scholarship. There was also the Academy of Sciences, a legacy institution left over from the Soviet Times, a gigantic non-profit organization, which included more than a thousand institutions in all fields, fields of knowledge, from nuclear physics to humanities. A typical institution had hundreds of social associates, most of them with doctorates, doctoral degrees, or super doctoral degrees. There are still two degrees in Russia. Regarding the administration of valuable real estate in major cities of Russia, these institutions are housed in some of the buildings, including in St. Petersburg or in Moscow, which they can actually rent out and use for profit. However, these academics institutions never had students, and education was not their function. They were involved in peer research, fundamental or applied. At the top of these institutions, there's still a ruling body that consists of the privileged academicians, like full academics as opposed to non-full academics, who are professors.

In 2022, there were more than 300 such academicians with an average age of 76 years. The whole system depended on the state budget, which was relentlessly shrinking. Many of the academic institutions made money by letting parts of their properties to businesses. This archaic system was only bail subordinate to the authorities or auditors. The salaries of scientists in the academic institutions

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Moscow, Leninsky Prospekt, 2008.

"THESE ACADEMICS INSTITUTIONS NEVER HAD STUDENTS, AND EDUCATION WAS NOT THEIR FUNCTION. THEY WERE INVOLVED IN PEER RESEARCH, FUNDAMENTAL OR APPLIED."

were pathetic and actually significantly less than the professorial salaries at the universities. A particular issue in Russian academic life was plagiarism. And we're not talking about plagiarism by students, but I'm talking about plagiarism by professors and research associates. Although it affects many countries, plagiarism was widespread in Russia. The new Russian elite considered an academic degree as an important addition to other perks and forms of status, like you have whatever billion in your bank account, you have maybe five yachts in the Mediterranean, and also you have a doctoral degree. Written by a ghostwriter, such a dissertation could be bought for cheap because there are ghostwriters, obviously, in academia, young professors or something like that, maybe graduate students. These dissertation writings were a form of corruption, of course, more sophisticated but less convertible than the appropriation of barrels. You appropriate thousands,

whatever, millions of barrels of oil, that's convertible. You get a doctorate degree, that's of course not convertible, but still it was important for these people.

IN 2016, the Dissernet, an informal organization of scientists who hunted plagiarism, using all kinds of means, mostly electronic, found out that every ninth member of the Russian Parliament, the Duma, had an academic degree, either a bachelor's or doctorate of science. And of course, all this was plagiarized, a ghostwritten thesis. One of the leaders of the Dissernet said in an interview in 2016 that, "A Russian Donald Trump would suddenly have a dissertation, maybe two or three." Indeed, Putin defended his dissertation wherein the Dissernet with some American help found plagiarism. It was also found in the dissertation written by the chairman of the Duma and thousands of other similar texts. Not one of these well-heeled officials that were involved

in the scandal resigned or repented or in any way responded to these accusations. But of course, with the start of the war, and when this new statute concerning foreign agents was instituted in Russia by the Russian government, the leaders of Dissernet left Russia, and some were declared to be foreign agents.

For similar reasons, attempts to create private institutions of higher learning have not really been successful. So, private institutions were created, but sometimes administrations stole the money, sometimes students were dissatisfied and wrote complaints, and sometimes the auditors found out that the diplomas were fake. However, there were several important independent universities that developed in the sensitive area of social sciences and humanities, the European University of St. Petersburg, the new economic school, the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, also known as Shaninka, and the Smolny, a semi-independent small college, which remained a part of the St. Petersburg State University. All these elite institutions were established in the 1990s with the financial help of George Soros. All of them developed into modern hubs of liberal arts and social sciences, having foreign grades, international professors, joint programs with foreign schools, and successful alumni who taught all over the world. The European University of St. Petersburg was closed twice, but still survives. The director of the New Economic School, Sergei Guriev, left Russia for Paris in 2013, and he's now provost of SciencesPo in Paris. Some writers were arrested, some were released, while others were not.

I'M ABOUT TO conclude with very recent news from Canada concerning something that happened on September 23rd this year. The government of Canada declared sanctions against a number of Russian educational institutions. And I think that's the first time that the sanctions have been declared against universities in Russia. Specifically, the sanctions were declared against the Highest School of Economics and the Moscow state of international relations. This is the first, but probably not the last, decision of this sort." ⊠

"In the Russian academic community, discussing this history has now been criminalized"

DINA GUSEJNOVA is an intellectual historian and Associate Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

"We are speaking today about universities at war at a conference on post-socialist universities, or universities in post-socialist countries. I want to begin by saying how the two topics connect, because I think that at one level, we are facing here a real tragedy, a tragic culmination in the history of post-socialist universities. Incidentally, this might also raise the question to what extent they were actually post socialist in any significant way, whether they have actually ever been socialist.

The first thing that is really important to bear in mind is that we will talk about two post-socialist academic communities, the Russian and the Ukrainian. Currently, one of them, Russia, has effectively been turned into a perpetrator community. In other words, the scholars that find themselves in this situation are facing the choice of essentially having to position themselves either in direct confrontation with the regime, or in some sort of passive resistance, or in tacit agreement with the regime. And it's particularly symbolic that institutions such as the Higher School of Economics which, until recently, has been hailed as the hallmark of post-socialist liberal democratic institutions, is now basically on the frontlines, carrying out the ideological functions of the Russian occupation in the occupied territories of Ukraine. It was this institution and others like it which have been pressuring some of the first academics now in exile to abandon their research agendas for years before the full-scale war against Ukraine. So, in Russia, we see the ongoing repression, but also, in some areas, the enforced complicity of Russian academic communities with the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

In Ukraine, I think, over 20 universities have been physically damaged in the course of the war, not to speak of the physical losses of academics directly involved in the war, destroyed archives, archives directly targeted for destruction by the Russian attacks, as well as collateral damage.

THE SECOND POINT that I want to make is that this entire situation inevitably revives the ghosts of the Second World War, topics such as the Soviet-German division of Poland, the attack on Polish cultural life, the cultural consequences of the German occupation of Soviet territories, and the war in the Baltic states. In the Russian academic community, discussing this history has now been criminalized; it takes place in the realm of illegality. Instead, the Russian government has authorized and centralized the production of alternative textbooks, alternative realities, parallel realities with redrawn maps. These materials are produced by leading experts, incidentally, of socialist global knowledge production, academicians like the 94-year-old historian Aleksandr Chubaryan. He was a star of Soviet comparative and world history and is now one among many who have been co-opted into effectively sanctioning the Kremlin narrative and its criminal foreign policy through textbooks.

