



Kulturstiftung Sibirien

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(eds.)

Academia Across the Borders



Exhibitions and Symposia

SEC Publications

Academia Across the Borders

edited by
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Verlag der Kulturstiftung Sibirien
SEC Publications

Bibliografische Informationen der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<<http://dnb.d-nb.de>> abrufbar.

Gestaltung:
Kulturstiftung Sibirien gGmbH, Fürstenberg/Havel

Herstellung:
Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt

Electronic edition:
<https://dh-north.org/publikationen/academia-across-the-borders>

ISBN: 978-3-942883-40-5

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Printed in Germany

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to an (Un) Published Forum

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January 4, 2024	7
February 14, 2023	9
December 2, 2022	14

Answers

David Anderson	17
Dmitry Arzyutov	20
Dmitry Baranov	30
Vlada Baranova	34
Tatiana Barchunova	37
Elena Danilko	39
Natalia Drannikova	41
Stephan Dudeck	42
Simon Franklin	50
Bruce Grant	51
Hubertus Jahn	52
Catriona Kelly	54
Roman Khandozhko	59
Ilya Kukulin and Maria Mayofis	63
Pavel Kupriyanov	68
Igor Kuziner	71
Dmitry Oparin	76
Lidia Rakhmanova	80
Petr Safronov	87
Victor Shnirelman	89
Aleksandra Simonova	94
Mikhail Sokolov	101
Sergei Sokolovskiy	104
Dmitry Verkhovtsev	109

References	114
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About the Authors	122
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INTRODUCTION TO AN (UN)PUBLISHED FORUM

Ekaterina Melnikova and Zinaida Vasilyeva

January 4, 2024

The idea of this forum originated in Russia, emerging as a distress call for the anthropological community working in, with, or about Russia as it began to show symptoms of disintegration, fragmentation and disruption. The outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022; purges and arrests of students and professors expressing critical opinions in Russia; the mass exodus of professionals; the imposition of European and US sanctions against Russian institutions, including in academia; the interruption of ongoing and/or planned collaborations; the distancing of colleagues – all this has had a direct impact on daily academic and private lives, the meanings of what academia and anthropology are about, priorities and plans for the future, and the state of minds and souls in the community.

Wherever our colleagues lived, worked, and were institutionally affiliated, they found themselves in a state of uncertainty and disruption of practices, values, and social networks. Moreover, those living and working in Russia were also rendered voiceless, as direct critical speech became criminalised, platforms for speaking out were rapidly curtailed or restricted in their agenda, and the public role of Russian academics was discredited by the official statements issued on behalf of community by a number of Russian academic leaders.

By the fall of that year, there was an urgent need to exchange views and launch a collective sense-making process. It was then that the idea was born to collect written commentaries documenting and reflecting on transformations of the academic landscape across the borders. Importantly, the purpose of the exchange was not to declare individual political positions and/or moral choices, but rather to identify and understand implications of the war for the community and multiple and diverse global effects that it triggered and that continue to unfold today.

Separated by ever more present borders, we invited colleagues to respond to four questions about how their academic lives and practices have changed in the aftermath of 24 February, 2022.¹ We decided to frame the questions around the notion of “boundaries” (*granitsy*), thus alluding to “borders” and yet, focusing on the space still available for their (re)negotiation. With the help of this concept, we aimed to trace the complex dynamics within academia, including professional routines, (trans)national collegial relations, individual trajectories, and the ways in which we understand and

1 The questions are published at the end of the introduction on pp. 14.

rethink our profession. Our intention was to start a conversation and create a platform for dialogue with colleagues who were not only separated by borders, but also bound by them, at least as far as their professional and intellectual interests were concerned. We still believe that such a dialogue is vital at the present time.

In December 2022, we contacted colleagues from different cities and institutions in Russia, as well as colleagues working in different countries abroad, with the still firm intention of publishing the commentaries in Russia and in the Russian language. We invited colleagues from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Lithuania, Ukraine, a number of Western European countries, and the US, and one month later, we received almost three dozen responses. Most of them were written in Russian and a few in English. All the invited authors from the post-Soviet countries distanced themselves from the discussion or clearly refused to participate mainly due to the unacceptable partnership with a Russian publishing house. Some of them wrote us long personal letters, others replied very briefly. We respect their decisions; moreover, we think that these (declined) commentaries in a way, answer the questions we posed.

At the same time, the situation in Russia deteriorated, and it became impossible to publish the forum in any Russian edition without endangering the authors and editors who remained in the country. Under the circumstances, we found ourselves in an extremely difficult situation, puzzled with many questions. Should we abandon the whole project and put it in the archives, regardless of the sweat and tears that went into it? Should we publish the forum abroad, and if so, in what language and for whom? Who would dare to publish this collection? Is it ethical to publish pieces documenting Russian pain at a time when the Russian state is causing so much pain in Ukraine?

