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**UKRAINIAN MAIDAN
AS THE LAST ANTI-SOVIET REVOLUTION,
OR THE METHODOLOGICAL DANGERS OF SOVIET NOSTALGIA
(NOTES OF AN AMERICAN UKRAINIAN HISTORIAN FROM
INSIDE THE FIELD OF RUSSIAN STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES)**

As a former Soviet Ukrainian historian who moved from post-Soviet Ukraine to the United States in 1997 looking for better living conditions and a job, I had problematic relations with my cultural, professional, and ethnic identity. Despite an annual obligatory summer visit to Ukraine with my family and travels between my hometown of Dnipropetrovsk and Moscow, I felt more and more distanced from the real practical issues of everyday life in both Ukraine and Russia, identifying myself with my American colleagues, professional historians, sharing our common professional interests and cultural practices with Americans, and gradually adjusting to American college life and values. Moreover, as a former Soviet Americanist historian, who became a historian of imperial Russia and the Soviet Union here in America, I experienced a real identity crisis, trying to unite the skills and practices of both historical fields in my professional life. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, like many of my Soviet co-citizens, I lived through another crisis of identity – my Soviet identity. All of this exacerbated

my old cultural distancing from my Moscow Americanist colleagues, for whom I was just “another annoying provincial Ukrainian scholar.”

Despite my native Russian-language skills (I spoke Russian at home all the time), my Moscow colleagues always demonstrated a very condescending attitude toward people like me, who for them (I paraphrase what Boris Shpotov of the Institute of World History said about Ukrainian scholars in 1999) were “narrow-minded stupid provincials, claiming that they know something in history.”¹ Therefore I began distancing myself from my Moscow colleagues, shaping my own intellectual identity vis-à-vis Muscovites. This mental distancing from Moscow gradually increased during the 1990s, when I began traveling abroad using various Western research grants. I felt more Ukrainian and less Soviet than my former Moscow colleagues whom I left behind. It was shocking for me that while I was losing mental association with my Soviet past during those years, all my Moscow colleagues, whom I visited almost every summer, expressed increasingly stronger feelings of “Soviet nostalgia,” blaming the West, especially Americans, for the dissolution of the USSR and for the deterioration of their lives in post-Soviet Russia. Moreover, many of my Moscow friends began blaming us, Ukrainians (including Russian-speaking Ukrainians, like myself), for betraying East Slavic unity, destroying the Soviet Union, and voting in 1991 for the independence of Ukraine (which for them is still a “historical part of sacred Orthodox Christian Russia ... with Kiev – the center of Holy Russia”).²

Paradoxically, this kind of “Soviet nostalgia” and the underlying accusation of Ukrainians for “betraying” also became evident in the writing and other expressions of professional practice of my American colleagues – “Russianists” and “Sovietologists” – experts in Russian/Soviet and post-Soviet studies. When I began my new academic and teaching career as an American “Russian” historian in 2002 in the United States, in an American professional milieu that was new to me, I encountered (surprisingly) a certain negative reaction to my Ukrainian identity and my research topics, which were related to my research work and based on material from my native Ukraine. Thus, when I finished my first American book manuscript about

¹ I quote Boris Shpotov’s phrase during the International Conference in Connection with the Bicentennial of the Russian-American Company, 1799–1999: Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, September 7, 1999.

² I quote Sviatoslav Dmitriev, professor of Ancient History at Ball State University, my Russian colleague (originally from Moscow), who took a very pro-Putin, anti-Ukrainian, Russian chauvinistic position in our discussion of the Ukrainian–Russian crisis, on January 30, 2014, Muncie, Indiana.

the cultural history of the Ukrainian peasant evangelicals in the southern Ukrainian provinces of the late Russian Empire and offered it for publication under the title *Ukraine's Lost Reformation*, all of my American reviewers immediately suggested that I replace it with a new title, *Russia's Lost Reformation*, arguing that nobody would be attracted to a book title containing the name of the new “unknown” nation of Ukraine.³ As the late Richard Stites joked about this in November 2008:

