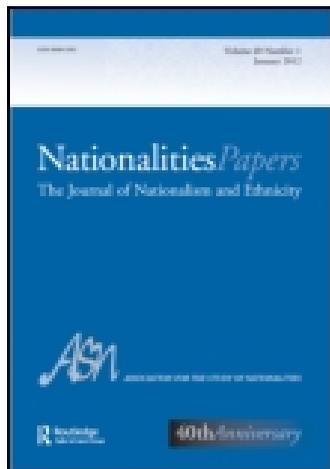


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## A Soviet West: nationhood, regionalism, and empire in the annexed western borderlands

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This article considers the role the Soviet Union's western borderlands annexed during World War II played in the evolution of Soviet politics of empire. Using the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine as case studies, it argues that Sovietization had a profound impact on these borderlands, integrating them into a larger Soviet polity. However, guerrilla warfare and Soviet policy-making indirectly led to these regions becoming perceived as more Western and nationalist than other parts of the Soviet Union. The Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine differed in their engagement with the Western capitalist world. Different experiences of World War II and late Stalinism and contacts with the West ultimately led to this region becoming Soviet, yet different from the rest of the Soviet Union. While the Soviet West was far from uniform, perceived differences between it and the rest of the Soviet Union justified claims at the end of the 1980s that the Soviet Union was an empire rather than a family of nations.

**Keywords:** Soviet Union; Ukraine; Baltic Republics; nationalism; culture

The end of the Soviet Union began at its western borderlands annexed during World War II. By the end of the 1980s, protests here gave rise to political movements aimed at ending Soviet rule. In early March 1990 Lithuania became the first republic to secede from the Soviet Union. Latvia and Estonia soon followed. With the failure of the August 1991 coup, foreign governments granted them recognition as independent states. Meanwhile, pro-independence movements flared up in parts of Western Ukraine annexed to the USSR at the end of World War II. In March 1990, the very month Lithuania declared independence, Lviv, Western Ukraine's cultural, economic, and political center, elected a non-communist government and proceeded to dismantle the institutions and symbols of Soviet rule. In the fall, Lviv residents took down their Lenin monument, many months before their counterparts in Moscow and Leningrad did. All of the Lviv Region's 24 representatives elected to Ukraine's Supreme Soviet in 1990 later supported that body's vote for Ukraine's declaration of independence on 24 August 1991. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union was no more. The leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus agreed to create a Commonwealth of Independent States, a body that paved the way for all three countries to become nation-states in their own right.

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The western borderlands represented compromises with Soviet realities that could come apart quickly, as seen with an oral interview I conducted with Oresta, a woman from Lviv born in 1957. Oresta knew nothing about the Stalinist terror conducted in the western borderlands during World War II and after, including its impact on her own family. She enjoyed being a member of the Pioneers, the youth organization for early school-age students, and she became an enthusiastic Komsomol activist in school. Back then, she saw communism as a noble idea, but her childhood was nevertheless marked by a sense of being different. While on summer vacation in Kyiv with other children at the age of 10, she acquired the nickname “Banderivka,” as she was the only child at camp who spoke Ukrainian and was from Lviv. Oresta at first did not understand what this nickname meant, but then realized that people called Lvivians “Banderivtsy,” and that it was a harmless nickname. Still, it is very telling that she gave this incident as an example of how, as she put it, “Life gradually hinted to me why things aren’t right and why my parents are silent [about the past].”<sup>1</sup>

This article deals with what I will call a “Soviet West” and postwar developments that made it possible for this idealistic Pioneer to acquire a nickname associated with Stepan Bandera and the anti-Soviet insurgency inspired by his movement. It focuses on how two key elements of this “Soviet West” – the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine – played an important role in the postwar Soviet Union’s evolution as an empire. The legacy of German, Polish, and Swedish rule in the Baltic Republics, as well as the legacy of Polish and Austrian rule in Western Ukraine, created national identities that compelled Soviet leaders to make compromises as they imposed Soviet institutions, practices, and values from the interwar Soviet Union on natives (Szporluk 1975). In the case of Eastern Galicia, because of past ties with Austria–Hungary and Poland, Ukrainians lacked a sense of inferiority to Russians experienced among their counterparts in pre-1939 Ukraine. Roman Szporluk writes,

Russia did not impress the West Ukrainians as a higher civilization, and their spiritual leader [the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church] resided in Rome, not in Moscow . . . . Vienna, not Moscow, was the place where they wanted to study. (2000)

Nonetheless, elements of a Soviet identity emerged, as seen with Oresta’s enthusiasm for the Komsomol. Locals learned to accept such things as a centrally planned economy, one-party rule, and a sense of belonging to a larger Soviet homeland. Some, particularly those born after World War II, including those who became dissidents, embraced the ideals of Soviet socialism. Intellectuals learned to work within the framework of socialist realism in art, music, and literature, and scholars utilized teachings from the Marxist–Leninist canon to legitimize their fields of inquiry. Within a decade after the annexation of this area to the Soviet Union, the “capitalist West” remained as foreign to residents of the Soviet western borderlands as much as it did to fellow Soviet citizens deep in the heartland of republics like Soviet Russia.

As noted by Roman Szporluk, the “Soviet West” or “Far Eastern Europe” escapes simple definitions. At best, we can say it consists of regions along the Soviet Union’s western frontier annexed some 20 years after the revolutions of 1917 produced the Soviet Union. These regions themselves had greatly different historical experiences under empires that had dominated them: Sweden in the case of Estonia, Latvia, and territories formerly belonging to Finland; the German Empire for Russia’s Kaliningrad Region (formerly the northern half of East Prussia); the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for Lithuania, nearly all of Western Ukraine, and Western Belarus; the Habsburg Empire for much of Western Ukraine; and the Ottoman Empire for Moldova and part of Western

Ukraine (Bukovyna) (Szporluk 2000, 259–261). Western Ukraine itself was a postwar Soviet construction of regions that had experienced rule under different states that had emerged in Eastern Europe after World War I: Poland (for Volhynia and Eastern Galicia), Czechoslovakia (for the Subcarpathian Region); and Romania (for Bukovyna). While acknowledging these different historical legacies' impact on Sovietization, I suggest a more nuanced Soviet West than what Szporluk's path-breaking work has argued for. Rather than viewing the region as the least Soviet, my article turns to the peculiar Soviet identities that emerged in the western borderlands.