While meditating on these and many other questions and coming to terms with the fact that the forum would not be published in Russia, we wrote an essay focused on the phenomenon of “public muteness.” This essay described the individual and collective struggles to find and develop a language adequate to an inadequate situation, in a context in which *Realpolitik* undermines any intellectual effort, when feelings of guilt, shame, and fear block academic instincts, when any analytic response can trigger public censure, and when old networks and collaborations happen to be inhabited by all kinds of uncertainties and mistrust.

One year later, we are publishing the collected responses and our essay in the English language. Today, this is no longer a snapshot of the contemporary situation, but a collection of historical documents recording the reflections of 2022. One might say it’s no longer relevant. Indeed, the public attention has shifted since then. But perhaps this lack of attention made answers to some of our questions easier. With this publication, we do not seek attention. Instead, we continue to work on maintaining the community and the dialogue in the context of the unfolding historical collapse.

Things have also changed for some of our authors during this year: some have changed institutions and countries, some have decided to deanonymise their contri-

butions, one author who remained in Russia has decided to withdraw their contribution, and one author has been granted refugee status in a European country and is now legally unable to engage in professional academic activity. Today, many authors feel ambivalent about their texts written a year ago, when the aims, language, audience, and relevance were imagined differently. We thank them for staying with the project and agreeing to publish without altering the content.

We hope that this publication will contribute both to our understanding of diverse implications of the war and shifts in public discursive regimes, including in academia, which is both an active subject and a passive object under transformation in any continuing political, social, and economic processes. The exchange initiated by this forum will continue and develop further in another form. In 2024, the series of collective volumes *A Fractured North*, edited by Erich Kasten, Igor Krupnik, and Gail Fondahl, will be launched. It addresses research collaborations in Siberia that are now at risk or frozen, due to the evolving political situation. The contributions to these volumes range from dilemmas of working under difficult political conditions (past and present) to the effects of halting collaborative projects, to thoughts on how partnerships might be restored.

February 14, 2023

The decision not to publish the forum in Russia became a symbolically important moment for us, eliciting memories of the early 2000s, when Russian social sciences were trying to overcome the “syndrome of public muteness” (Vakhtin and Firsov 2017; Atnashev et al. 2021), that is, the lack of a common language within the community and the need for an exchange of ideas between representatives of different academic groups and disciplines: anthropology, folklore, linguistics, cultural history, museum studies, etc. After 20 years of continuous efforts to create a space for dialogue and discussion, we are now facing a new reality, in which the syndrome of public muteness is imposed on us once again. We are taking it as an action, a performative statement, a loud silence.

Muteness was a theme that ran through many of the responses that we have received. “I find myself in a situation where there is no language to talk about these things, that I have no voice in principle to say anything, and the only thing left is to be silent,” wrote one researcher who did not manage to write a reply. At the same time, judging by the volume of texts published over the past year (even measured simply by the number of characters) devoted to attempts to understand and formulate one’s attitude towards what is happening, this time can, by no means, be called a period of silence. On the contrary, talking seems to have become one of its key characteristics. A chorus of voices, a cacophony of opinions and interpretations, a polyphony, a diversity of genres and platforms – these are what we encounter every day in the media

and, to a certain extent, in everyday life (Yusupova 2023). It is the tension between the muteness, the silence, the impossibility or unreadiness to find a language, rubbing up against the cacophony, the unambiguous declaration, and a sort of compulsion to speak out, that is at the centre of our considerations.

An extreme form of muteness is the deliberate refusal to speak out, a performative communicative act when silence is evidence not of an incapacity for speech but of an unwillingness to take part in dialogue as a form of interaction and co-participation. The context of a statement – the platform, the affiliation, the language of the publication – are weighed down today with a wide spectrum of additional meanings, which, in some cases, make the statement itself impossible. And although the question of where and in what language to speak out (or as a variant, where to publish) was significant before too, now the cost of the reputational risks has increased, and the cost of the choice of the territory and the language of the conversation has increased correspondingly.

Another kind of muteness that our authors wrote about is characterised by a person's inner state that resists the normalisation of their experience. "The topic is very important, and worries me, but I have set about writing several times and understood that I cannot formulate anything coherently." An effort, and at the same time, an inability, to find a language "in which one could describe the indescribable, the unprecedented" (Barskova 2022: 32), the distressing failure of attempts to write, the struggle with the language, the "deaf-blindness", as Irina Sandomirskaja calls this rhetorical property (Sandomirskaja 2013), all indicate an experience of the inadequacy of the available language for the events we are living through. Such an experience is a recognisable feature of traumatic testimonies, a constituent property of which is the dissimulation of the ordinary and the dreadful, to describe which one requires another language that does not exist. The refusal to acknowledge one's own experience as normal, usual, and capable of being described by means of accustomed language does not mean an identification of one's own experiences with the tragic experience of victims of humanitarian disasters, but rather indicates a vast range of other communicative and social challenges.