> ## "IN RUSSIA, WE SEE THE ONGOING REPRESSION, BUT ALSO, IN SOME AREAS, THE ENFORCED COMPLICITY OF RUSSIAN ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES WITH THE RUSSIAN WAR OF AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE."

So, this for me is actually the backdrop against which we discuss the historical and present crises of universities at war. And it poses a lot of moral questions for academic communities affected by it, whether they're based in Russia, based in Ukraine, expatriates from either of societies, or international people with no connection to these countries. I myself arrived in Germany as an eight-year-old, as the daughter of two Soviet academics (my father had a Humboldt fellowship, and my mother a Hölderlin fellowship, both in Germany), and I benefited from the kind of opening up of the post-socialist world and the opportunities which presented themselves then. In this war I am realizing that I'm completely out of my depth. I mean, my experience and even that of my parents provides absolutely no resources available for me to understand the desperate experience and situation of young people from Ukraine now. I get applications from Ukrainian school leavers looking for a degree who get rejected from European universities because they don't have a high school diploma; meanwhile, they tell me it has not been granted because their high school has been bombed, and things like that. I often feel helpless.

And I'm also dealing with it on a daily basis as an academic.

ONE OF THE QUESTIONS which preoccupies me now is how to mobilize the insights from the way academic communities responded to the rise of the Third Reich, the Second World War, and the Cold War, in today's crises. And, I was thinking of what Kristine mentioned about the mentoring program and the mental health question. The first point is academic solidarity. There is a lot to learn from the historical solidarity networks that emerged in response to the aggression of the Third Reich, for example, the Council for the Assistance of Refugee Academics in Britain, and similar initiatives in France, the United States, and elsewhere. There were also particular groups that supported specific groups of refugees, Jewish refugees, Christian refugees from the Third Reich and so on.

At one level, one can learn a lot from these groups because they provided a

Petro Mohyla Black Sea State University after Russian shelling on August 17, 2022.

"IN UKRAINE, I THINK, OVER 20 UNIVERSITIES HAVE BEEN PHYSICALLY DAMAGED IN THE COURSE OF THE WAR."

lot of support, and also a lot of advice on relocation and how to find maybe possibilities or short-term contracts. But there are also a number of things that one can do differently and perhaps improve. One is the question of gender, because these support networks were usually focused on male star academics. They completely neglected not only independent female scholars, but also the wives, children, and family members of academics. One of the lists I'm working with as a historian was produced in the 1940s by the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, the organization which became the council for refugee academics and now works as CARA. Out of a list of about 600 academics supported by this organization, only two or three names are those of women, even though by this point there were already a number of distinguished female scholars and students fleeing the Continent. What worked against them was that women actually had more possibilities to find employment in domestic work or tutoring, and therefore they did not require the support of this academic community, which later also hindered their visibility and academic networks after the war.

NOW, TODAY, we are hoping at least not to fall into the same trap, even though there's a kind of self-censorship going on in a number of affected communities. The women among the Ukrainian scholars in exile and Russian scholars at risk often, for different reasons, have a tendency to promote their husbands' work, rather than speak of their own work or achievements. It's a kind of common pattern in these communities, and we try to work around this. I think I also want to mention that it's really good to bear in mind the benefits of this kind of supporting work for the supporters. This is not just a humanitarian kind of extension of a helping hand by a rich and stable society to a suffering kind of disintegrating Eastern Europe. Academic refugees provide a great enrichment to the communities that host them – not least, continued expertise in the region. In the aftermath of the Second World War, a number of British social reformers working on innovations in social policy such as the National Health Service, the democratization of universities and other changes, were influenced in their thinking by academic refugees from continental Europe. There were many networks connecting refugees and hosts, which provided expertise to these organizations. Work in areas such as comparative law, development economics, all of these fields, were pioneered by refugee scholars who had brought some of the experimental social science from Germany to the United States, Britain, France, and so on.

The last point I want to make is that we should at the same time avoid turning universities into a kind of Truman show of cosmopoilitanism when we are living in the context of wars and conflicts whose end we cannot see, and which might last a decade or two. How do we maintain, on the one hand, a commitment to cosmopolitan solidarity, but on the other hand, remain sober about the difficulties faced by scholars on many levels? For example, many scholars from Ukraine cannot envision the possibility or the opportunity of working with scholars from Russia; this kind of dialogue is very difficult and problematic. How can international academics position themselves in this crisis, and what's the place of international networks in facilitating this kind of conversation?" ⊠

PHILIPP SCHMÄDEKE: We thank you very much for these five inputs. It is a really important discussion and let us continue it – not only here today but also at our home universities and in our national context. Thank you all a lot."

Serhii Sydorenko:

"We face a lot of catastrophic forest fires during war"

by **Elena Palenova**

D r. Serhii Sydorenko and I are both researchers studying the same large topic, namely forest fires. Our first encounter was during a course in pyrogeography – the study of fires – at Wageningen University, the Netherlands. He is supervising a student group making educational cards regarding what to do during forest fires to distribute in social institutions. Cards address topics such as "How to avoid mines" and "Fire prevention for kids." One of them gives suggestions on one side regarding "What to do in case of a wildfire", with many pieces of advice such as "stay safe" and "family first", while on the other side it explains "What to do in case of safety," with only one recommendation: "Just keep calm and cook borscht." The card also contains a family recipe for Poltavian borscht, with the blue-yellow background of the Ukrainian flag.

Serhii Sydorenko is an easygoing and cheerful supervisor. He even helps draw a firefighting beaver mascot for these creative leaflets.

As I prepared to conduct an interview with him, I typed in the ChatGPT window, "What should I ask the researcher from Ukraine who is studying forest fires?" I received very generic variations of suggestions for questions, such as "how did the war affect your research" and vague advice like "acknowledge the gravity of the topic" and "express appreciation for the researcher's work in a challenging environment". Acknowledgement and appreciation I have in abundance. We study the same topic; I am an interviewer, he is an interviewee. I am Russian, Serhii Sydorenko is Ukrainian. I left the country that started the war. He remains in the country where this war is still ongoing.

We have the interview in English. I do not know whether he knows Russian. I do not ask about it. Most likely yes, but I do not ask about it. So, we are talking with our Slavic accents and both laughing nervously when we approach topics that can be sensitive under any circumstances.

How did you end up in Wageningen?

"I am doing my postdoc here at Wageningen University. In Ukraine, I am the head of the Department of Forest Ecology at the Ukrainian Research Institute of Forestry and Forest Melioration located in Kharkiv, not far away from the frontline. I am trying to do my best and support my colleagues in Ukraine, so all evenings after the working day in Wageningen, and on weekends, I work on a voluntary basis to support research in Ukraine.