Sovietization of the region significantly shaped what became a Soviet West, but historical ties with more western neighbors, diaspora communities in the capitalist West, and natives' responses to postwar repressions reinforced a complicated relationship with the rest of the Soviet Union. The loss of statehood for the Baltic Republics, as well as armed resistance to Soviet rule, made the Sovietization of the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine, together with Western Ukraine's unofficial capital Lviv, much more complicated than the Sovietization of such newly acquired western regions as western Belarus or Moldova. This article argues that the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine as a Soviet West became a western nationalist other deemed politically unreliable or in need of some accommodation. At the same time, the Soviet West was not uniform. Some parts of it were perceived to be in greater contact with the "real" West (such as Estonia, with its contacts with Finland). In relying on published memoirs, published and tape-recorded interviews, and secondary sources dealing with intellectuals from the western borderlands, this article finds that often the most avid consumers of cultural products from intermediaries like Poland or Finland or friends of fellow nationals in the West were intellectuals at odds with the Soviet state. Tensions with the state were probably much more muted or nonexistent for other social groups in the Soviet West.<sup>2</sup> The western borderlands could be places of contact between capitalist West and Soviet East, but also places of greater policing and surveillance of the Western other (Weiner 2006). Local and republic Communist Party reports for Ukraine, KGB materials of Ukrainian dissidents' trials, and published versions of censorship reports from Latvian archives become prime examples of such policing, and they may exaggerate the nature of nonconformity and dissent this article mentions. Nonetheless, while the Soviet West demonstrated effective Soviet postwar practices of empire, these practices provided the potential for open dissent that intellectuals and dissidents articulated in the Soviet public sphere at the end of the 1980s.

### **Embracing Soviet identities**

The Soviet annexation of the western borderlands was a messy affair, leading to a different way of being Soviet than other regions of the pre-1939 Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> The initial Soviet occupation of 1939–1941 was followed by Nazi occupation in 1941 and the Soviet re-conquest of the region in 1944–1945. The Holocaust, mass flight to the West, wartime and postwar deportations, as well as the in-migration of new labor forces from the interwar Soviet Union greatly altered the population. Locals had collaborated with the Nazis to varying degrees. They bore at least some responsibility for the mass murder of Jews and others. Ukrainian nationalists killed around 40,000–60,000 Poles in the Western Ukrainian region of Volhynia (Snyder 2003). Collaboration with the Nazis compromised people's careers and became official justification for arbitrary repressions of the local population after the war. In the immediate years after World War II, Sovietization produced a civil war between Soviet forces and local nationalist forces. It pitted Soviet authorities against a large number of local inhabitants subject to terror and deportations. Sovietization also

created tensions between nationalist activists and the local population at large, many of whom came to perceive stability under Soviet rule as the “lesser evil.” Finally, while promising greater social justice and national self-expression than the old regimes of the region, Sovietization resulted in outsiders dominating Communist Party leadership positions, as well as leadership positions in state security, military, and economic apparatuses, in most of the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine as late as the end of the 1980s (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, 81–83, 132, 140–149, 207, 281; Risch 2011, 70, 71).

Because Soviet rule was violently imposed from outside and highly divisive, many locals viewed the Soviet state as colonial. Members of Western Ukraine’s intelligentsia shared such views about the state when it deported Ukrainian Lvivians in 1947. In one Soviet secret police report on Lvivians’ responses to the deportations, M.D. Drahan, assistant director of the Museum of Ukrainian Art, allegedly said, “The Soviet state is just like the tsarist state of Peter I. Russian Communists conduct themselves in Western Ukraine like harsh imperialists, only they hide under the flag of brotherhood of the same blood” (Slyvka, Halaichak, and Luts’kyi 1995, 471). In the 1960s, Western Ukrainian villagers who came of age after the Stalin era circulated propaganda suggesting that the Soviet Union resembled other colonial empires.<sup>4</sup>

However, Soviet rule in the western borderlands also offered opportunities for locals to advance and acquire a sense of belonging to a Soviet family of nations. Soviet leaders nationalized urban space in the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine. In Lviv, local officials nationalized the city’s urban space by giving Polish educational and cultural institutions to Ukrainians, renaming streets named for Polish historical figures with Ukrainian ones, co-opting existing Ukrainian institutions like the Museum of Ukrainian Art, and removing or letting fall into neglect monuments for Poles and Jews (Risch 2011, 41–45). Soviet officials made Vilnius into a Lithuanian city, satisfying the ambitions of romantic Lithuanian nationalists from the nineteenth century. Besides deporting most of the city’s prewar Polish population, they renamed Polish street names with Lithuanian ones and highlighted the city’s Lithuanian national roots (Weeks 2006, 2007).

By the time of Khrushchev’s Thaw, Party and state institutions and members of the local intelligentsia sought to challenge or expand official historical narratives, however unequal these compromises were. Lithuania’s Communist leadership tolerated republishing the works of cultural figures from the bourgeois past, including the composer and painter Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis. Historical memories of the recent past made the compromises tenuous. In making figures like Čiurlionis acceptable members of Soviet Lithuanian culture, Party and state leaders wound up encouraging public debates on historical themes that fueled support for Lithuania’s political opposition at the end of the 1980s (Ritter 2003, 104). In Lviv, the 1956 rehabilitation of the Communist Party of Western Ukraine (KPZU) indirectly led to historians questioning such themes as the formation of the West Ukrainian People’s Republic (ZUNR) in 1918, seeing it as part of a workers’ revolution rather than a bourgeois nationalist putsch (Risch 2011, 150, 152).

The vulnerability of the compromises between Soviet apparatchiks and members of the creative intelligentsia could be seen with myths about the Latvian Red Riflemen. These myths legitimated the Soviet Latvian state, since the riflemen fought for Soviet power in the October Revolution of 1917 and later in the Russian Civil War. However, many of the soldiers, after service in the Tsarist army, went on to fight for an independent Latvian state in 1918 and 1919.<sup>5</sup> Those Latvian Red Riflemen who stayed in the Soviet Union became victims of the 1937 Great Terror. Along with other Latvians who chose to serve the Soviet state, they were subsequently rehabilitated during Khrushchev’s Thaw, but talking about the victims of Stalinist terror became a sore point for Soviet

Latvian officials once the Thaw ended. Thus Latvian Communist Linards Laicens, a victim of the Great Terror, was not only rehabilitated during Khrushchev's Thaw, but also memorialized with a museum near Alūksne. A local school history teacher, Harijs Auseklis, director of this museum, claimed that he was threatened by neo-Stalinists after the Thaw, because Laicens had been repressed. The KGB sent agents to attend his museum tours as "visitors," and the Alūksne KGB chief himself visited once (Auseklis 2011, 425). Laicens's biography bothered not just the KGB, but also Riga's censors. A 1978 secret report by the Latvian *Glavlit* chief to the Central Committee in Riga claimed that "unjustified attention" had been paid to victims of Stalin's cult of personality like Linards Laicens. Materials proposed for publication in the journal *Zvaigzne* for 1977 mentioned the closing of the Latvian book publisher Prometejs in Moscow and Laicens's death at the end of the 1930s. Censors also objected to a biography mentioning a postwar meeting of the Soviet Latvian journal *Karogs* where someone claimed Laicens was an "enemy of the people" and no one stood up to criticize him (Strods 2011, 261, 262).