Resistance to normalisation is expressed in a protest against "hasty" diagnoses and judgments, particularly noticeable amongst anthropologists, whose basic background assumes training in moral relativism and the acceptance of the most alien and incomprehensible positions. The habit of analysing complex life on many levels and the impossibility of "hacking out" what has been said and written is a problem today for many people who use the word as the tool of their trade to produce "long" meanings, the value of which presumes a long-term agenda and relevance. "Hasty" words à la Facebook, reflecting momentary feelings and reflexions, are important, useful and acceptable in ordinary public dialogue, but seem, to a number of authors, dangerous and harmful, oversimplifying reality and giving a sense of definiteness to what is indefinite, unstable, and incomprehensible.

In a recent podcast on NLO.media about Olga Freidenberg's diaries of the Lenin-grad blockade, Irina Paperno spoke about another contradiction of speaking-muteness: the risk of suppressing freedom of thought with ready-made linguistic clichés and concepts that lay reality on a Procrustean bed of categories, which were formed in other historical, geographical, and political contexts. Such intellectual transfers or borrowings are more a hindrance than a help to finding the words and models for an adequate description of the present day (*Intellektual v izolyatsii* 2023). Our authors also spoke of these types of risks, preferring to avoid large conceptual frameworks that treat the present day in any sort of unambiguous terms. Muteness is a means of distancing oneself from any forms of analytic and political consensus in a situation when external compulsion towards such a consensus becomes a reality on different sides of political and disciplinary borders.

At the same time as noticing muteness, many authors spoke of the importance and inner necessity of overcoming it. Combining a whole range of evidential roles, from the moral and historical witness (Assman 2018) to the informant, researchers have tried to feel their way towards such a form of utterance and to find a genre that would not only allow the explanation and interpretation of the surrounding reality, but also provide it with sources for a future understanding. Hence, the remarkable diversity of genres among the responses, distributed as widely as possible along the scale from “raw” to “cooked”, from “bare sources” to maximally distanced analyses and diagnoses of the present day.

Although this forum was not envisaged as a therapeutic practice, it soon became clear that reflexion on the events that were happening to researchers and inside them was ineluctably connected with therapeutic work of that sort. The place of conceptual interpretations is frequently occupied by reflexion and lucubration on a person's own, and as a rule, profoundly personal experience – fieldwork, writing, observation. The conflict between a researcher's academic role and their inner self is well documented and reflected on in anthropology ever since Malinowski's famous diaries (Malinowski 2020) and it remains on the agenda (Faust and Pfeifer 2021). The imperative to understand and to extend sympathetic attention and sensitivity in fieldwork frequently collides with inner protest and painful self-examination regarding the extent and degree to which it is appropriate, meaningful, and possible to exercise empathy and compassion in a situation where “the field” breaks the researcher's basic ethical principles and even physical boundaries. The frontier experience revealed in such responses echoes the topics of risks in the field in anthropology, to the discussion of which a special issue of the journal *Antropologicheskij forum* was dedicated (*Forum* 2021). The verbalisation of personal feelings and experiences serves both as a form of subjectivisation (the determination and expression of oneself as a human being here and now) and a means of flight from analysis: transferring attention to one's affects as symptoms of the existing conflict allows researchers to distance themselves from global conclusions and generalisations.

Concern about the lack of a language is often accompanied by an explicit desire to feel one's way towards it. Although not all the authors responded positively to the invitation to answer our questions, a number of researchers thanked us for this initiative, recognising that the search for a common language transcending borders, be they national, academic, generational, or political, is essential for the continuation of the dialogue. A common language is always the result of concessions and conventions, and a situation of extreme uncertainty leads, if not to the abolition, then to a maximal "suspension" of conventional language. The multiplicity of reactions, genres, and means of (not) speaking that we have encountered and that cannot be reduced to one or even to several models, seem not only to be a sufficient imprint of the current language crisis, but also an honest means of articulating it.