Sergei, you will be surprised to see how Russian-centered and Moscow-focused all your American friends, historians of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union are. Your new Ukrainian nation with your provincial interests just does not fit this historical “imperial” imagination. Many of these American historians still prefer the traditional perception of all multinational history of the entire post-Soviet space from only one – Moscow and Great Russian [*Velikorusskaia*] – point of view. They still live in their own historical nostalgic space – in the Brezhnev era in Moscow or Leningrad, when they were young scholars, recalling all of the meetings and adventures with their (mainly) Russian friends and colleagues, who still communicate with them, strengthening this mentality of the nostalgic Soviet past on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴

To some extent, my second American book became another challenge to the so-called Muscovite paradigm in both post-Soviet Russian and Western historiography, which was dominating mainstream history writing in American studies of the Soviet Union. This was a book about the history of Soviet cultural consumption and identity formation – not in Moscow, or in Soviet Russia, but in one industrial city in Soviet Ukraine, in my “provincial” hometown – Dnipropetrovsk. Portraying a cultural situation in this multinational Soviet Ukrainian city during the Brezhnev era, I showed the gradual formation of the local Ukrainian identity vis-à-vis the Soviet identity imposed by Moscow even before the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁵ But de-

³ I refer to Sergei I. Zhuk. *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830–1917*. Baltimore and Washington, DC, 2004.

⁴ I quote my interview with Richard Stites, Philadelphia, November 21, 2008, at the 40th National Convention of the American Association for Advanced Slavic Studies. Compare with various case studies in Samuel H. Baron and Cathy A. Frierson (Eds.). *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present*. Armonk, NY, 2003.

⁵ I refer to Sergei I. Zhuk. *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnipropetrovsk, 1960–1985*. Baltimore and Washington, DC, 2010.

spite my idealization of the Ukrainian identity in this book, I still had some ambiguous feelings about my Ukraine, especially after 2010, as I closely observed the rule of the most corrupt regime (in all of Ukrainian history) of President Yanukovich and the shameful passivity and subservience of my obedient co-citizens. I did not like the Putin-style KGB oligarchy rule in Russia, but I hated the total corruption of my Ukraine even more.

My ambiguous perceptions of Ukraine changed dramatically after November 2013. By the end of February 2014, with the progress of the Maidan Revolution in Kyiv, following these revolutionary events on television, via the Internet, and in communication with my relatives and friends in Ukraine, I began to feel tremendous respect for my Ukrainian people, who challenged the regime of total corruption and overthrew the Yanukovich oligarchy of Donetsk bandits. Moreover, I felt a certain pride that my hometown of Dnipropetrovsk, led by a group of talented and patriotic Jewish Russian oligarchs such as Igor Kolomoisky, Gennadii Korban, and Boris Filatov, was able to suppress the violent reaction of local pro-Russian separatists and transform my city into a bastion of democracy, cultural and linguistic toleration, and Ukrainian patriotism in the eastern, mainly Russian-speaking, region of post-Soviet Ukraine. My entire family (with our Russian, Jewish, Ukrainian, and Greek roots) in the United States became not only the new patriots of post-Maidan anti-Soviet Ukraine but also the loyal followers of our Dnipropetrovsk leaders with their different ethnic and religious backgrounds, such as Jewish businessman Korban, Russian Orthodox Filatov, and Ukrainian nationalist Dmytro Yarosh (a head of Pravyi sektor). The Maidan Revolution and the subsequent political and social upheaval in our hometown was the final blow to the few remaining pieces of our Soviet identity. Moreover, watching Russian television and communicating with our Moscow relatives after November 2013 became a real cultural shock for our family as well. For us Maidan was a revolution of dignity, a revolt against the corrupt post-Soviet oligarchy, and we expected that ordinary Russians, who suffered from a similar oligarchic regime, would support such a revolution and express at least some solidarity with it.