"Right now I am here for only a month; soon I will go back. I am going back and forth: a month in the Netherlands, then some time in Ukraine to prepare documents for renewed permission to cross the border.

Serhii Sydorenko works in Kharkiv at the Ukrainian Research Institute of Forestry and Forest Melioration.

"When the war started, I applied for a variety of different programs for Ukrainian researchers. My postdoc is financed by the MSCA4Ukraine program (the EU's Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions for Ukraine is the scheme that provides fellowship support to Ukrainian researchers to continue their work in some European host countries, – interviewer's note). I chose the Marie Curie program because it focused on multi-skill training and ensured a brain drain from Ukraine. I also received an offer from the Canadian Forest Service research station, but it's almost impossible to get permission to go to Canada; therefore, I chose this option.

"Interest in forest fire topics arises because we face a lot of catastrophic fires during war, and there is a necessity to develop and improve a clear methodology on the ecological impact of war, in terms of landscape fires. For example, how to distinguish war-related fires from casual fires, such as how to check whether fires were caused by war, or happened for the usual reasons. We have this methodology, and also the methodology for assessing ecological losses. However, it is still half baked and needs improvement, which I am working on as a part of my postdoc."

"Many experienced fire suppression personnel now are serving in the military."

Why are you interested in studying wildfires?

"I have some background in forestry and fire science. I started researching similar topics long ago, around 12 years ago. In my previous research, I was doing post-fire tree mortality modelling, you know, to predict whether the stand or individual trees will die or not because of different factors.

"My interest in fire comes from my childhood when I was 5–6 years old. My grandmother at the end of harvesting season was always making piles of dry plant residuals on the field and burning them. We baked potatoes and different vegetables on these fires. Now it is not legal to burn things on all types of land. Also, no prescribed fires are allowed (prescribed, or controlled fires are a forest management tool that requires setting a fire for fuel reduction and maintaining forest health, and preventing high-intensity fires, – interviewer's note). Ecological NGOs stand against it, and in Ukraine, it feels like society is not ready to accept the idea of living with fire. We will work on it, but now of course it is a really bad time for starting such discussions when the war is ongoing."

What is your current research about?

"We started to assess the impact of war on landscape fires, and the first part of my research is to develop tools for this. We need to have a base to compare fire regimes nowadays with the situation before the invasion. For this purpose, we need data about fire perimeters, their severity, weather conditions, and so on, for the past 30 years at least.

"I am separately looking into the direct and indirect impact of war on the wildfires' regime change (the term "fire regime" describes shifts in the patterns of fire behavior, – interviewer's note). The direct impact will be investigated in the sense of how density, number of fires, burnt area, average fire size, response time for each fire, and a variety of other parameters are changed on the war frontlines and in affected territories. At the same time, we define and describe the indirect impacts of war on Ukrainian fire management in terms of social consequences, fuel management, and factors leading to the collapse of fire suppression and prevention, especially in mined areas and areas polluted with mines.

"We also highlight other 'cascading effects' resulting from war. Among them are land abundance near the frontline, the destruction of dams that lead to hydrological regime change, for example, southern Ukrainian landscapes becoming more dry, also, deterioration of forest health, which leads to fuel build-up and damage to the shelterbelt system in Ukraine. Destruction of the windbreak system in southern and eastern Ukraine will affect the fires' behavior on the landscape level. Windbreaks in the steppe often played the role of 'greenbreaks', or 'fuelbreaks', limiting or even stopping the spread of surface fires along the perimeter of the agricultural fields. Special microclimatic conditions form inside the windbreak: wetter, cooler, and more shady than those outside.

"It is important to remember that a lot of people were mobilized. Firefighters and forest emergency services staff can also be mobilized. After the first waves of mobilization, one in every seven first responders for wildfires joined the army. It is affecting fire management. Many experienced fire suppression personnel now are serving in the military and are excluded from the fire management system. We have lost many experienced firefighters during the war.

"All that stuff that we included in our research is needed to understand the scale of ecocide in Ukraine, at least on the part of landscape fires."

What data do you use?

"We analyze data using different parameters for the last 20–30 years, mostly looking at times with satellite cover-

Serhii Sydorenko holds a course in pyrogeography.

age. We use a lot of meteorological data because we need information regarding weather conditions, whether they caused drought, for example. We use the very famous Fire Weather Index to estimate fire danger. Then we compare historical data with the situation now, for each region of Ukraine.

"We use satellite data, of course, at least to check large fires. For the data about the dynamic frontline change, we take open-source data such as that from Deep State Map (an online tool following the military operations of the Russian and Ukrainian armies during the war, – interviewer's note). This resource uses information from different sources: television, radio, and the internet, for example, and Telegram channels (a tool in the messenger for broadcasting publicly available information, – interviewer's note) that publish photos with geographical references.

"Regarding the indirect impact of war, a lot of people became refugees and had to flee from war. With the movement of a large number of people, fire risks change from region to region. Fires are mostly caused by people in Ukraine, maybe even more than 90% of fires. We investigate population density and structural change for different regions and can clearly see how the number of wildfires increases with the increasing population.

"Also, in towns and cities people found it difficult to live after the war started. Because, for example, rent prices increased 10–20 times in the safe western regions, especially in 2022. So people moved to small villages and started to cultivate the land. Consequently, the number of fires increased there."

Do you already see the effects of the war on the number of fires?

"The density of fires and the number of fires increased dramatically. We see fifty or even sixty times the number of fires in some areas with intensive combat. You can see it clearly if you look at the situation at the frontline and then move five kilometers on either side of the war conflict. The area of fires increased, of course, everywhere, because fire does not take sides. But also, it is visible how fires are suppressed. From the Ukrainian side, fires are suppressed very fast, because it is a part of our policy that every fire in Ukraine must be suppressed. But on occupied territories, there was often no treatment of fires, so they became huge and dangerous for local communities.

"The density of fires and the number of fires increased dramatically."

"As I mentioned, the number of fires depends on active combat and proximity to the frontline. Regarding the intensity of fires, it is necessary to remember seasonality. Before it was visible how fires start in early spring, burn during summer, and go down in autumn. Now we have some kind of endless fire season. Fires start now because of the shelling or explosion of technical equipment and then spread through the landscape if weather conditions contribute to this.

"Fire is also used as a weapon. So, the weaponization of fire is another great concern, because fire is used by Russians to support military operations and gain tactical advantages. More and more fires occurred after incendiary ammunition was used by Russian forces, heavy fire thrower systems, and so on. Due to this, in Ukraine, we must now include new causes of fires in official fire statistical reporting, such as artillery shelling, incendiary ammunition shelling, heavy fire thrower shelling, and fires in mined areas."