The fact that several journals and academic media platforms invited their authors to discuss the current changes all at once (Vazyanau et al. 2022; *Slavic Review* 2022; Schweitzer and Povoroznyuk 2022; *Anketa* 2023) testifies not only, and not even mainly, to attempts to feel one's way towards a new common language. Rather, this is an effort to preserve the existing transnational "thought collectives" (*Denkkollektive*) (Fleck 1979) and epistemic communities (Haas 1991; Criado and Estalella 2018), of which language is a principal foundation. The process of reordering social, epistemic, and ethical networks is one of which researchers are acutely sensible, and the decision (not) to participate in the collective discussion becomes one of the forms in which the new borders of the academic community, and one's own positioning in respect of them, is manifested.

Like the search for a new language, the assertion, questioning, exploration, and construction of new borders makes up a significant part of our everyday life nowadays. Many researchers are not only changing their place of residence and work, their position and status, but are also reordering their relationships with their colleagues, institutions, and field partners and regions. Some of the refusals that we received were motivated by relocation and the many practical difficulties that absorb all a person's time and creative energy. However, there were also some responses that constituted a means of living through, and reflecting on, these changes, practically but also politically and ethically.

Against the background of the reordering of the community, old networks and affiliations acquire new meanings and connotations. Belonging to institutions, which only recently was a sign of a successful career and a stable position, now often places researchers in a vulnerable situation. By contrast, translocality, which used to be correlated not only with the resource of an international academic existence but also with its precarity, the lack of a permanent position and of a firm place in the community, seems in the current situation to possess an additional emancipatory potential, including because it removes the burden of old connections and the necessity of positioning oneself in relation to traditional institutions.

A central theme of many responses was the maintenance of personal connections and of the possibility of preserving intellectual life in a situation where the research community is closed and/or polarised. Within this, colleagues from abroad also express concern at the growing role of administrative directives in regulating academic life. Against this background, old contacts and networks acquire an even greater significance, not only helping to patch up holes in the fabric of academic life, but also maintaining the experience of transnational research solidarity. Some authors noted the importance of technology in maintaining relationships, and also placed upon it their hopes that complete isolation would be impossible in the modern world.

The reordering of borders within the community, like the reordering of national borders, is inevitably accompanied by a re-evaluation of the discipline and of the professional practices of ethnographers. What field is (in)accessible? What means of presenting material are (im)possible and (un)acceptable? What can(not) be a topic for research? What objects can(not) be included nowadays in museum collections? How can one conduct fieldwork and maintain connections with informants safely – for the field subjects and for oneself?

Much has been written since the middle of the twentieth century about how anthropology as a discipline has been rooted in colonialism as a means of understanding the world and governing it. The collections and exhibitions in ethnographical museums are clear evidence of how societies have lived through this experience. Being aware of that heritage, many generations of anthropologists have asked how their professional interest affects the life of the communities they study, and how they can work so as not to harm them (or, better, so as to help them), taking upon themselves the role of mediators in conflicts, guides, *Kulturträger*, or simply sympathetic and interested citizens. The tension between research interest and political responsibility regarding the communities being studied has led to a reinterpretation of fieldwork as collaboration, accompanied by a constant problematisation and critical reflection on one's own methods of work, and by a discussion framing "the fieldwork dynamics in terms of political dominance" (Kasatkina, Vasilyeva, and Khandozhko 2018: 149).

Variants of this reflexive turn in the social sciences are also known as the participatory, actionist, or collaborative approaches (Yarskaya-Smirnova and Romanov 2004; Utekhin 2015). There are not so many followers of these approaches in Russia,² and those who regard their social mission as an important dimension of their ethnographical practice are currently confronted with new challenges. If the anthropologist's task includes the mission of a go-between in the organisation of social dialogue and cultural transfer in the very broadest sense, it is completely unclear from what language and into what language the observed reality can and should be translated, for whom and for what purpose the evidence of the present should be preserved, and with whom and in what language one's observations should be shared.

2 One outstanding example is the work of Anna Klepikova (2019).

This general state of inarticulacy, silence, and muteness nevertheless conceals active work in searching for meanings, new borders, and points of contact with the field and with each other. The preparation of this publication also made a contribution to this work: correspondence with authors and discussion within the editorial board were simultaneously performance, therapy, and practice in maintaining the community, and a moment for expressing positions, when in another context we might have preferred to stay silent.

December 02, 2022

Academia Across the Borders

Over the last year, our conditions of work, professional relations, life, and world generally have undergone significant changes. In our questions, we place those changes, and particularly their relationship to borders, at the centre of discussion. We want to encourage dialogue among the broadest possible circle of those researching society and culture, from a variety of disciplines, including those working outside Russia as well as inside, participants at different stages of their life path, and people who are relatively new to academia as well as those who have long experience of the profession. Your answers are vital as a record of the changes currently happening in academic practices, in our field of investigation, and in the ways we understand our profession. Our intent in organising the discussion is to create a platform for dialogue, with participants who are not only separated by boundaries, but also united by them, at least when it comes to the boundaries of their professional interests. We believe that such a platform is vital at the present time.