But alas, the Russian media and my Moscow colleagues took a very anti-Ukrainian position, and then the Russian leadership began open aggression against Ukraine, annexing Crimea in March 2014. The long campaign of demonizing the Ukrainian Maidan Revolution, which began in Putin's controlled Russian media in November of last year, persisted in portraying the brutality and violence of the fascist Nazi Bandera followers, who participated in the American conspiracy against Russia, killing and torturing

innocent Russians and Jews all over Ukraine. As a result of this massive and professionally organized anti-Ukrainian propaganda, not only ordinary Russian consumers of TV information but also the intellectual leaders of the Russian Federation as well as prominent representatives of the Russian cultural establishment, such as the noted film director Nikita Mikhalkov and the orchestra conductor Valery Gergiev, supported Putin's aggression against Ukraine in the name of the liberation of "all Russians of Ukraine, who were threatened by the Bandera fascists."⁶

Even a famous skeptic of Putin's politics, the last Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, applauded Putin's annexation of Crimea as an act of the restoration of "historical justice," uniting the Russian territories. Meanwhile, in response to anti-Russian sanctions by the West, a popular leader of Russian state television, Dmitry Kiselev, explained to his Russian viewers that Russia is the only country capable of turning the United States into "radioactive ashes." He then went on to use animated maps to show exactly how Russia would automatically respond with nuclear missiles if command and control were attacked or disabled by a U.S. attack. Many Russian and Western scholars and experts such as Stephen Cohen and Henry Kissinger still discuss "the justified historical role" of Russia in protecting her geopolitical interests even by dismembering independent Ukraine. Some of them justified their support of Putin based on the "historical connection" and "historical rights" of Russia to the lands that Putin recently took from Ukraine.⁷

Ironically, Putin's imperial claims to Ukraine, his purely imperial project of Novorossia (the very word derived from the late imperial Russian vocabulary!!!) in eastern and southern Ukraine, and his sending of Russian military troops to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were mixed with "Soviet nostalgic" rhetoric and symbols. Leaders of the separatists in eastern Ukraine and their followers there always referred to Soviet symbolism and used Soviet cultural practices, trying to restore the Soviet political and cultural forms. Even their recent war with democratic Ukraine is presented as a kind of sequel to the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Donbass with German Nazi troops during 1941–45. Russian instructors and volunteers like Girkin (Strelkov), who became leaders of the separatist movement in Donbass in April 2014, even used the discursive practices of World War II (including Stalin's orders of 1941 about the execution of criminals in the

⁶ I quote Dmitriev.

⁷ Not everybody in Russia supports Putin's policy. Russian historians such as Andrei Zubov, and rock musicians such as Andrei Makarevich have publicly criticized Putin's aggression against Ukraine.

occupied territory) to control order in the town of Slaviansk in the Donetsk region. For many Muscovites and residents of Donbass, the best (and overly idealized) period of their lives, which they are now trying to re-create in eastern Ukraine, is the Brezhnev era of late socialism, especially of the 1970s and early 1980s. They reject the very fact of the historical existence of independent Ukraine as a new post-Soviet state.

During the spring of 2014, when I tried to disseminate various information about the political situation in Ukraine, attacked by Putin's Russia (in the Midwest Russian History Workshop and other venues of American Slavic and East European Studies), I was surprised to encounter the similar rejection of Ukraine's rights to protect its territorial integrity and the defense of Russia's historical territorial rights in both Crimea and Donbass by some of my American colleagues, historians of Russia/Soviet Union. These American Slavists criticized my pro-Ukrainian "nationalistic" position, repeating Russian mass media clichés about the "fascist, anti-Jewish, and anti-Russian" goals of Maidan, defending and justifying the reaction of the Yanukovich regime and atrocities committed by the Yanukovich police against Maidan activists. Even now, a year after Maidan, as I witnessed during recent visits to Barcelona, Berlin, and Rome, some of my American and European colleagues still try to justify the anti-Ukrainian politics of Putin's Russia as the "anti-imperialist and anti-American reaction of the Russian people."⁸