Critiques of the bourgeois nationalist past also produced unintended consequences in the western borderlands. Party and state leaders in the Baltic Republics pointed to the authoritarian regimes that had come to power in all three states by the mid-1930s, noting their fascist attributes (Ritter 2003, 90). This discrediting of the independence period resonated somewhat among Latvians. Latvian life stories collected after 1991 included those with negative memories of the era of the Kārlis Ulmanis dictatorship (1934–1940) (Klimovičs 2011, 54, 241, 298, 299, 369, 415, 416). On the other hand, Soviet Latvian authorities tolerated and coopted symbols from the Ulmanis era, like the Freedom Monument, erected in the center of Riga in 1935, and Riga's Brethren Cemetery, whose main memorial complex was completed when Ulmanis was in power (1936). Soviet-era guidebooks connected the monuments to class themes or universal themes about war (Debrer 1982, 66–70, 73–75). However, other texts threatened to give such monuments further significance. A 1976 Latvian *Glavlit* report indicated that censors had to remove parts of a *Karogs* journal article on Riga monuments by writer Edgars Domburs that claimed these monuments did not deserve to be forgotten or labeled reactionary, as they were symbols that "fostered the interests of the democratic intelligentsia and the working people" despite their bourgeois reactionary origins (Strods 2011, 251). The Freedom Monument remained as a symbol of Latvian independence for locals, becoming the site of the first public protests against Soviet rule in Latvia in 1987 (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, 307).

Soviet power therefore accommodated local identities, including national ones connected with the pre-Soviet past, in order to give Soviet rule legitimacy among the natives. However, as with other colonial projects, these were asymmetrical compromises with natives (Cooper 2005). Locals' responses varied, from acceptance to veiled hostility. An example of this could be seen with the impact of Lviv's surviving prewar intelligentsia on younger counterparts during the Thaw years. Postwar Sovietization of Western Ukraine led to this small elite becoming loyal to Soviet power, promoting the ideals of Soviet socialism and brotherhood with Great Russians, and condemning their involvement with the region's "bourgeois nationalist" past.<sup>6</sup> They became role models for younger Ukrainians who migrated to the city from small towns and villages in Western Ukraine, teaching them how to be good Soviet citizens (Amar 2006, 467). However, the older generation did not produce a completely stable Soviet Western Ukrainian identity for their younger peers. This could be seen with composer Stanislav Liudkevych. Local press coverage of his 100th birthday in 1979 emphasized his symphonic works' contributions to Russian–Ukrainian friendship (Iarosevych 1979, 2). One Lviv poet writing for a Kyiv newspaper mentioned Liudkevych's collaboration with other Galician intellectuals in producing the

first Ukrainian translation of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (Liubkivs'kyi 1979, 3). However, during the Thaw, students and intellectuals circulated an anecdote attributed to Liudkevych suggesting his own skepticism toward the new Soviet order. Allegedly Liudkevych, then in his 70s, had said the following at a congress of composers in Soviet Ukraine's capital, Kyiv:

We endured Austria–Hungary, and the patchwork empire was no longer on the earth; we suffered Polish occupation and waited for golden September [September 1939, when Soviet power came to Western Ukraine]; we even endured the horrible fascist occupation – the occupier was killed; and now dear Soviet power came to us – and there's nothing we can do about it! (Ivanychuk 1993, 80, 81)

Liudkevych's remark hardly expressed enthusiasm for the Soviet project. Liudkevych and other Ukrainian Galicians admired the Soviet state's Ukrainianization of Soviet Ukraine's cultural and educational institutions and media in the 1920s, but they found out about the famine that killed millions in Ukraine in 1932–1933 and later the repression of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. They did not share the enthusiasm for Stalin's revolution from above, which Russian intellectuals like Boris Pasternak once had (Zubok 2009).

Popular memories of the bourgeois past, shared by people from a variety of backgrounds, made it easier to approach the Soviet order with the irony displayed by intellectuals like Liudkevych. In Riga's Forest Cemetery, Latvians visited the graves of independent Latvia's first president, Jānis Čakste, and its first foreign minister, Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, on the anniversary of Latvia's independence (18 November 1918), leaving candles, flowers in the national colors of red and white, and red ribbons. In 1968, a young Jūris Podnieks, later famous for his Soviet documentary film *Is It Easy to be Young?* (1986), was caught by KGB agents when he tried to film graves decorated for the anniversary (Fasta 2010, 256). Similarly, Estonians regularly laid flowers on the grave of Julius Kuperjanov, a hero of Estonia's war for independence, in a Tartu cemetery, thus honoring a symbol of Estonia's bourgeois nationalist past (Taagepera 1993, 101). In Lviv, the graves of Sich Riflemen who had fought for the ZUNR in 1918–1919 became pilgrimage sites for people on All Saints' Day, 1 November (which was the anniversary of the ZUNR's declaration of independence in 1918) (Risch 2011, 170, 171). These actions symbolized defiance of official representations of the region's past. Local memories circulating underground thus had the potential to form the basis for new historical myths challenging Soviet rule at the end of the 1980s.

Still, as officials and intelligentsia created public consensus over the western borderland's recent past, locals made compromises with the realities of Soviet life. Collections of life stories of Estonians and Latvians who remembered the war and sometimes events preceding it suggest locals' adaptation to Soviet realities, though not without conflicting emotions about it. A metal worker, Artūrs Mažaiks, born in 1927, from the western Latvian city of Liepāja, recalled joining the Communist Party in 1952 or 1953 to get a better-paying job working in the furnaces (2011, 102). After joining the Party, he was elected as a delegate to the Twelfth Komsomol Congress in Moscow in 1954, and later he was a member of the republic Komsomol's Central Committee for about two years. Reflecting on this brief time in the upper echelons of the Komsomol, Mažaiks said, "There was no joy. I was paid for work, I was given time off, but others looked askance at me. They didn't like me." He recalled younger coworkers who had been deported in 1941 or who had served in the Latvian branch of the Waffen-SS acting very cautiously around him (2011, 103).

Mažaiks's story resembled those told by others in Latvia and Estonia of joining the Party because they had to.<sup>7</sup> Joining the Party meant opportunities to become directors of

schools or factories (Šļukuma 2011, 156; Zālītis 2011, 349). Party membership gave one Latvian soviet executive committee chair greater political cache with the local bureaucracy that constantly hampered local government work (Dukāts 2011, 379).