[1] In the decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, border-crossing in many respects lost its political sensitivity and became a normal, indeed routine, practice. National boundaries never disappeared, and in fact, in some places, new ones appeared, but the process of transit across them, however troublesome and unpleasant it remained, was still a relatively familiar and habitual activity. During this course of this year, however, borders have acquired new force and have once again turned from, as it were, doors and windows into fences and walls, and the process of crossing them has become unpredictable and to a large extent dependent on geopolitical considerations. How has the hardening of borders affected your own academic life? What impact has it had on collegial relations within your discipline? What are its effects on the boundaries of the discipline itself?

[2] In recent decades, many of us have become familiar with translocality as a concept and reality (Kordonsky 2000; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013). It is not uncommon for academics to have affiliations to more than one, or indeed several, institutions

and to have access to social, intellectual, and material resources in different places, constructing their identities in a situational manner, depending on the research topic, the centre where the particular research cluster is located, and on the patterns of their own career. After 24 February 2022, this customary mode of translocality has come under assault, or at the very least transformed in a radical manner. What has changed in your personal life? What impact have the new restrictions on academic practice and the changing expectations in the academic community had upon you personally, and what ways have you found of coping with them? Have you had problems in accessing information resources such as library catalogues, digital archives, databases, and websites?

[3] Academia's frequent declarations of commitment to translocality, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism have never translated into equal opportunities for academics. Economic, intellectual, educational, and professional resources are not distributed equally across the globe, and academic hierarchies have been inflected by geopolitical as well as local factors. The three-tier model of 'metropolitan, provincial, "native"' scholarship that was analysed with reference to Russian academia a decade ago by Mikhail Sokolov and Kirill Titaev (2013) could, with certain modifications, also be used to analyse the operations of academia internationally. What is the impact upon academic hierarchies and the geography of these of the mass relocation since 24 February 2022 of academics from Russia and Ukraine? Is the three-tier model any longer of relevance, now that the academic unipolarity which facilitated the hierarchy has itself come under question?

[4] Those researching the national politics of the Russian Empire and the USSR have often emphasised the role of anthropology as a profession in the formation and regulation of relations between the centre and the periphery (the Soviet republics and regions), in the construction of social identities, and in state- and nation-building. At periods of political transformation, this role has come into particular view. What lessons can we draw from the participation of anthropologists in the social and political life of their country? Have you yourself had experience of such participation? What relevance does it have for the present situation? What is, or should be, the role of anthropology as a profession in current events right now?

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our colleagues and friends for their advice and support throughout the project, Ralph Cleminson for translating the responses written in the Russian language, and Marlise Schneider and Tom Quick for their help in proofreading the final version of the Introduction.

ANSWERS

David Anderson

Transnationalism and Rituals of Commensality

The day I got the invitation to participate in this discussion, I was busy making *kutya*. I mostly improvise the recipe – and it is not all that difficult – but I am guided by a cookbook published in 1963 by the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League written by my maternal grandmother. Years ago, I would thresh the bran from the spring wheat with a rolling pin, and then separate it by floating it. Today there are Polish and East European speciality shops pretty much everywhere in the city where I live which provide pre-ground poppy seed, threshed pearl wheat, and particularly tasty honey. I like adding walnuts. I don't really follow my grandmother's recipe closely since the partially processed purchased ingredients mean that the wheat only needs to soak and cook for an hour – instead of a day or more. Before I would use spring wheat that my father, uncle and I had harvested ourselves.

Kutya is a ritual dish common to Greeks and Slavs. During the long nights of the winter solstice, on the great feast of the birth of Christ, it is the first dish eaten by the assembled family, and afterwards, left on the table, our deceased relatives also take their share. The grains have the power to predict the future – the bounty of the harvest and the productivity of the livestock. It is supposed to be part of a 12-dish meatless feast and accompanied by a carol. I am the only one now who knows (some of) the words to the carol – and my children prefer British festive roasts. And so the recipe changes as it crosses borders, but continues nonetheless. This year we had refugees from Kyiv joining us.

The editors asks us to reflect on the borders “which have acquired new force” and on our “situationally” constructed identities as scholars, and on the role that anthropologists could play in the current conjuncture. I would like to reflect on the borders that we create ourselves, and of course those small recipes which continue to cross those borders.