I tried to explain this position of my Western (especially, American) colleagues. And I agreed with Richard Stites's observations about the pro-Moscow sympathies of American Slavists, which I quoted above. But among many reasons for these pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian feelings of American experts in Slavic studies, one is the most important and interesting to me as a historian of cultural consumption and knowledge production. I call this reason a methodological paradigm of "historiographic Soviet nostalgia." In my opinion, this was related to a serious *paradigmatic shift* in the historical analysis of late socialism of the Soviet Union, which began with the rise of the new "revisionist" American studies of Soviet/Russian history and culture during the 1990s. If the earlier generations of American experts in

⁸ Many Western historians had already described the rise and danger of Russian nationalism and Soviet (post-Soviet) imperialism. See Ben Fowkes. *The National Question in the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev: Policy and Response* // Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle (Eds.). *Brezhnev Reconsidered*. New York, 2002. Pp. 68-89; Gerhard Simon. *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society* / Translated by Karen Forster and Oswald Forster. Boulder, 1991; Yitzhak M. Brudny. *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991*. Cambridge, MA, 1998.

Soviet studies concentrated on various contradictions and problems of late socialism (including corruption, the black market, nationalism, religiosity, political dissent, etc.), after the collapse of communism, the new scholars began emphasizing their research on the conformist practices of everyday life and consumption, dismissing or avoiding the serious internal problems and conflicts of late socialist Soviet society, which became obvious in the recent confrontation of Ukrainian nationalism and Russian/Soviet imperialist policy.⁹

During the Cold War, especially before the 1980s, Soviet society was presented as a one-dimensional, monolithic, and predictable entity on both sides of the ideological divide – in Soviet studies in the West as well as in histories of the USSR/Communist Party in the Soviet Union. Despite the prevailing different theoretical models of interpretation – a totalitarian/modernization model in the West and Orthodox Marxism-Leninism in the USSR – Soviet studies in both the capitalist West and socialist East explained the major developments in a similar way, emphasizing mostly political, economic, and ideological moments in the never-changing stability of Soviet civilization. During the 1970s and the 1980s, the sudden rise of the “revisionist” school in Western historiography, especially with the publication of brilliant studies by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Stephen Cohen, Leopold Haimson, and other Western scholars, revealed new data from the Soviet/Russian archives and introduced the fresh ideas and theories of a new social and new cultural history. A new generation of Western scholars, including Richard Stites, Vera Dunham, Laura Engelstein, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Jeffrey Brooks, and Denise Youngblood replaced the traditional one-dimensional interpretation of Soviet society with one that took into account the wealth and variety of different cultural practices that these scholars had “discovered” in the everyday lives of Soviet people. This changed the development of Soviet studies, and eventually contributed to the tremendous popularity of cultural studies among both Western and post-Soviet historians.¹⁰

⁹ Of course, many of my colleagues still addressed these issues. See, for example, Brudny. *Reinventing Russia*.

¹⁰ On revisionism in American Soviet studies, see David C. Engerman. *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts*. New York, 2009. Pp. 9, 286, 294, 305-308. On the new popularity of cultural studies and on mutual influences between Western and former Soviet scholars, see: Laura Engelstein. *Culture, Culture Everywhere: Interpretations of Modern Russia, across the 1991 Divide // Kritika*. 2001. Vol. 2. No. 2. Pp. 363-393. Soviet historians were also influenced by charismatic medievalists such as Aron Gurevich who popularized the ideas of the French *Annales* among the Soviet reading audience. On this, see Roger D. Markwick. *Cultural History under Khrushchev and Brezhnev: From Social Psychology to Mentalités // The Russian Review*. 2006. Vol. 65.