At the same time, it appears that joining the Party was not just a practical move for many indigenous inhabitants of the Soviet West. Mažaiks' life story suggests that at one time he shared the idealism of Soviet socialism, at least in his youth:

In the postwar years they inoculated, told, and explained to us that the USSR is a happy place. And at that age people could be brainwashed with anything. And, if they didn't know what was going on behind the curtains ... Only much later I understood. I found out about this much later.

It was only at the beginning of the 1970s that he understood that communism stood no chance of winning worldwide, and this was after a very gradual discovery of more information (Mažaiks 2011, 103).

Some Western Ukrainians also adapted to Soviet realities in a similar fashion. Besides those who joined the Komsomol and the Party out of necessity, some were at least partly drawn to the ideals of Soviet socialism. Lviv poet Dmytro Pavlychko, born in 1928 in the Ivano-Frankivsk Region, had flirted with a local Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) youth group and was briefly arrested in 1945. He became an outspoken critic of Russification in Lviv during the early Thaw years. Roman Szporluk, a Polish citizen who met Pavlychko in November 1957, recalled to me in an e-mail on 16 October 2009 that Pavlychko was "very anti-Soviet" in private conversations: he blamed the Soviet secret police for the murder of Iaroslav Halan, a local communist-leaning writer, in October 1949 because of the latter's anti-Soviet views. Still, in 1998 Pavlychko admitted that at one time he had thought highly of Lenin's ideals of social and national liberation, convinced that the Soviet Union championed freedom and justice in the world. For many years, he blamed local officials – in Lviv and Kyiv – rather than Moscow for causing Russification in Soviet Ukraine (Mushynka 1999, 130, 131). Such conflicting views also affected those born after the war with no memories of the national insurgency or the Soviet repression of it. This could be seen in the life story of Lviv poet and journalist Bohdan Zalizniak. Born in 1946 in Galicia, he said that he knew from family members, former clergy members of the abolished Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, that Soviet power was "the Antichrist." He personally sensed that the state was "Bolshevik" and "imposed [*nakynutyi*] on us." Nonetheless, he was interested in what life under communism would be like in 1980.<sup>8</sup>

The empire's leading cities of Moscow and Leningrad attracted young people from the western borderlands. Just as Pavlychko believed true defenders of Soviet socialism concentrated in Moscow, younger Lvivians saw Moscow offering ample opportunities for literary and artistic expression in the 1970s and 1980s (Riabczuk 2000, 226, 227, 236, 237). Young Latvians who used to hang out at Riga's young people's café, "The Goat" [*Kaza*], from 1962 to 1970, recalled avidly reading Russian-language texts published in Moscow, including Ilya Ehrenburg's memoirs of life in interwar Paris (Valtpēters, Kronberga, and Aizpuriete 2010, 59, 185). Friends from The Goat went to an international film festival in Moscow in 1963, where they had a chance to watch Italian Neorealist films like Federico Fellini's *8½*, which movie theaters in Riga did not show until some 20 years later (94, 195). They attended exhibits of abstract French artists, including Picasso and Matisse, at a major exhibit in Moscow's Sokolniki district in 1961 (94). Young Estonians, too, drew on cultural life in Moscow for their intellectual development. Astrophysicist Ene Ergma (born 1944), recalling her years as a university student in Moscow, stressed that

Moscow in the 1960s was an intellectual Mecca for herself and other Estonians. It was here that they read and copied the semi-legal works of Mikhail Bulgakov and attended unforgettable concerts and theater performances. “I would hardly be who I am today without Moscow and its cultural life,” she said (Ergma 2009, 483, 484).

The Soviet West can thus be understood as a space where new ideas of Sovietness developed, shaped by compromises between local inhabitants and state and Party institutions. The compromises could be renegotiated as political circumstances shifted. During Khrushchev’s Thaw, new historical narratives allowed for official acceptance of people and events connected with the bourgeois nationalist past, while the Thaw’s end seriously damaged some of these narratives, especially those involving victims of Stalinism. Younger generations attracted to some of Soviet socialism’s ideals in the 1950s and 1960s lost faith in those ideals during Brezhnev’s stagnation. The fact that Party leaders had the ultimate say over what constituted acceptable historical memory made even visits to cemeteries potential acts of political resistance.

### Local cultural capital and the Soviet West

For the new intelligentsia emerging in the Soviet West, older generations not only fostered a more ironic stance toward Soviet socialism, but also provided cultural capital connected with interwar Central and Eastern Europe. Vytautas Landsbergis, who later went on to become president of independent Lithuania, recalled the great impression his Vilnius Conservatory professor had on him and his classmates. She “lectured without political propaganda and certainly without Soviet ideology.” She instilled in them a love for collecting Lithuanian folk songs through ethnographic expeditions to the countryside (Landsbergis 2000, 43, 44). Landsbergis suggests this prewar era professor fostered a Lithuanian national culture free of the restraints of postwar Soviet institutions. Some senior intellectuals also earned the respect of younger Lvivians – who were either their students or graduate students – because of their perceived distance from official ideology and state bureaucrats. Like the historian Ivan Kryp’iakevych, director of the Institute of Social Sciences from 1953 to 1962, they stood in stark contrast to the careerists, opportunists, and carpetbaggers who were Soviet functionaries (Kots’-Hryhorchuk 2001, 636).

Furthermore, younger generations found connections to an imagined West through publications from World War II or the interwar period. Vytautas Landsbergis recalls the great impact his parents’ generation’s libraries had on him and his friends. The private libraries had books from prewar and German-occupied Lithuania and books from Soviet Russia later banned in the Stalin era (Landsbergis 2000, 42, 50, 51). Landsbergis claims reading a prewar Lithuanian translation of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and a prewar Russian translation of Henrik Ibsen’s *Enemy of the People* (a play not published by the Soviets then) made him realize that the individual mattered more than the larger Soviet collective (51, 52). Young Latvians who gathered at Riga’s The Goat circulated texts from Latvia’s independence period and stories about such things as the Soviet terror against Latvians in 1940–1941, deportations of Latvians in 1941 and 1949, and some general facts about Latvia’s independence (Valtpēters, Kronberga, and Aizpuriete 2010, 22).