Like many I have been shocked both by the bloodshed, and in particular the deliberate destruction of homes and civil infrastructure by the Russian Army. I am also dismayed by the cloud of isolation imposed upon Russian scholars by sanctions. The international borders, however, seem to me to be pretty much the same. I became an anthropologist at the end of the Soviet period. My first visits to the homelands of Zabaikal Evenkis were conducted under the close watch of minders, and authorised (or not) by internal travel permits stamped on top of my three-page light blue entry and exit visa. In those days one could only travel, or reasonably exchange money, with

the help of trusted friends. The heavily policed boundaries also induced a type of solidarity and an acute awareness of the sensibilities which were not bounded by the state.

To some degree the retraction of border formalities in the 1990s came as a surprise to me, and to some degree I perhaps never took them for granted. I never liked holding unguarded conversations in taxis. As the Russian government began slowly to ratchet up migration control, and the registration of foreign agents, it seemed that regulations were converging if not only back to a Soviet past but to a globalised authoritarian future. I was saddened by sanctions on academic institutions, and on restrictions on movement, however initially I shrugged it off as a slide back to the first square in a game of snakes and ladders – a game that at least I thought I knew. What caught me entirely off-guard were the new internal and somewhat optional boundaries which emerged within my local scholarly community.

For a very long time I have been interested in the collaborations and conversations which flourished both across international borders but also the moral/political border of the Cold War. Together with Sergei Alymov and Dmitry Arzyutov we have studied the correspondence that united Soviet, Canadian, British, and American scholars on themes of mutual interest such as circumpolar indigenous commonalities and questions of stratification. We described some of our teachers as “bridge-builders” – as scholars who built academic communities across boundaries of language, culture, and political mistrust. The recipe for transnational anthropological activism traditionally has included journals (such as this one), international scholarly meetings, publications and co-authored publications. More recently, funded scientific projects were added to the list (like electric blenders) and which have always held an ambiguous intellectual and moral status. Much like the rules of international trade, these scientific collaborations seemed resilient and “bomb-proof”. It has come as a shock about how fragile our scholarly networks have become in an environment of three decades of permissive movement.

The restrictions on scholarly activity within the context of this European war vary widely. My weak understanding is that our colleagues based in Russia, in Russian state institutions, are required to show solidarity with the invasion. But likely there is a variety of positions. In discussing this commentary with my friends they pointed to a kind of “porousness” which allowed individual scholars have one foot in and one foot out of any institutions – delicately manoeuvring their scholarly research in between the cumbersome infrastructures of institutions. I don’t think I have ever met a “company man” in Russia in the Soviet period or now. I realised in discussing this that this is a quality that we have lost – at least in the United Kingdom.

Across Europe and North America I have learned there is also a variety of positions. In the United Kingdom, on paper at least, we are not encouraged to travel to Russia and as employees of institutions which are partly state-funded. We are not to enter into contracts or agreements with Russian state institutions. The rule of thumb here is that “private” collaborations with Russian citizens are permitted and some-

times encouraged. This is not the same across Europe. In working with colleagues within the University of the Arctic I quickly came to learn that in some countries, such as Finland, it is not permitted to correspond with colleagues in Russia using university email accounts. In some other European countries Russian co-authors are removed from joint publications. In other neighbouring countries, co-authors are allowed to be mentioned as individual authors but without their institutional affiliations. However trans-European institutions like the University of the Arctic default to the strictest guidelines (in order not to let any member feel left out).

These rules of thumb vary in their enforcement. On the morning that Kyiv was bombed, with surprising efficiency, my university froze any research trust accounts that were sponsoring fieldwork in Russia and nullified any letters of collaboration. This would not be surprising if it were not for the fact that it took weeks, if not months, to set these documents up in the first place. In the days and weeks that followed there were small transgressions. A woman with a Russian surname was denied permission to apply for a fellowship. There were controversies about webpages that were published partly in Cyrillic. We argued over the eligibility of Ukrainian scholars holding Russian passports to apply for support as research fellows. In some of the more bizarre arguments, I have argued with research accountants over whether a payment to a Russian library for a scan of an article constitutes a payment in support of a state agency (and thus indirectly a support to the war machine). Along with other scholars, we passed a motion at the university Senate to recognise the rights of scholars to continue to read and write about Eurasia widely, and about Russia specifically.

What was never said was that the skittish managers who were cancelling long-term collaborations were mostly concerned about “reputational damage to the corporation”, and not good science.

When did our membership of academic institutions become so compromising? How has it come to pass that we can no longer substitute ingredients for our traditional ritual offerings – finding quiet free spaces to talk offstage? I caught by the irony of the fact that I have to loudly report to managers that my research collaborations now are with unaffiliated individuals in Russia. This is ironic since not so long ago, my research collaborations were also with trusted friends – only then I had to loudly pretend that I actually was collaborating with institutions. The research seems somehow more honest now.