Are you studying just forest fires?

"Terminology is very important. When we use the term 'forest fires' we actually mean fires in forested areas, but it is important to note here that more than 70% of all our fires happen on agricultural lands. I just started researching fires on agricultural lands during the war and do not have much data, but I can say that the intensity of fires there also increased. Before the war, we had fires in the harvested areas, and now, when the land is abundant, there is a huge accumulation of fuel that can burn. I am developing the methodology for accessing this right now.

"War creates the more complex problem of multidimensional pollution. If combat takes place, for example, in a protected area, there will be light pollution, sound pollution, chemical pollution, heavy metal pollution, and wildfires on top of that. It is really harmful to biodiversity. It is indirect and may have some kind of cascading effect from the war.

"Another indirect impact of wildfires, for example, is the dominance of invasive species. In the southern region, the weather conditions are very severe and forests burn completely, there is no or limited natural regeneration of native species because the territory is unmanaged during the war, and therefore it is occupied quickly by invasive species."

How disastrous are the consequences of war-related fires?

"Direct consequences of forest fires will mostly have a short-term effect. But regarding indirect impact, effects can last years and years, because it will depend on clearing the territories, especially forest territories, of mines. Experts estimate it will take years and years because the speed of demining in forested areas is 12 square meters per day.

"Regarding the social consequences of war-related fires, some communities live in forests, in villages surrounded by forests. They are very vulnerable because the territories around them need to be managed and demined. If a fire starts there, they are under the threat of being burned and destroyed."

> "The number of fires depends on active combat and proximity to the frontline."

Was the infrastructure for fire and forest research damaged during the war?

"Russians occupied a lot of territory very quickly at the beginning of the invasion and caused significant damage to the fire management capacity. Vehicles, trucks, fire towers with video cameras, and other equipment monitoring the forest were stolen or destroyed. They took the machinery and tools for their own fortification and destroyed much of the rest, for example, cameras for fire monitoring, fire towers in the forest. We have a network of fire towers that use video cameras. Using these cameras you also can see the movement of the Russian army, so of course they destroyed them."

What is the most challenging part of your research these days?

"I need adequate data for the whole Ukrainian territory. Some regions only have partial information, such as information regarding just a part of a season from 15 or 20 years ago. That is why I rely mostly on satellite data.

"Also, now, the areas of my fieldwork are now occupied or polluted, so part of my work will probably get lost.

"It would be great to implement fire management plans in Ukraine. There are holistic plans that include many parts; for example, implementing safety for the whole landscape and not only those communities that live in the forested areas.

"These plans' implementation is paused for now because of war. Earlier, we prepared one plan for the pilot site, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, and it was very promising."

Are any of your colleagues mobilized?

"Researchers and scientists are not mobilized now, we have 'armor' against mobilization. But many of my colleagues from academia joined the Ukrainian forces and now are on the frontline. They left behind all research ca-

reer prospects; they left everything and joined the army to protect us all. I am proud of them, of their will and courage. Many of us are involved as volunteers to help the army.

"Each of us has lost someone in this war. Each family has someone who went to the frontline, we are trying to keep in touch with them."

What is the impact of the war on the science community in Ukraine?

"A lot of researchers now go to Europe through special programs. Some of them totally cut off all connections with Ukrainian colleagues. I work here in Wageningen as a postdoc, but also try to work for my research institute to support my colleagues. I work for them in my free time, which is sometimes all night long and all weekend.

"I understand if I go to Europe and say goodbye to the people who work with me, it will probably ruin our Forest Ecology department. There are only four people left now. Half of the staff was laid off because of the financing reduction. Because of the war, of course, research is no longer a high priority. However, there is always a possibility to find projects and extra funding outside of Ukraine."

What motivates you to continue your research?

"I am here in Wageningen to save my department as well. I am networking, gaining experience and new skills, and looking for opportunities for new projects, grants. We need networking outside of Ukraine because it is the only way to support our institutions, their only way to survive. I believe that if you are a young scientist, you should go to Europe or somewhere abroad and build your network and capacity, gain experience, and then return to Ukraine.

"I see my future in Ukraine, and what is going on now, is just temporary. I have already gone back and forth six, seven times. I also bring my family here, every time I come here. But I leave my cat. Next time I will bring the cat with us as well."

How does your family find your movements?

"My parents back in Gadyach in the Poltava region are critical of it. My wife is upset, but she supports me. She is also a scientist in the forestry sector, and she is a little bit involved in my research.

"I am worried sometimes that the legislation will be changed, and then I will be stopped at the border and they won't let me go. Border guards check my documents sometimes for a long time. They are checking whether I am going to come back. But I always come back.

"It is hard to find accommodation here in the Netherlands for only a month, so we are renting a place here in Wageningen and in Poltava. It costs a lot of money."

How old are your kids?

"Nine and one. They are adventurous, my girls. They like to travel. The younger one was born during the war. Well, Sofia was born also during the war, in 2014. And then, Victoria. You know, in Ukraine, probably all newborn girls are Victorias now."

***

After this, he apologized and left to pick up his daughter from school. I returned to the classroom, thinking of how we were doing the same thing, studying forest fires, but doing it in very different contexts. My topic is how forests recover after fires, and how you can save what has already been burned. I have stepped over the catastrophic present and begun looking into the future. Serhii Sydorenko looks at the situation here and now, following changes due to the disaster that unfolds right before his eyes. ☒

Elena Palenova is a Russian journalist based in Stockholm, and a PhD student in Environmental Studies, Södertörn University.

> "We have a network of fire towers that use video cameras."

The archaeologist Marija Gimbutas.
Grand theories at the outskirts of modernity

Although Marija Gimbutas is a well-known figure in her native Lithuania, throughout my education in Latvia and Estonia I had never heard about her, until recently when her name came up in a book in which I had no expectations of finding references to the Baltic states and our cultural context. The book *The Dawn of Everything* by David Graeber and David Wengrow is a fascinating exercise that challenges everything we seem to know about social progress. It discusses new archaeological evidence and questions the existing narratives about prehistory. Within this ambitious critique focusing on meta-narratives of Western political and social modernity, Marija Gimbutas, a Lithuanian archaeologist, suddenly appeared as a significant heroine. Yet her presence in the book makes perfect sense, as Rasa Navickaitė's new biography of Gimbutas illustrates in a much-needed and excellent account of the Lithuanian archaeologist and scholar.