Reading these materials did not necessarily make one anti-Soviet. Landsbergis argues that such publications put him on an anti-Soviet path, yet it is curious that he mentions Soviet-era publications banned in the Stalin era as part of his secret readings. This suggests he may have had affinities for the Soviet project at least in its pre-Stalinist mold. Underground reading likewise did not necessarily make young Lvivians anti-Soviet. In the late

1950s and 1960s, one group of them discovered the works of Dmytro Dontsov, as well as copies of the literary and political journal he edited in interwar Lwów, *The Literary-Scholarly Journal*. The journal gave them information about both Russian and Ukrainian literature and Ukrainian history left out of Soviet publications and school lessons (Hubka 2001, 291–293). Dontsov, a writer and political commentator, was known for his anti-Soviet views and the espousal of Ukrainian integral nationalism. As Taras Kurylo mentions in his 4 March 2012 blog for *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, Dontsov's integral nationalism stressed the cult of the authoritarian leader, derided liberal democracy, and expressed hostility to other nationalities in interwar Eastern Galicia (the Poles and the Jews). Young readers of Dontsov may not have accepted his integral nationalism or his anti-Soviet views. One of them recalled his friend in this group of Dontsov readers having great admiration for Khrushchev and the Thaw (before he talked his friend out of what he said were naïve views about the Soviet system).<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, consuming literature in private libraries and listening to stories from the older generation constituted acts of resistance to a public sphere where local officials exercised political vigilance toward bourgeois nationalism. In Soviet Latvia, library officials destroyed literature from independent Latvia and from the German occupation era or kept it in special depositories off limits to nearly all readers (Strods 2010, 138–188). Lviv's Party and state leaders, and state agencies in Kyiv, removed materials from research and public libraries deemed "bourgeois nationalist," even if they were Soviet-era publications critiquing "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism" (Slyvka, Halaichak, and Luts'kyi 1996, 92–95, 100–102, 309–327, 490–493, 633, 634). The special initiative Lviv functionaries took in censoring could be seen with the works of Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, Ukraine's first president during the national revolution of 1917–1920, credited with writing Ukraine's first modern national history. After World War II, Hrushevs'kyi's version of Ukrainian history was condemned as "bourgeois nationalist," and adherents to the so-called Hrushevs'kyi school of history in Lviv had to recant their views in public meetings or face dismissal from work and threats of arrest and exile (Dashkevych 1995). According to one former library employee, by the mid-1980s, Hrushevs'kyi's *History of Ukraine* was not only locked away in the special depository of Lviv's Academy of Sciences library, but the library director told her not to tell patrons that it was in the special depository. By contrast, this former librarian's husband, who studied in Odessa in southern Ukraine in the 1960s, could borrow books by Hrushevs'kyi from open library depositories.<sup>10</sup> Thus, turning to private libraries for information, as with other acts of reading noted by Michel de Certeau (1980), became an act of subversion. In October 1966, this had become enough of a problem for one Lviv Region Komsomol secretary to warn fellow Komsomol members at Lviv State University to deal more decisively with peers telling their friends about literature they had found in "grandpa's attic."<sup>11</sup>

In turning to "grandpa's attic" for an informal education, these people resembled other Soviet citizens in privately subverting the restrictions of official media and educational institutions (Boym 1994, 93–95). They simulated loyalty to the Soviet state while seeking out illicit sources known to be anti-Soviet (Kharkhordin 1999, 270–278). However, engaging in such practices in the Soviet West, many young people created a sense of belonging to nations connected with cultural and political developments in interwar Europe. Thus, they engaged with the "backwards" Western bourgeois world that Soviet leaders sought to combat in the years immediately after World War II (Amar 2006, 118–262).

### Windows to the West

Young residents of the borderlands created a more western sense of being Soviet not only through pre-Soviet publications, but also through connections with western neighbors and fellow nationals abroad. Poland became one important channel of information. Poland's communist leaders began limited engagement with the capitalist West when Władysław Gomułka initiated his "Polish road to socialism" in 1956. Not only was censorship relaxed, but Western rock bands such as the Rolling Stones performed in Poland in the late 1960s (Kosiński 2006, 346; Ryback 1990, 25; Sipowicz 2008, 338). This engagement with the West intensified in the 1970s when Edward Gierek, Gomułka's successor, embarked on "modernization" to contain domestic unrest. By 1972, a rising number of Poles could travel to the West. Coca-Cola and other Western products became more available. Movie theaters featured many more Western films and radio stations began broadcasting significantly more Western music (Pelka 2008, 103, 104).

This greater openness to the West, regardless of how relative it was, made Polish books and mass media attractive to Soviet citizens in the borderlands. As with the consumption of literature from the pre-Soviet era, the consumption of Polish media had the potential to be subversive. In Lviv, reading Polish translations of Western writers, viewing Polish albums of Western artists, and listening to BBC Polish-language broadcasts inspired an underground art academy among the trusted students of instructor Karlo Zviryns'kyi in the early 1960s. It featured informal lessons in art, philosophy, religion, literature, and music, broaching subjects deemed taboo for Lviv's Soviet institutions of higher education (Iatsiv 1998, 443; Kordun 1996, 156).<sup>12</sup> A 1961 republication of a novel by Polish writer Juliusz Hartwig about the life of French poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918) and bohemian artists Apollinaire knew in early twentieth century Paris convinced a group of young male Lviv poets, artists, and musicians that they, too, were part of a carefree avant-garde yet to be discovered, marginalized by increased Soviet censorship of literature in early 1970s' Ukraine (Riabczuk 2000, 217, 218).

How subversive Polish publications could be outside narrow intellectual circles is debatable. Writer Mykola Riabchuk recalled a summer 1966 visit to relatives near Lutsk in Western Ukraine where a friend of the family shared with them a copy of the Polish magazine *Sportsman* that had more photos and information about foreign soccer players than its Soviet counterparts, had higher quality photos, and offered a prose free of ideological jargon. Local readers of *Sportsman* in rural Western Ukraine may have found Polish media useful in filling in gaps in information rather than creating alternative worlds like Riabchuk and his friends were doing in Lviv (Riabchuk 1998, 143, 144). In Riga, young intellectuals in the 1960s consumed Polish translations of Proust and Kafka, Polish humor journals, Polish albums of Picasso, and (by the 1970s) articles on Polish experimental theaters. They thus expanded their artistic, literary, and philosophical horizons in the absence of Russian- or Latvian-language sources, but did not necessarily challenge the legitimacy of Soviet socialism (Valtpēters, Kronberga, and Aizpuriete 2010, 22, 23, 54, 55, 59, 130, 202, 225). Similar motives may have led one Riga artist in the 1967 Soviet Latvian film, *Breathe Deeply*, to tune in to Polish radio in his shop, or a Riga hippie nicknamed "Klingers" in the late 1960s and 1970s to collect Polish newspaper articles critical of countercultural phenomena in the capitalist West (Kalniņš 1967; Valtpēters, Kronberga, and Aizpuriete 2010, 121–123).