In the current context, rather than the international boundaries, the boundaries which have acquired new force are internal institutional policies. Since anthropology has become professionalised, there has always been an ambiguity surrounding one's identity as a professional ethnographer and one's membership of a university. It was not so very long ago that universities were run by scholars. The buildings and libraries were collective resources that were often lavishly supported by governments but were officially semi-autonomous collectives. During that same period when international borders became more porous, our local institutions became more fortified. Starved

for public money, these collective entities became more corporate and worried over offending ministries, private donors, and funding agencies. To a great extent, the traditional recipes of transnationalism – the publications, seminars and informal chats in corridors – were now considered to bring great risk. This now implies that we might need to reevaluate our duties as ethnographers and weigh them against the commandments of our institutional managers. Maybe the anthropology of Eurasia no longer belongs in a University campus?

Like recipes which cross borders, and which incorporate new ingredients and symbols, there is room to re-think how anthropology can be practiced in these new conditions. The University of the Arctic – a non-anchored international network – has taken the step of removing all affiliations from the names of all scholars advertised on their websites. This might be an interesting way forward for anthropologists generally. What would an anthropological journal look like if the anthropologists published as persons unaffiliated to an institution? The current conjecture also provides an interesting opportunity for documenting testimony of how people the world over experience the current conflict. I am guided here by the “Peace Propagandist Fourteen Twenty” who uploads short interviews with pedestrians in Moscow who are asked to describe what they see in photographs of bombed apartment blocks in Bakhmut. He captures, in my view, the subtle and confused mood of many people.³ I am also guided by a very telling, if very sad, telegram channel where ethnographers document the mobilisation of Siberian indigenous hunters to the frontlines. Small actions like this are central to what historians of science describe as Science Diplomacy – of the building of solidarities often at a small local level over interests of mutual concern. Before Anthropology became consumed by research metrics, publishing projects like *Current Anthropology* were precisely the type of venue where rarely heard voices were put into debate with one another. Many of these small actions are now sometimes stymied by our professional institutions. Therefore, I would like to suggest that we work without them – adapting our well-crafted rituals of commensality privately with the scholars who we understand as kin.

Dmitry Arzyutov

*Anti Anti-Polyphony and the Borders of Modern Russian Anthropology*⁴

I am grateful for the kind invitation to share my thoughts on the catastrophe that has befallen us all. In the proposed discussion I should particularly like to hear the voices of Ukrainian anthropologists and historians, for whom the topic of borders is not

³ <<https://www.youtube.com/@1420channel/about>> [accessed 7.12.2023]

⁴ I am grateful to colleagues in Russia, the USA, Great Britain and Finland for their advice and comments, which have helped to improve the text of my reply.

so much a subject for theoretical discussion as a question of survival under Russian bombardment.

But I should like to begin with an episode from the history of our discipline. On his return from the International Congress of Americanists in Sweden in 1924 Walde-mar Bogoras wrote several official reports, in which he recounted the discussions of the papers and the conversations in the corridors. Among other things, he mentioned the latest news of his old friend the American anthropologist Franz Boas, who, as is well known, had greatly influenced Bogoras as a researcher. Here is a fragment of one of his reports published in *Izvestiya*, 7 September 1924, under the headline “Under the Flag of the RSFSR (From our Special Correspondent)”:

During the war Boas was not only a pacifist, but an outright defeatist. He published a letter against the excesses of American military intelligence in the newspapers, and lost all the position that he had won over fifty years of work.⁵ “Real Americans” are still berating him, but he does not give a fig. His face is traversed by old fencing scars from his student days, and distorted as a result of the excision of an ulcer (Tan [Bogoras] 1924).

This fragment, almost a hundred years old, has obvious parallels with today. For the eminent field ethnographer Bogoras, who had been a war correspondent at the front during the First World War and seen his own contribution to the creation of the new Soviet nation, the very philosophy of defeatism seemed too radical and probably contradicted his personal convictions (Shakhnovich 2018). For Boas, by contrast, pacifism, even to the point of defeatism, was a means of maintaining the emergent anthropological way of thinking, with its essential acknowledgment of cultural relativity even in a situation of war and conflict. A couple of years later Bogoras would be complaining amicably in his letters to Boas that living and working in the Soviet Union was becoming unbearably difficult for him. But then he would take a fresh sheet of paper and, dipping his pen in the same ink, write a letter to the permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences, Sergei F. Oldenburg, requesting him to promote as quickly as possible the closure of the Arctic to American and European researchers,⁶ that is,

5 Bogoras had in mind Boas’s article “Scientists as Spies” in *The Nation* (Boas 1919), which provoked a stormy reaction and had unpleasant consequences for Boas’s career. Despite that, Boas continued to condemn military action and anthropologists’ participation in it to the end of his days. In 2005 the American Anthropological Association recognised its mistake, issued an apology to the late Franz Boas, and withdrew the censure that it had pronounced in 1919 <<https://americananthro.org/about/policies/uncensoringfranz-boas/>> [accessed 7.12.2023]. I would also remark that criticism of one’s own country’s military activities has been an integral part of the discipline’s intellectual life in the history not only of American anthropology, but that of France and many other countries. It would not be hard to compile a vast list of articles and books on the anthropology of war, with leading academic publishers just as a start.