The rise of the Western “revisionist” school coincided with and was stimulated by the events of perestroika and the resulting collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. During this period, new archival collections were opened in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet states. Many former Soviet scholars could travel abroad, using the funding and resources (both financial and theoretical) of Western research centers. A unique scholarly dialogue and collaboration between the Western and former Soviet scholars were established during this time. Many talented Soviet intellectuals of various professional backgrounds, such as Serhii Plokyh (trained as a historian of early modern Ukraine), Yuri Slezkine (originally, an expert in Portuguese linguistics), Irina Paperno (trained as an expert in Russian literature and associated with the Tartu school), Dmitry Shlapentokh (a historian of France and Russia), Aleksei Yurchak (a radio engineer and producer of famous Leningrad rock bands), Andrei Znamenskii (a historian of American Indians), Vladislav Zubok (trained as an expert in U.S. politics), and myself (a historian of colonial British America), left their post-Soviet countries and joined Western academia, and now teach Soviet/Russian/Ukrainian studies in American universities. All of this experience contributed to expansion and change in the field of Soviet studies, which has today become a real international phenomenon. At the same time Soviet studies were losing their confrontational character, and stressing conformist features in Soviet historiography.¹¹

The first serious theoretical justification for the new paradigmatic shift in the direction of the conformist, nonconflict approaches to American studies of Soviet society during the Cold War was a book by a Soviet émigré from Leningrad and now anthropologist, Alexei Yurchak, who tried to explore the ideological aspects of everyday life, the theories and practices of late socialism, and discursive practices and identity formation in post-Stalin Soviet society. Yurchak investigated “internal shifts that were emerging within the Soviet system during late socialism at the level of discourse, ideology, and knowledge but that became apparent for what they were only much later, when the system collapsed.”¹² According to Yurchak, after Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization, communist ideology in Soviet society underwent

April. Pp. 283-301. See also Catriona Kelly, Hilary Pilkington, David Shepherd, and Vadim Volkov. Introduction: Why Cultural Studies // Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Eds.). *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*. New York, 1998. Pp. 1-17.

¹¹ See Engelstein. *Culture, Culture Everywhere*. P. 389ff.

¹² Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton, 2005. P. 32.

a so-called performative shift, when Stalin's authoritative discourse lost its importance and became a mere ritual for many Soviet people, who had tried to exist *vne* – outside – this communist ideological discourse since the 1950s. He used material primarily from his hometown, Leningrad, to show how different forms of cultural production and consumption of late socialism, especially rock music and Western fashions influenced Soviet youth, including Komsomol activists and officials. According to Yurchak, “rock-n-roll culture” became a part of “nonofficial discourses and practices in late socialism.” In contrast to authors such as Thomas Cushman, who insisted on the countercultural character of rock music in the Soviet Union, Yurchak argued that nonofficial practices (such as listening and playing rock-n-roll) “involved not so much countering, resisting, or opposing state power as simply *avoiding* it and carving out symbolically meaningful spaces and identities away from it. This avoidance included passive conformity to state power, pretense of supporting it, obliviousness to its ideological messages, and simultaneous involvement in completely incongruent practices and meanings behind its back.”¹³

In fact, the entire theoretical framework of Yurchak's study was directly influenced by French thinkers like Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau. According to de Certeau, in modern European society, “the imposed knowledge and symbolisms become objects manipulated by practitioners who have not produced them.” In de Certeau's interpretation, such practitioners usually subverted practices and representations that were imposed on them from within – not by rejecting or transforming them (although that occurred as well), but in many different ways. Practitioners of knowledge production “metaphorized the dominant order: they made it function in another register. They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally. They diverted it without leaving it.”¹⁴ These ideas, combined with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *authoritative discourse*, became the foundation of Yurchak's theoretical framework.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid. Pp. 36-76. This thesis had already been criticized and analyzed by Sheila Fitzpatrick in *London Review of Books* (2006. Vol. 28. No. 10. Pp. 18-20), and by Kevin Platt and Benjamin Nathans in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* (2010. No. 101. Pp. 167-184), and in Kevin Platt and Benjamin Nathans. *Socialist in Form, Indeterminate in Content: The Ins and Outs of Late Soviet Culture // Ab Imperio*. 2011. No. 2. Pp. 301-323.