MARIJA GIMBUTAS established herself as a widely respected scholar, studying the origins of Indo-European people in Eastern and Central Europe. It was a largely neglected topic in the 1950s, when she moved to the US as an refugee after the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. Drawing on her research in this field, Gimbutas elaborated a general theory about the migration pattern of the proto-Indo-Europeans to the European mainland – the "Kurgan hypothesis". As the biography rightly emphasizes, both large-scale excavations and grand theory building were usually the domain of male archaeologists, but Gimbutas carried out and established her name in both. Despite being an outsider due to both her gender and cultural background, Gimbutas made her way into the inner circle of the discipline. And yet – the grand theories she continued to formulate in her life's work became uncomfortable to mainstream archaeology, effectively resulting in Gimbutas marginalization and even expulsion from the academic canon. Gimbutas' most controversial thesis of Old Europe focused on the Neolithic period before Indo-Europeans and drew its source from a number of artifacts found in Gimbutas-led fieldwork in Southeastern Europe. Most notably, these were goddess figurines, but also pottery and other objects with striking designs. Gimbutas described the civilization of Old Europe as women-centered, egalitarian and peaceful, based on the cyclicality of time and nature. She integrated the Kurgan hypothesis by arguing that the peaceful goddess culture of Old Europe was upended by patrilineal, warlike proto-Indo-European newcomers to Europe. If there was almost no evidence of arms and hierarchical social structures in the Old Europe, such was a plenty with the mass movement of Kurgans – people from the Pontic-Caspian steppes. For Gimbutas this was a clash of two completely different civilizations, of which the latter one became dominant throughout Western modernity. Gimbutas' ascribed connections between the artifacts was seen by her critics as an imposition of too much meaning on the discovered objects. Prehistory continues to be a difficult subject for interpretation since it is defined by the lack of any written sources. This lack is also what often leads to describe prehistory as a primitive stage of human development that has little to offer for today's political and social thought – a perception that Graeber and Wengrow challenge in their book. Marija Gimbutas would have agreed with them completely.

The book makes a compelling critical analysis of Gimbutas reception by mainstream and feminist academia without attempting to idealize Gimbutas' own limitations. Gimbutas certainly did not fall within the progressive strains of the scholarship at the time. She did not describe herself as a feminist, nor did she engage with critical perspectives on gender in academia. Yet Gimbutas was careful to look for a vocabulary that would not reproduce the binarity of power in terms of hierarchy between sexes. She interpreted the focus on women as constituting a broader spiritual universalism, a fact that her critics took as an illustration of her bias, although such universalization from a male-centric perspective rarely received similar treatment. The prevailing interpretations of the ancient women figurines described their functions in terms of sexuality or maternalism. The women-centric cultures were generally viewed as a primitive stage on the way to the development brought by the Bronze age. For Gimbutas, these and other artifacts were indications of an altogether different cosmology that was female-centric and not to be assessed with the modern sensibilities of progress.

FEMINIST ARCHAEOLOGISTS, as Navickaitė demonstrates, did not view Gimbutas work as a seminal dislocation of an androcentric paradigm. Instead, she was accused of proposing a sort of extreme matriarchy with an ideological bias that excluded a measured balance between sexes. In the emerging gender archaeology, Gimbutas' focus on women in prehistory was the "wrong kind" – too metaphysical in its approach and non-conforming to the paradigm of social constructivism. Here Navickaitė uncovers a striking paradox: the radical and constructivist approaches that critiqued Gimbutas for her essentialism, in turn, used essentialism to dismiss Gimbutas based on her personal circumstances. Critics such as Lynn Meskell went on to argue that Gimbutas'

Marija Gimbutienė commemorative plaque in Kaunas, Mickevičius Street.

Marija Gimbutienė on a 2021 stamp of Lithuania.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Marija Gimbutas by Kerbstone 52, at the back of Newgrange, County Meath, Ireland, in September 1989.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

idealized life of the Old Europe destroyed by a Kurgan invasion was motivated by her experience of "two foreign occupations by 'barbaric invaders'" of which the ones from the East stayed. As the book argues, Gimbutas' work was used to create a "paradigmatic case of biased science", and it was pursued with a special rigor in the most progressive strains of the discipline. Navickaitė explains this as a move from gender archaeology to establish its scientific credibility in mainstream archaeology. Thus, to avoid reproducing the dominant androcentrism of the discipline, the feminist discourse instead invalidated Gimbutas on the basis of her personal experiences, cultural background, age and even medical history.

IN NAVICKAITĖ'S assessment, Gimbutas' main contribution was a type of "pre-her-story", constituting an important step in the change of perspective on gender in archaeology, which was not, however, understood and appreciated by her peers. While it certainly appears to be the case, I think there is more to be said about assessing Gimbutas' complex legacy. Specifically, this concerns the positionality of Eastern Europeans once it is placed

closer to the discourses of the Western "core". As the biography demonstrates, the cultural identity of Gimbutas, once acknowledged, was seen to interfere with her capabilities as a scholar of more general, "objective" knowledge. Furthermore, even if she was celebrated, the embeddedness of her work in the Baltic culture was Orientalized, as in the case with the goddess spirituality movement in the US, or Westernized, as in the case of post-socialist identity building in Lithuania. All these cases uncovered the liminal positionality of Eastern Europe from the point of view of either the "core" or "periphery".

Gimbutas' historical and cultural background was important for both her critics and supporters. It was significant for Gimbutas herself, as in her latter books, she focused on myths and folklore as resources for interpreting archaeological evidence. Gimbutas defined

The archaeologist Marija Gimbutas

this approach as archaeomythology and expanded on the ideas about the centrality of pre-Christian, marginalized European cultures for understanding prehistoric, pre-Indo-European civilization. If there remained traces of Old Europe, they were in the folklore of those European people who were the last to be touched by Christianity, such as those adhering to the Baltic, but also the Basque, Celtic and Germanic paganisms. This sourcing of interpretation in folklore moved Gimbutas even further away from the mainstream discipline. The autobiography seems to view Gimbutas "mythological turn" critically, especially the ways it connected with her New Age supporters. Gimbutas found her supporters and community in the feminist spirituality movement of the 1980s onwards, which was based in the US and flourished in the New Age milieu. In Navickaitė's reading, for the women's spirituality movement, the goddess spiritual world, elaborated by Gimbutas, provided a pre-modern European heritage that was free from associations with whiteness, modernization and domination. The contemporary Eastern European context was presented as an almost unmediated link to the world Gimbutas envisioned. It was valuable as much as it still could be perceived as untouched and removed from Western modernity, reproducing an Orientalizing gaze on Eastern Europe that was absent in Gimbutas' own work.