Consumption of Polish media was not limited to the western borderlands, but a common practice among intellectuals in Moscow and Leningrad (Zubok 2009, 90). However, for at least Soviet Lithuania and Western Ukraine, the intelligentsia's consumption of foreign

media was intertwined with more immediate contact locals had with Poles that reinforced a more western way of being Soviet. Unlike Leningrad or Moscow, Vilnius and Lviv had access to Polish TV due to geographical proximity to the Polish border. By 1968, Polish TV, accessible to two-thirds of Soviet Lithuania's population, offered more variety and more innovative programming that attracted Lithuanian audiences (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, 181). Young Lvivians by the early 1980s were avid consumers of Polish TV (Risch 2011, 86). In Vilnius and Lviv, historic connections with Poland led to greater familiarity with the Polish language and greater contacts with Polish tourists and relatives in Poland. Polish tourists provided locals with black market goods, including Western rock albums and blue jeans (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, 180; Risch 2011, 85–92). Regardless of what local residents' attitudes were toward the Poles, the presence of Polish tourists as black market intermediaries reinforced perceptions that urban centers in the borderlands were more western than cities like Dnipropetrovsk (Zhuk 2008, 661).

For the Baltic Republics of Latvia and Estonia, there were more direct contacts with the Western capitalist world. A Swedish pirate radio station network, "Radio Nord," operating off the Baltic Sea Coast, gave Latvians, even residents of Riga, an opportunity to listen to the latest Western rock hits for at least a couple of years in the 1960s (Valtpēters, Kronberga, and Aizpuriete 2010, 106). By 1973, Latvian KGB officials noted a problem with residents in the northwestern region of the republic, picking up Swedish TV broadcasts from Gotenburg through special homemade receivers (Strods 2010, 322).

Latvians did not know Swedish well, and broadcasts from Sweden were sporadic. In contrast, Estonians, particularly those in the north of their republic, could tune in to Finnish TV – broadcast in a language very closely related to their own – and thus obtain direct access to the capitalist West. Tourists from Finland began arriving through regular boat connections between Soviet Estonia and Finland first established in 1965. These "vodka tourists," as referred to by Rein Taagepera, presumably offered Estonians Western consumer goods seldom found in the Soviet Union. Estonians themselves were allowed to go to Finland for visits. The numbers of such tourists to the "real" West were small – about 1700 in 1970, though probably more in the years that followed – but enough to play the role of cultural intermediaries (Taagepera 1993, 95, 99, 105, 106). Contacts with Finland affected cultural developments in Estonia. By the 1970s, Soviet Estonia published its first translation of a Western comic book, on Donald Duck, presumably from a Finnish translation (99). Helsinki thus became Moscow's rival in influencing Estonians' values and behavior (107, 108). Connections with Finland convinced Latvians that their northern neighbors were the closest thing to the "real" West. Thus Jānis Borgs, a graduate of Riga's Latvian Art Academy in the 1960s, recalls that in those years, Latvians went to Estonia to watch television programs from Finland (Valtpēters, Kronberga, and Aizpuriete 2010, 106).

The Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine also had connections with relatives and friends in the capitalist West. Beginning with Khrushchev's Thaw, all three Baltic republics, as well as Lviv in Western Ukraine, saw an influx of tourists from the capitalist West, primarily from émigré communities there (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, 182, 183, 243; Risch 2011, 98; Taagepera 1993, 95; Vardys 1975, 165, 166). The political implications of visits by Westerners were not lost on Party leaderships in the western borderlands. On 18 April 1961 the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee bureau claimed that anti-Soviet émigré circles from abroad sought to use the relatives and acquaintances from the West visiting Latvia to promote their own hostile agendas (Strods 2010, 319). In Lviv, the regional KGB chief, reflecting an intensified crackdown on dissent in Soviet Ukraine by late 1971, told fellow communists at a regional Party plenum that

such Western diaspora organizations as the OUN and the Foreign Section of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council had tried to establish “direct organizational links” in the region in 1970 and 1971. Posing as tourists from Britain, Sweden, and Canada, these agents allegedly tried to influence younger generations not connected with the old nationalist underground, hoping to encourage young Ukrainians to struggle for an independent state. Besides spreading anti-Soviet literature of their own, some Western tourists collected underground literature from locals and gathered what the KGB chief called “anti-Soviet information.” The Lviv Region’s KGB alone caught as many as 150 tourists conducting similar activities in 1971, including 11 who were deported.<sup>13</sup>

Visits from abroad had an impact on the western borderlands’ intellectuals, even if some of the foreign tourists and their hosts clashed over politics. Published KGB investigation records for Lviv poet Iryna Kalynets suggest that she sharply disagreed with a Ukrainian national activist from West Germany, Marko Horbach, over the strategy and tactics of the Union of Ukrainian Youth, a Western diaspora organization. However, the materials reveal that Kalynets and her friends, when speaking with Horbach, drew comparisons with Ukrainians in Soviet Ukraine and Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the capitalist West. Voicing criticism of the Soviet nationalities policy in Ukraine, they concluded that Ukrainians living abroad had it much better than their counterparts in the USSR (Slyvka and Zaitsev 2004, 126–128, 143, 144, 177, 178, 327). In this way, personal interactions with people from the “real” West, the capitalist West (and for Ukrainians, interactions with fellow nationals in neighboring Soviet Bloc states) inspired more critical views of Soviet socialism.

Packages, letters, and gifts sent from relatives and friends in the capitalist West posed a similar danger. Mail from the capitalist West increased greatly with Khrushchev’s Thaw. In Soviet Latvia, the number of packages of printed matter (*bandroles* in Latvian) from Western countries increased by 4480% between 1955 and 1960 (Strods 2010, 368). Among the packages were newspapers, journals, and books from anti-Soviet émigré centers in the capitalist West (Strods 2010, 382, 383). Émigrés from the West also sent a variety of publications in English. One Latvian *Glavlit* report from 1961 complained that the multitude of photo ads in American magazines like *The American Home*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Popular Boating* threatened to give Latvian readers the false impression that people in the capitalist world were wealthy and prosperous. Copies of *National Geographic* gave anti-Soviet accounts of life in socialist camp countries. Another US magazine, *Down Beat*, which popularized jazz music, was deemed “harmful” and “demoralizing” to young people (Strods 2011, 292–294, 297–299). Over the next two decades, Latvia’s *Glavlit* and affiliated institutions limited the mail Latvians received from the West. At the Riga Post Office’s censorship office, 33.6% of all simple packages (*vienkaršas bandroles*) and 52.9% of all registered packages (*ierakstītas bandroles*) arriving from abroad in 1961 were confiscated (Strods 2010, 369). Of all the packages arriving from abroad in 1977, the Riga Post Office’s censorship office confiscated 74.8% of simple packages and 61% of registered packages (Strods 2010, 382). By 1980, only 35.5% of all foreign mail processed by the Riga Post Office’s censor reached Soviet Latvian addressees, while 61% were opened (and of this, only 3.2% reached addressees) (Strods 2010, 383). Despite considerable censorship of the mail, some literature from the capitalist West reached citizens in the Baltic Republics. Latvian journalist Uldis Rudaks, recalling his first encounters with rock music at the beginning of the 1980s, mentions that his uncle had preserved copies of the West German music magazine *Bravo* from the late 1960s (Rudaks 2008, 8).