¹⁴ Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life / Translated by Steven Rendall*. Berkeley, 1989 [1984]. P. 31.

¹⁵ As he explained, “for Bakhtin, authoritative discourse coheres around a strict external idea or dogma... and occupies a particular position within the discursive regime of a period,” while “all other types of discourse are organized around it.” Yurchak. Everything

As Yurchak argued, an obsession with Western cultural products became the most important feature of cultural consumption in the closed socialist society of the post-Stalin era during the Cold War. Yurchak focused especially on the cultural and discursive phenomenon known among social scientists as the “Imaginary West.”¹⁶ According to Yurchak, the “Imaginary West” is “a local cultural construct and imaginary that was based on the forms of knowledge and aesthetics associated with the ‘West,’ but does not necessarily refer to any ‘real’ West, and that also contributed to ‘de-territorializing’ the world of everyday socialism from within.”¹⁷ Yurchak rejects the confrontational/countercultural character of the “imaginary West” in Soviet cultural consumption. He offers a consensual/conformist interpretation of this metaphor. Using the ideas of the Russian cultural critic Tatyana Cherednichenko, Yurchak tries to show how Western music (as a part of “the Imaginary West”) contributed to “the production of a whole generational identity” for the last Soviet generation.¹⁸ At the same time, he ignores the problems of regional, national, and religious identities that were shaped by the consumption of Western cultural products in various parts of the Soviet Union. Yurchak discarded connections between Soviet dissidents and the idea of the West, which was very important for the practice of political dissent in the USSR. Yurchak’s interpretation exaggerates the role of discursive practices. In his interpretation the visual elements, especially Western films, lost their role for influencing both ideological discourse and the local identity of Soviet consumers.¹⁹ Therefore, Yurchak

Was Forever. P. 14. See especially an American edition of Bakhtin’s work with insightful comments in Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays* by Mikhail Bakhtin / Ed. by Michael Holquist. Austin, 1994. Pp. 342-343. Compare with Slava Gerovitch. *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics*. Cambridge, MA, 2004; Stephen Lovell. *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*. New York, 2000; Juliane Fürst. *Stalin’s Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism*. New York, 2010.

¹⁶ Various scholars used this metaphor before Yurchak. See: Gordon K. Lewis. *The Growth of the Modern West Indies*. New York, 1968. Pp. 57ff.; Robert D. English. *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War*. New York, 2000. P. 22.

¹⁷ Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever*. Pp. 34-35, 161-162.

¹⁸ See Tatyana Cherednichenko. *Tipologiya sovetskoi massovoi kul’tury. Mezhdubrezhnevym i Pugachevoi*. Moscow, 1994.

¹⁹ Most of Yurchak’s material and interviews are from the Leningrad area. Moreover, a majority of his material and information came from the educated elite of this city, loyal representatives of the Soviet middle and upper classes, and conformist Soviet intellectuals from Leningrad. He entirely ignores working-class youth, the major consumers of heavy

interprets Soviet society during late socialism as a society devoid of any serious social problems or conflicts. His study ignores the prevalent problems of this period, including the involvement of Soviet officials in black market activities, Russification, street-gang culture, popular religiosity, nationalism, and anti-Semitism. Yurchak also underestimated the importance of the KGB and police interference in the cultural consumption of late socialism, which especially affected the provincial cities, where the majority of Soviet youth lived.²⁰