Gimbutas reading of prehistory could certainly be criticized as making overly general assumptions, yet what distinguished Gimbutas, was her wish to seek genuinely new perspectives of what she saw and move beyond the premises of modern history writing. Gimbutas was insufficiently self-critical, imagining the possibility of a detached, "modest" perspective that was free from any cultural and ideological influences. However, her work was also continually reduced to the cultural bias of her audience. This included Gimbutas' reception in Lithuania in the early 1990s, an aspect that appears but is not explicitly addressed in the discussion about the period in the biography.

GIMBUTAS CRITICAL perception of the Western modernity, which she associated with both capitalism and communism, significantly manifested in her views on the future of post-socialist Lithuania. In contrast to most public figures in the transition era, Gimbutas viewed the Christian heritage of Lithuania as a result of internal European colonization. She was critical of Westernization as a desired endpoint for the post-socialist transition and urged Lithuanians to take pride in their ancient spiritual origins, preserved by folklore in the female deities like Laima, Ragana and others. At the same time, Gimbutas' view of paganism was not embedded in a typical ethnonationalist perspective. Nationalism was a product of modernity, whereas Gimbutas was looking for alternatives to the teleological view of the progress over the last few hundred years. As the biography demonstrates, the Lithuanian feminist movement of the 1990s took Gimbutas arguments to construct an identity that was both pro-Western and nationalist. Such positionality was clearly paradoxical from

Gimbutas's point of view; however, Navickaitė's book pays less attention to this discrepancy. The book implicitly shows that the fact that Gimbutas had recognition and prominence abroad meant a lot for Lithuanians, while her actual arguments appeared to fade in comparision. Gimbutas' ideas contradicted the mainstream transition narratives of the Baltic states, illustrating how such contradicting narratives were essentially erased from the hegemonic "end of history" discourse in the post-socialist context.

The question about these various dimensions determining Gimbutas's legacy is not simple. Navickaitė's book makes a compelling case against Gimbutas' unjust position in the "intellectual backwater", showing that most of Gimbutas' criticism has been based on a crude simplification of her works and personal background. In its concluding part, Navickaitė's biography calls for a re-evaluation of Gimbutas' work as a valid resource for the continuing rethinking of womanhood across ages. The biography has been written with a focus on gender studies debates, which were the most controversial aspects of the Old Europe thesis. The focus on Gimbutas contribution to gender studies is important, but it is remains rather unclear on how it could relate to the contemporary themes of the field. Gimbutas might not be restricted to intellectual but historical backwater instead.

As the biography discusses the controversies of Gimbutas research, it pays less attention to the work of Gimbutas that earned her a reputation in the first place. Gimbutas focused on the early Bronze Age in Eastern Europe, a subject that, due to the language barrier in the West, was virtually unexplored at the time. Through her regional focus, she proposed a hypothesis that described the origins of Proto-Indo-European language. The Kurgan hypothesis was more recently confirmed by DNA data and has been at the centre of the debate about the Proto-Indo-European language, such as in David Anthony's renowned *The horse, the wheel and language* (2007). Yet, Gimbutas name in academic and popular context is tied to the controversies and the accusations of pseudo-science. However, Gimbutas identity as a scholar did not appear to change much over time – she was looking for connections and meanings where others saw isolated objects. Such approach

could lead to wrong explanations, but it could also propose truly novel ideas, which could be explored further by other researchers and new data analysis.

AS GRAEBER and Wengrow write, certain myth-making is inevitable when making grand historical arguments, but it is only allowed for some – and it certainly was not allowed for Gimbutas, whose reward "was not a literary prize, or even a place among the revered ancestors of archaeology; it was near-universal posthumous vilification, or, even worse, becoming an object of dismissive contempt." The myth-making in question does not entail simple fantasy; it concerns a certain gap between facts and our interpretations about them, which cannot ever really be closed. Most often these interpretations reflect historical hegemonic conjectures, of which also Gimbutas was not immune – but nor were her critics as much as they assumed the position of "objective science". Rasa Navickaitė does an excellent job tracing these conjectures in academia and beyond, with their consequences for Gimbutas perception, making it a very important contribution to the debate about her legacy. Hopefully, it will significantly add to its re-evaluation over time and deepen her position in Eastern European intellectual history. Gimbutas is both a cautionary tale about the limits of one's positionality and, at the same time, an inspiration precisely because of it. ×

Lelde Luika

Postdoctoral Research Fellow
at CBEES, Södertörn University.

Women from the Riekkala village near the town of Sortavala washing their laundry in Lake Ladoga in the early 1930s.

PHOTO: PEKKA KYYTINEN. FINNISH HERITAGE AGENCY, HELSINKI, FINLAND. CC BY 4.0.
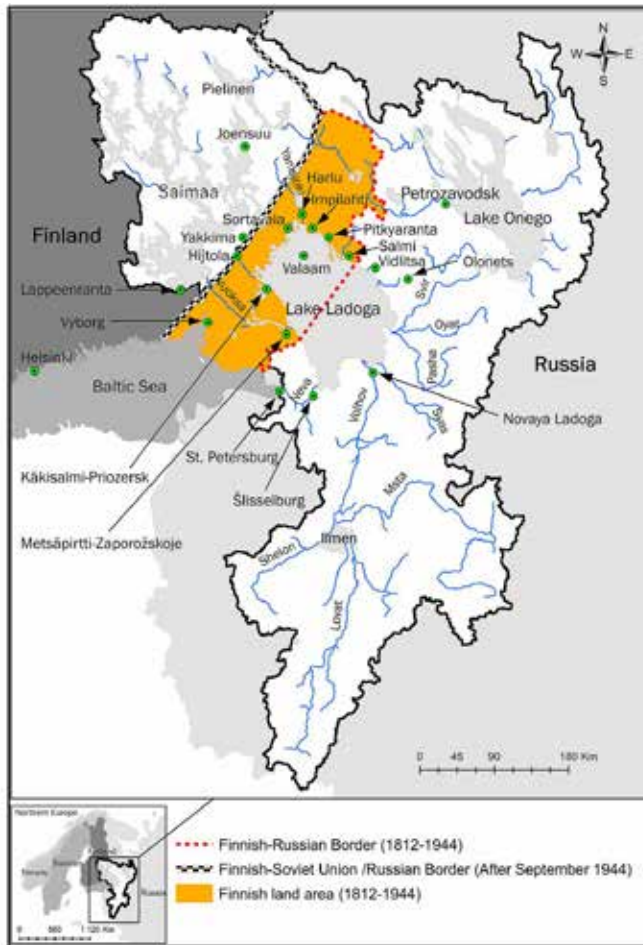
Lake Ladoga.
A transnational history

Lake Ladoga: The Coastal History of the Greatest Lake in Europe

Maria Lähteen-mäki and Isaac Land, eds., (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2023). Studia Fennica Historica vol. 27, 233 pages.