Gifts from relatives abroad, including consumer goods rarely found in the USSR, reached residents of the western borderlands and made it on the black market, enriching the addressees. In Soviet Lithuania, the value of such gifts was so great that in 1965, one man had managed to build a house for himself by selling just 10 parcels he had received from his sister in Canada. The Soviet Lithuanian press reported that the executive committee of the local soviet ordered the house confiscated because the funds for it had not come from “socially useful work,” but the local judge reversed its decision (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, 182, 183). A 1973 report by the Lviv Region’s Party committee secretary to superiors in Kyiv on measures to curb channels of goods from abroad noted that recipients included those who at one time had been involved in anti-Soviet activity (usually connected to collaboration with the Germans during World War II or involvement in the guerrilla insurgency). Recipients sold goods on the black market or showed them off to neighbors, coworkers, and friends.<sup>14</sup> Despite frequent confiscations at places like the Riga Post Office, and despite a steady propaganda campaign against gifts from the West, parcels most likely continued to reach recipients in considerable numbers, because the Soviet government profited from the heavy import duties imposed on them (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, 183). Even letters about life abroad provoked alternative readings of Soviet socialism. A Lviv émigré’s 1974 account of life in Western Ukraine reported that an elderly Galician Ukrainian peasant he had met expressed wonder at news that his neighbor’s relatives from Canada had written. Their stories, related through this neighbor, made this elderly man question whether Soviet newspapers were right about the West having so much poverty (Deka 1974a, 1974b). While Susan Reid has emphasized the skepticism Soviet citizens had for images of prosperity in the capitalist West, this elderly man’s musings suggest that at least some letters from abroad provoked questions about life beyond the Iron Curtain (Reid 2008).

Contacts with the West and with the pre-Soviet world convinced outsiders that the western borderlands were different from the Soviet Union. For ethnic Russians and Russian speakers from other Soviet republics, the Baltic republics collectively were “our Soviet abroad.” This “Soviet abroad” had capital cities with Western architectural styles; impressive restaurants, coffee shops, and music; and more fashionably dressed women. It had attractive consumer products including alcohol, perfumes, and radios. Speaking Russian with a Baltic accent became chic among the intelligentsia (Smirnov 2003, 55–57; Zubkova 2008, 3–5). While Lviv was a more provincial example, they left similar impressions on outsiders. Popular literature and guidebooks for Lviv emphasized its Gothic, Baroque, and *Jugendstil* architecture. One popular history from 1969 referred to Lviv as the “Ukrainian Florence,” suggesting ties to Italy and thus lands more connected with Central Europe (Sychevs’kyi 1969, 2). One Kyiv writer later connected with the Communist Party of Ukraine’s Central Committee recalled that Lviv’s “Europeanness” greatly impressed him on his first visit there in 1961 (Haman 1997, 132). Similarly, former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma noted that in Soviet times, when he was working for the Soviet rocket industry in Dnipropetrovsk, a Communist Party worker from Moscow told him how struck he was by Western Ukrainians’ politeness, religiosity, and respect for the law. This Central Committee functionary concluded that Western Ukraine was indeed where “the West” ended (Kuchma 2003, 57, 58).

What kind of a West was this? If we believe her testimony to the KGB, Iryna Kalynets had serious disagreements with her West German counterpart about the Ukrainian diaspora’s political activities abroad. The enterprising Lithuanian who built a house out of gifts from abroad probably knew that only in the Soviet Union was this possible. Media and private correspondence from Soviet Bloc states or the capitalist West may have

encouraged citizens to reflect on what Soviet media told them without undermining the fundamental worldview that Soviet media conveyed. All this gave the Soviet West a unique identity in the USSR, but not one that was necessarily anti-Soviet.

### More western, yet still Soviet

Despite being where “the West” allegedly ended, natives of the western borderlands faced varying degrees of being provincial. Other parts of the Soviet Bloc were more western than Latvia. A rural school director, touring the Danube River with other republic propaganda workers in the 1970s, recalled that Hungary was a “Soviet” state, yet its standard of living was higher, and the scenes of goods in shops amazed them. Ironically, these Latvian tourists came to resemble Soviet citizens visiting their republic. They spoke Russian during the whole trip, despite being Latvians. During their stay in Vienna, having overheard their conversation, one Austrian went up to them, swore and spit in the school director’s friend’s face, noting disdainfully that they were from the Soviet Union (Šlukuma 2011, 159).

Divisions within the Soviet West also encouraged some locals to speak of the borderlands as “Soviet” and provincial. Along with their Latvian counterparts, Lvivians saw Tallinn and not their own city as being the “Soviet Abroad.” Writer Marina Kursanova, perhaps not so ironically, said that people gathered at Lviv’s Armenian Street Café in the 1980s “because there was nowhere else to go.” Her siblings in the 1970s had their adventures in Tallinn (Kursanova 2003). While recalling Lviv as a popular gathering spot for hippies from across the Soviet Union in the late 1970s, Oleh (Alik) Olisevych remembered 1970s’ Tallinn having a livelier hippie scene, one closely resembling what he saw in Amsterdam years later (Olisevych et al. 2002, 141).

This impression that Estonia was more liberal affected not just fun-loving young Lvivians like Kursanova and Olisevych. Lviv Party officials in the early 1980s had no problems accusing Estonians of bringing unhealthy influences to their city. A city district Party functionary, Aleksandr Khokhulin (“Mankurt”), recalls that in 1982, at a major exhibit for the Soviet Union’s 60th anniversary, local officials banned nude sculptures by Estonian artists, causing the Estonian delegation to leave town in protest (Khokhulin 2005). Latvian officials had their own misgivings about Estonian culture despite being part of the Baltic “Soviet Abroad.” In 1972, the Latvian *Glavlit* denied the newspaper *Literature and Art* publication of a translation of an Estonian story, “Monologue.” This story by Paul Kuusberg, who went on to become secretary of the Estonian Writers’ Union from 1976 to 1983, allegedly contained “demagogic” thoughts. The narrator of this story treated humans not as social beings, but as biological creatures inferior to dung beetles, ants, and bees. In developing this argument, the author referred to current events (including the Vietnam War, events in Czechoslovakia, the environmental hazards of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), and humans’ lack of morality), “making ambiguous hints and indulging in petty bourgeois moods” (Strods 2011, 234). Officially sanctioned writers like Kuusberg thus were too ideologically unreliable for Latvian censors.