Yurchak's study attracted many American and post-Soviet scholars, who were tired of the traditional emphasis on political and other dissidents, and who wanted "more positive and friendly approaches toward defeated and humiliated (by the West) post-Soviet Russians, who lost their Soviet Empire at the end of the Cold War."²¹ Yurchak's ideas influenced new studies of postwar Soviet history, especially the history of Soviet youth. One of the best books on Soviet postwar youth – "Stalin's last generation" – demonstrated an obvious following of Yurchak's ideas and approaches. According to Juliane Fürst (who follows Yurchak verbatim), the result of this socialist imagination was the creation of a socialist "modernist" culture of late Stalinism as "a complicated conglomerate of performative practices, collective habits, individual mechanisms of survival, strategies of self-improvement, and segregated spaces for action, all of which were linked and interacted with each other in the person of the Soviet subject and citizen."²² But in contrast to Yurchak, Fürst not only used material from Soviet capital cities, such as Leningrad and Moscow, but also introduced archival documents from various Russian and Ukrainian regional archives and created a lively picture of cultural consumption among Soviet young people during the late 1940s and early 1950s. To some extent, she tremendously enriched the historiographi-

metal and adventure films in Soviet society. Another problem with Yurchak's study is his uncritical attitude to interviews. Many of Yurchak's interviewees tended to idealize or exaggerate their "socialist experience" as being without conflicts, in contrast to the brutal reality of "bandit capitalism" during the Yeltsin era. In many cases, using his "speech acts" approach, Yurchak took his interviewees' information at face value, uncritically, without checking archival sources. About his methods, see Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever*. Pp. 29-33.

²⁰ Even the list of forbidden rock bands, which Yurchak published in his book, came from the Ukrainian provincial town of Nikolaev. With only a few exceptions, all of Yurchak's information is derived from his hometown, Leningrad/St. Petersburg. See Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever*. Pp. 214-215.

²¹ Interview with Richard Stites, Philadelphia, November 21, 2008.

²² Fürst. *Stalin's Last Generation*. P. 26.

cal terrain of late Stalinism, based on classical studies of the Soviet/Russian historian Elena Zubkova, and added new concepts of Western cultural studies, including Yurchak's ideas.²³ Unfortunately, in her new research about the Soviet youth and the Soviet hippies, Fürst also demonstrates, to some extent, her own fascination with the Soviet (Moscow-centered) model of socialist civilization (which ignores the serious regional differences existing among various Soviet youth subcultures) by suggesting the existence of a single, one for all, Soviet cultural experience.²⁴

Now it is difficult to imagine recent Soviet and post-Soviet studies in the West, especially in the United States, without obligatory citations from Yurchak's study. Following Yurchak, even Donald Raleigh's good oral history studies still stress the nonconflict "positive" side of Soviet history. His recent book is the first known Soviet oral history study by a Western scholar that is based exclusively on personal oral interviews as the only primary sources, and uses the oral history method in presenting and analyzing these interviews.²⁵ Raleigh interviewed sixty 1967 graduates of two Soviet magnet schools offering intensive instruction in English, one in Moscow and one in provincial Saratov. This project began as an extension of his previous book – *Russia's Sputnik Generation* – which contained only the Saratov interviews with former graduates of Saratov's School no. 42.²⁶ Some of the major characters from the first book and their interviews play an important role in this new book as well. What is more original in the new book is the addition of interviews with Muscovites, which created an important social and cultural dimension for the historical comparison of two different but elitist cohorts of Soviet students from two elite schools specializing in

²³ Ibid. Pp. 25, 100, 103, 297, 301, 362. Compare with Elena Zubkova. *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* / Translated and edited by Hugh Ragdale. Armonk, NY, 1998. Trying to avoid the excessive conceptualization of Yurchak the anthropologist, the historian Vladislav Zubok wrote an excellent study of postwar Soviet intellectuals, whom he called "Zhivago's Children," in reference to the eponymous hero of Boris Pasternak's novel. See Vladislav Zubok. *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia*. Cambridge, MA, 2009. This project originated from his excellent study of the Cold War, idem. *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*. Chapel Hill, 2007.

²⁴ Cf.: Juliane Fürst. *Where Did All the Normal People Go: Another Look at the Soviet 1970s* // *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*. 2013. Vol. 14. No. 3. Pp. 621-640.

²⁵ Donald J. Raleigh. *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation*. New York, 2012.