Histories of great bodies of water – maritime histories, histories of river basins – have been the object of scholars' interest for quite some time, while similar approaches to lakes have been less common. Not to look too far, the Baltic Sea has had its share of histories throughout the 20th century, written with various agendas in mind, depending on the changing times and the changing geopolitical contexts.[1] Maria Lähteenmäki, one of the editors of the book under review, calls the Baltic Sea "Ladoga's 'big sister'" in the first chapter (p. 12), thus connecting the two on the level of scholarship, as well as on the level of the environment and lived experience, into one system – the lake becoming, in a way, the sea's extension to the east. Lake Ladoga, Lähteenmäki seems to be saying, deserves as much attention as the big sister.

The volume under review aims to do just that, to present a transnational history of the lake, and more precisely its coasts. The editors and authors emphasize the concept of "new coastal history" introduced in 2007 by Isaac Land (the other of the volume's editors),[2] as one of the guiding concepts behind the book:

Map 1. The Drainage Basin of Lake Ladoga.

The focus is on the coast alongside the water (p. 18–19). By writing about Lake Ladoga, they hope to expand this approach to cover not only oceanic and maritime history writing, but also that about lakes, and to develop a "lakefront history approach" (p. 20). The editors underline that their aim was to concentrate on the lake, its shores, the interaction between human society and economy, and the natural environment. They also want to put the lake into the global context in terms of the environment, as belonging to "a global family of great lakes" (p. 45): a chain of lakes in Northern Europe, the great lakes of the northern hemisphere in general, and their impact on climate.

THE BOOK IS DIVIDED into four parts, followed by a Postscript. In the first part, three chapters outline the theoretical bases and the place that the volume intends to occupy at the intersection of transnational history, environmental history, and coastal history. It is also a call to "take lakes seriously", as the title of

the chapter by Isaac Land suggests: a call to look beyond seas and oceans, and to extend scholarly reflection and scrutiny to those great reservoirs of fresh water, their impact on societies and the environment, and how these are inseparably intertwined.

The second part of the book consists of two chapters dealing with the earliest history of human settlement on Ladoga's shores, as testified by archaeological findings, linguistic evidence, and medieval written sources. The image painted in these two chapters shows the lake – since the beginnings of human presence on its shores – as a borderland between the Slavic, Finnic and Scandinavian worlds, a place of flows and exchange, on the route from Viking settlements, through Rus', into the East. It also shows – on the example of the so-called "Normanist controversy" in Thomas Rosén's chapter – how history continues to have relevance for, and to be instrumentalized in, present day nationalistic politics.

Part three jumps ahead in time from the early Middle Ages to the industrialization era. These three chapters deal with this and its consequences for Lake Ladoga. The first two focus on case studies – the river Jänisjoki and the village of Pitkäranta – showing the importance of the lake's drainage basin as one ecological and socio-economic system, the non-linear processes of industrial development, and their dependency on geographical location and the multicultural borderland environment. The final chapter in this part, by Alfred Colpaert and Augustine-Moses Gbagir, with its focus on the ecological state of Ladoga's waters examined using satellite images, is rather an odd one out in the anthology. While it is an interesting addition to the discussion on the consequences of industrialization, in its approach and methodology it veers away from the historical and social sciences approaches that govern the rest of the book. Interestingly, the authors decided to add QR codes to link to the colored versions of the illustrations that could only be printed in black and white in the book. It is a good way to overcome technical limitations and to better visualize the data. Unfortunately, though, the link on p. 145 does not work.

Part four of the volume consists of three chapters focusing on the lived experiences on the lake's coasts and islands. It examines the

intimate, sensory histories of living on and close to the lake, the changing experience with the shifting state borders in the aftermath of the Second World War, the tensions between the leisure life of vacationers and tourists on one hand, and permanent inhabitants making their living off the resources of the lake and its coasts on the other hand, some of which come to the fore in the long lasting disputes over the establishment of the Ladoga Skerries National Park.

FINALLY, THE LAST PART consists of just one chapter penned by both editors. The title of this part, Postcript, suggests something added as an afterthought, after the whole volume had been completed, but it serves rather to reiterate and to sum up the points made throughout the book, especially those about the interdependency between the human societies and the environment.

The book's ambition is to be innovative in several different ways, starting with the fact of taking the lake as its central theme, and looking at it from the point of view of its socio-cultural life and its relationship with the environment, rather than "big" politics, the focus of more traditional histories. Even though Lake Ladoga was situated on the frontlines of both the Second World War and the Cold War, the focus in the book is elsewhere: on the lived experiences, the interactions between the people and the environment through tourism, economy, and environmental protection. The major political events and shifting borders feature only insofar as they influenced the former. The book thus presents a novel view on history of Europe and in Europe: its hitherto understudied regions and borderlands, determined more by geography and its interplay with human societies than by nation states, their policies, and the confines of their borders. Rather than a place divided by a clear-cut national border or the Iron Curtain, Lake Ladoga is shown as "the lake of the northern borderland" (p. 13) in more than one sense: It lies on Europe's northern periphery, and on the shifting border between the Finnic and the Slavic worlds, between Finland and Russia/the USSR. The editors' focus on coastal history, furthermore, underlines its nature as a borderland between land and water, and the specific conditions – environmental, socio-cultural, economic – which this kind of borderland engenders.

Boaters on the shore of Honkasalmi island in front of the city of Sortavala.

At the same time, the book leaves the reader with a sense that there is still much to explore in this transnational history of Lake Ladoga, especially because timewise the volume only covers the early Middle Ages and the period since industrialization, while the centuries in between are absent. This makes the volume slightly lose its focus: If it is indeed the history of the greatest lake in Europe, as the title promises, it is a history that misses a few

chapters, and if it is supposed to be contemporary history, then it has a few chapters too many. The absence of big politics has its shortcomings, too. The book ends with an optimistic conclusion about "relinquishing the national gaze" and Lake Ladoga as "our cultural heritage, containing values that we all share" (p. 225). However, in face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (which is not mentioned in the book at all), and the processes which it triggered – among others the Russian Federation's isolation in Europe and Finnish NATO membership – the reader is left wondering who and what "we" and these "values that we all share" are. It could perhaps be interesting to address the issue if, and how, the current war influences and will influence the Lake Ladoga as "a shared natural heritage site, for which we humans in general – not just citizens of individual countries – are responsible" (p. 226). Can we indeed hope that this sense of the shared responsibility for the environment will be enough to overcome big power politics, major military and political conflicts, and nationalistic feelings, as the editors seem to postulate?