These impressions of a “Western” Estonia were not unfounded. Estonia did have more liberal cultural policies compared to the rest of the USSR. It led other republics when it came to translating and producing musicals and plays from abroad. In 1965, Estonian theaters began staging the American musical *West Side Story*, presumably the first American musical staged in the USSR. Estonians produced *Krapp’s Last Tape*, a play by existentialist playwright Samuel Beckett, another example of more “formalist” or ideologically unsound works being produced here as opposed to other parts of the USSR (Taagepera 1993, 106). It

was in Estonia, not in Russia, where Bertolt Brecht's works were first performed onstage in 1958. Similarly, Estonians produced the first Soviet performances of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, sung in Estonian by Russian artists and directed by a Russian maestro from Moscow (Vardys 1975, 163). Modern Western writers appeared in translation first in Estonia, then in Lithuania, and generally ahead of other republics. Thus Albert Camus's works were published in Estonia in 1963 and 1966, while Lithuanians published a translation of Camus's *The Stranger* in 1968 (163).

On the other hand, Estonia, too, had its limits as a "Soviet Abroad." Provincial Estonia could be very Soviet. The youngest of those contributing to the collection *Estonian Life Stories* – Tiia Allas, born 1973 – said that her village school emphasized Soviet ideology very strongly in the early 1980s. This shocked her urban counterparts, where, by that time, rituals involving Soviet patriotism and official propaganda existed only on paper (Allas 2009, 500).

The varying degrees of cultural expression along the western borderlands suggest that Soviet practices of empire in this region were not only diffuse, but dependent on local Party and state officials who implemented policies and decided what was "bourgeois nationalist," "alien," or "anti-Soviet." In this sense, the western borderlands became places where local officials regarded it as a duty, or as a professional opportunity, to display their ideological vigilance and enforce ideological purity, or to protect their public reputations. In Latvia, under First Party Secretary Arvīds Pelše, a purge of about 2000 "national communists" from the Party ranks between 1959 and 1962 contributed to stricter controls over cultural and intellectual life from the 1960s onward (Plakans 1995, 157, 159). In Lviv, local Party leaders likewise displayed their ideological vigilance when they compelled people not even to mention the existence of works by the "bourgeois nationalist" historian Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi. Valentyn Malanchuk, an Eastern Ukrainian who came to Lviv after the war, worked his way up the Party hierarchy, from the regional Party committee to the republic's Central Committee in Kyiv, attacking manifestations of bourgeois nationalism in Lviv. By 1973, as a Central Committee secretary in charge of ideology, his campaign against bourgeois nationalism assumed a republic-wide scale (Vrublevskii 1993, 114–124). Others besides Malanchuk earned political capital attacking bourgeois nationalism in Western Ukraine. Novelist Roman Ivanychuk recalls a number of functionaries in Kyiv in the 1970s that, while working in Lviv or Ivano-Frankivsk, had written propaganda pieces against the guerrilla insurgency (Ivanychuk 1993, 128, 169, 170).

## Conclusion

Soviet practices of empire after World War II were highly effective in the western borderlands. Despite armed resistance against Soviet rule, locals in the Baltic Republics and Western Ukraine learned to "speak Bolshevik." With the help of the local intelligentsia, Party and state leaders enforced practices of governance seen elsewhere not just in the Soviet Union, but in the Soviet Bloc (Kotkin 1995; Kotkin 2007, 523–525, 528–531). Embracing Soviet socialism's ideals, displaying loyalty to the Soviet order, consuming subversive literature, seeking channels of information about the outside world, and engaging in black market trade for Western goods were practices not unique to the western borderlands. Such practices contributed to milieus that distanced people from the Soviet public sphere without creating opposition to it (Yurchak 2006). Censorship and coercion had limited possible alternatives to Soviet socialism. Thus in the western borderlands, most people lacked the "mental tools" needed to imagine a world outside that of Soviet civilization (Febvre 1985). Compromises over local histories and cultural legacies, cooptation of

local intelligentsias, promotion of titular nationalities to positions of power, and support for local languages and cultural expression that was “national in form and socialist in content” proved that the “affirmative action empire” of the interwar USSR could still muster support or at least compel obedience (Martin 2001).

However, the practices of empire wound up fostering a sense of Soviet citizenship that, while being different from Eastern Europe or the capitalist West, was also different from the rest of the USSR. The “Banderite” or the *pribalt* was not the same as a Siberian or a Georgian.<sup>15</sup> While he or she had the right to a socialist version of cultural self-expression in a Soviet family of nations, he or she was closer to the Western capitalist world via Polish black market goods, Finnish tourists, or diaspora relatives. He or she knew elders who talked about the old bourgeois world and the Soviet repression of that world. The “background culture” of the bourgeois past that survived in daily life had the potential to provoke alternative narratives to the Soviet ones (Narvselius 2012, 188). The Soviet West produced a sense of difference that, while not inherently anti-Soviet, made it much easier to become so in the era of glasnost.

## Notes

1. Interview with “Oresta,” 22 June 2007.
2. See Zbigniew Wojnowski’s article in this collection, as well as Halyna Bodnar (2010).
3. For scholarship on this earlier period of the region’s history, see, for example, Gross (2002), Mertelsmann (2003), Reichelt (2011), Swain (2009), and Zubkova (2008).
4. See, for instance, a collection of sources on the Ukrainian National Front (1964–1967) in Zaitsev and Dubas (2000).
5. For one example of these Latvian Red Riflemen, Artūrs Vanags, see Aleksandrs Grīns (1990).
6. An example of this would be historians like Ivan Kryp’iakevych who publicly renounced their “bourgeois nationalist” views on Ukrainian history in the late 1940s (Dashkevych 1995). As late as 1959, Kryp’iakevych (1959, 153) reminded readers of *Ukrains’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* that one book he had published in Lviv in 1937 “was written not from Marxist positions and I now condemn as incorrect the views expressed in it.”
7. In the case of Estonian Elmar-Ramund Ruben, born 1918, joining the Party was nothing special. “Besides paying my dues, life went on as usual,” he said (Ruben 2009, 89).
8. Interview with Bohdan Zalizniak, 24 July 2004.
9. Interview with Teodoziy Starak, 26 February 1999. Starak was referring to his friend and classmate, poet Ihor Kalynets.
10. Interview with Stefaniia Hnatenko, 13 March 1998.
11. Derzhavnyi arkhiv l’vivs’koi oblasti (hereafter DALO), f. P-3567, op. 1, spr. 36, ark. 133.
12. For oral interviews on this, see interviews with Andriy Bokotei, 17 February 2000; Oleh Minko, 17 February 2000; Roman Petruk, 21 June 1999.
13. DALO, f. P-3, op. 19, spr. 22, ark. 78–80.
14. Tsentral’nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads’kykh ob’iednan’ Ukrainy (hereafter TsDAHOU), f. 1, op. 25, spr. 878, ark. 16–22.
15. *Pribalt* was sometimes used as a pejorative term for people from the Baltic republics. See Ergma (2009, 485).

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