²⁶ Donald J. Raleigh. *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives*. Bloomington, 2006.

English – one from the “closed” Soviet provincial city of Saratov, and the other from the center of Soviet civilization, the capital city of Moscow. Unfortunately, the serious social and political problems, including the rise of Russian nationalism, feelings of the exclusive Muscovite sociocultural position in the Soviet cultural hierarchy, and the psychological foundations of Soviet Russian imperialism completely disappeared from Raleigh’s oral history of “Soviet baby boomers.”

For many American experts in Soviet studies, the nonconfrontational, conformist, and “emotionally positive” approaches to the analysis of Soviet and post-Soviet society and culture, as offered by Yurchak, became the most popular theoretical model, which led to very dangerous epistemological and methodological consequences. This “conformist” model allowed the very serious “brewing” problems of Soviet Russian imperialism and Russian nationalism to be ignored. Confronted with the “unexpected” Maidan Revolution in Ukraine, which rejected all of the premises and elements of the pro-Russian and pro-Moscow theoretical model of recent Soviet/post-Soviet studies, American Sovietologists and historians of Russia and the Soviet Union were unprepared to discard their favorable historiographical concepts of the conformist late socialist Soviet past. That is why they distanced themselves from these “controversial” Ukrainian developments, denying their historical validity, and associating themselves with more familiar and predictable developments in post-Soviet Russia. In the historical imagination of the experts in Soviet/post-Soviet studies, the Ukrainian Maidan became the real *last anti-Soviet revolution*, which rejected and destroyed the traditionally accepted Moscow-centered and Russian-focused (in fact, Russian imperialist) approaches to an analysis of recent political, social, cultural, and economic developments in the post-Soviet space.

SUMMARY

Sergei I. Zhuk sees the same reason as an explanation for why many American experts in Russian studies and Russian scholars oppose the Ukrainian revolution and solidarize with the foreign policy of Putin’s regime. In their historical imagination, the Ukrainian Maidan became the real last anti-Soviet revolution, which rejected and destroyed the traditionally accepted Moscow-centered and Russian-focused (in fact, Russian imperialist) approaches to an analysis of recent political, social, cultural, and economic developments in the post-Soviet space. As such, this

revolution challenged nonconfrontational, conformist, and “emotionally positive” approaches to the analysis of Soviet and post-Soviet society and culture, which have become the most popular theoretical model and have dangerous epistemological and methodological consequences. Unwilling to discard their favorable historiographical concepts of the conformist late socialist Soviet past, many American and Russian scholars preferred to distance themselves from “controversial” Ukrainian developments, denying their historical validity, and associating themselves with more familiar and predictable developments in post-Soviet Russia. Thus, a particular epistemological choice necessitates a very special political decision.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Тот факт, что многие американские русисты и российские исследователи заняли антиукраинскую позицию и поддержали внешнеполитический курс путинского режима, Сергей Жук объясняет общими мотивами. Они разделяют историческое воображение, в котором Майдан предстает как последняя и окончательная антисоветская революция, отвергающая и разрушающая традиционный и привычный москвациентричный и россиецентричный (по сути, российский империалистический) подход к анализу политических, социальных, культурных и экономических процессов на постсоветском пространстве. Украинская революция бросила вызов определенному типу интерпретации позднесоветского и постсоветского общества – как неконфронтационного, конформистского и эмоционально позитивного. Эта интерпретация в последнее время превратилась в наиболее влиятельную теоретическую модель, с крайне опасными эпистемологическими и методологическими последствиями. Не желая расставаться с прочно утвердившимися историографическими шаблонами о конформистском позднесоветском обществе, многие американские и российские исследователи предпочли отстраниться от “противоречивых” украинских событий, отрицая их историческую значимость и солидаризируясь со столь знакомой и предсказуемой социально-политической динамикой в постсоветской России. Таким образом, определенный эпистемологический выбор повлек за собой весьма специфическое политическое решение.