Even with these reservations in mind, though, it can be said that the book fulfils the aims which its authors and editors set for themselves, and is an interesting addition to understanding Europe's past and present. One can hope that it will inspire others to follow in its footsteps and to fill in the still missing chapters in the history of Europe's greatest lake. ❎

Marta Grzechnik
Assistant Professor at the Institute for Scandinavian and Finnish Studies, University of Gdańsk

references

1 For example: Władysław Konopczyński, *Kwestia bałtycka do XX w*. [The Baltic question until the 20th century] Prace Naukowo-Informacyjne. Seria Sprawy Morskie [Scientific and Information Works. Naval Affairs Series] (Gdańsk, Bydgoszcz, Szczecin: Instytut Bałtycki, 1947); David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World 1492–1772* (London: Longman, 1990); David Kirby, *The Baltic World 1772–1993: Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change* (London: Longman, 1995); Kristian Gerner, Klas-Göran Karlsson, and Anders Hammarlund, *Nordens Medelhav: Östersjöområdet som historia, myt och projekt* [The Nordic Mediterranean: The Baltic Sea area as history, myth and project] (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2002).

2 I. Land, "Tidal Waves: The New Coastal History', Journal of Social History 40, no. 3 (1 March 2007): 731–43, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2007.0051.

Now in Scopus

Baltic Worlds' statement of purpose

contributors

Kirstine Arentoft

Currently a master's student in Comparative Literature at the University of Vienna, working with the University New Europe's mentoring program.

Alexandra Brankova

PhD candidate at the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies & Department of Informatics and Media, Uppsala University.

Olga Bubich

Belarusian freelance journalist, photographer and memory researcher temporarily based in Berlin as an ICORN Fellow.

Emil Edenborg

Associate Professor in Gender Studies at Stockholm University:

Alexander Etkind

Professor of History and since 2022 at the Department of International Relations at Central European University in Vienna.

Marta Grzechnik

Assistant Professor at the Institute for Scandinavian and Finnish Studies, University of Gdańsk.

Jenny Gunnarsson-Payne

Professor in Ethnology at Södertörn University.

Dina Gusejnova

An intellectual historian and Associate Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Stefan Jonsson

Professor in Ethnic Studies and Head of the Division of Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO) at Linköping University, Sweden.

Alar Kilp

Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia.

Elżbieta Korolczuk

Associate Professor in Sociology at Södertörn University and the American Studies Center at Warsaw University

Liubov Kuplevatska

Ukrainian scholar currently based at Lund University, the Center for Languages and Literature, via a grant for Ukrainian scholars from the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation. Associate Professor at the Kharkiv National University in Kharkiv, February 2022.

Galyna Kutsovska

PhD student at the Department of History at Uppsala University.

Lelde Luika

Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES), Södertörn University.

Josefina Lundblad-Janjić

Holds a PhD in Russian Literature and is a Lecturer in Russian at the Swedish Armed Forces School for Interpreters.

Torbjörn Nilsson

Professor Emeritus in History at the Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University.

Elena Palenova

PhD student in Environmental Studies at the Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS), Södertörn University.

Andrea Pető

Professor at the Department of Gender Studies at Central European University in Vienna, a Doctor of Science of Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Philipp Christoph Schmädeke

Political Scientist at the Federal Agency for Civic Education, Berlin, director of the Science at Risk Emergency Office.

Maryna Shevtsova

Postdoctoral Fellow at KU Leuwen, Belgium.

Hansalbin Sältenberg

Holds a PhD in Gender Studies, Södertörn University.

Svitlana Telukha

PhD in History, and a Lecturer at the National Technical University Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute and fellow of the Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO).

Piotr Wawrzeniuk

Associate Professor at the Swedish Defence University's Department of Military History.

Michał Wawrzonek

Professor in the Institute of Political and Administrative Sciences, at Jesuit University in Cracow.

FSC MIX Papper FSC® C074394

KLIMATKOMPENSERAD CO₂ AV TRICORONA

SVANENMÄRKT Trycksak 3041 0417

The print journal is distributed in 60 countries. It is also published open access on the web.

A world order in transformation?

Russia's full-scale invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine has, in addition to all the destruction, grief and terror for the people concerned, meant changes of an economic, ideological, geopolitical kind that are ongoing and even claimed to be an epochal turn for the region. One might argue that the entire post-communist period hastily came to an end with the outbreak of war in February 2022 (although one could argue that this happened already in 2014 with the Russian invasion of the Crimean Peninsula – if not even before). There are signs that the on-going war may redefine the future of the region.

THE ANNUAL publication *CBEES State of the Region report* focuses on Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Balkans, and the Baltic Sea region, where we find countries that are closest to the war. Russia's full-scale invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine has unravelled the profound instability in what has conventionally been understood as the world order.

Presently, the prospects for the arrangement of a global order based on the principles of liberal democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, peaceful cooperation, and sustainable economic growth looks unrealistic.

The war has made security a major concern throughout the region and has increased or reinforced tensions between some countries. This year's thick report presents these challenges, both in the form of thematic pieces and specific country reports. The aim is to present a contemporary overview of the diversity of challenges the countries are facing and the implications for the region. Over 40 scholars have been engaged to analyze how these countries in different ways are being affected by the war in order to form a tentative understanding of certain consequences of the war as they unfold in the countries in question and the region as a whole. Understandably, the consequences of the war tie in to historical and contemporary conditions that also preceded the war.

THIS VERY CONTEMPORARY report collects various insights and data from the scientific community in the region regarding a number of aspects and issues, and on different levels. Topics covered here include political issues (primarily relating to security), but also issues like democracy versus authoritarian rule, migration and demographic changes, challenges for the protection of human rights and the freedom of speech, socioeconomic effects in the short- and long-term, and the changing prospects for knowledge production and the academic landscape.

The region is undergoing substanial changes, but it is not possible to say what these changes will lead to, as Irina Sandomirskaja notes in the concluding reflections. Is Eastern Europe, as we understand it, coming to an end, and are we observing the beginning of a new region?

> [...] we cannot say for sure if we are observing the end of the old or the beginning of the new. [...] This, I believe, is the paradox that this report seems to have captured, a process still uncertain as to whether it is an end or a beginning, with either option at present equally probable. ⊠

Note: The full report is available OA at: https://www.sh.se/stateoftheregion

---

CBEES
State of the Region Report 2024

A World Order in Transformation?
A Comparative Study of Consequences of the War and Reactions to these Changes in the Region