6 See, for example, Bogoras’s note “Why We Need the Lands around the Pole”, published in Ogonek (Bogoras-Tan 1926).

effectively to Boas's students and colleagues with whom he had been in conversation at conferences just before, and while in his correspondence he was declaring international cooperation to be essential (on relations between Boas and Bogoras see [Kan 2006]). Bogoras, a former populist revolutionary, whose acquaintance with the hard life of a political exile was by no means by hearsay, now began to call for the borders to be closed, renouncing the idea of trans-national anthropology. At the same time, he was writing brilliant texts defending the relational nature of the perception of time and space among the indigenous peoples of Siberia, making attempts, as we would put it today, at decolonising knowledge and at inclusivity by creating the Institute for the Peoples of the North, or restoring the native names to these peoples instead of colonial ones. As we can judge from Bogoras's enormous archive, in the 1920s and 1930s his ethnographical boundaries were constantly being redrawn under pressure from the Soviet state, to which he was unable to offer any resistance. In those same years Bogoras continued to correspond with his friends Waldemar and Dina Jochelson, who had emigrated to the USA with Boas's support, and wondered why they did not return, despite "all the conditions" which Soviet Russia was ready to offer them.⁷

As I was preparing these documents and others for publication,⁸ I could not help thinking about the resemblance between the histories of the first third of the twentieth century and what I can see "right out of my window", and hear in conversations with colleagues, notwithstanding the quite significant differences between these two periods. A repetition of Bogoras's history, as I hope to show in my commentaries, is the sacrifice of the ideals of anthropology in the name of preserving a relationship with the authorities that is supposed to preserve the scholar or his research group from social, economic or even physical annihilation.

Now, a century on, we are once more separated by borders, but all of us now in different ways: what is a border for some of us need by no means be one for others, and vice versa. For some of us, the present social frontiers came into being with the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in February 2014, but for most people, they

7 After his old friend's death, at the height of Stalin's tyranny, Boas, drowning in letters from his German colleagues asking for help in emigrating from Nazi Germany and finding work in the USA, began to refuse Bogoras's students. Thus was broken the thin thread of hope for the Eskimologist Aleksandr Forshtein. After a placement in a museum in Copenhagen he embarked for Leningrad, where he was soon arrested and spent many years in the GULag. However, Boas saved many German anthropologists and helped the Jochelson family to the end of his days, and tried by every possible means to keep the field of anthropology open, and its frontiers sufficiently porous to have the opportunity, almost unnoticed, to resettle at least some of those colleagues who were threatened with certain death in their own country or in a concentration camp (Arzyutov 2022). (I am grateful to Igor Krupnik for a conversation about Forshtein's heritage.)

8 A two-volume edition of Franz Boas's correspondence with Russian and Soviet ethnographers (*Paper Bridges Between Franz Boas and Russian Anthropology*), prepared by Dmitry Arzyutov, Sergei Kan, Laura Siragusa and Alexander Pershai, is currently awaiting publication by the University of Nebraska Press.

were created by Russia's aggressive military invasion of the territory of a sovereign Ukraine eight years later, on 24 February 2022. For some the borders are essentially geographical (or, more precisely, national) or along the line of the front (in Russian newsroom jargon, "the line of military contact"), while for others they have less to do with states and are defined rather by attitudes to political regimes and heads of state. There are probably also some for whom borders mean nothing today, that is, like "peoples", as we learnt recently, they were "invented by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin" and the borders of Russia, as the same man recently declared, "go on for ever". And, finally, for some people speaking out against the military activities of the Russian army on the territory of a neighbouring country is an expression of their civic position as people and anthropologists, while for others the "special military operation" "there" should not separate "us" "here", does not oblige us to speak out against it and does not prevent us from shaking the hands of politicians and business leaders who are continuing to colonise their own and other countries, or from being proud of the awards they have received from the people who took such catastrophic decisions. These boundaries and barricades multiply every day, rapidly reducing the space for dialogue and demanding that everyone should define their own political and civic position. These multiple divergences in the formulation of initial positions are probably one of the sources of the conflict within Russian anthropology, which, however, is nothing new in the post-Soviet period.

This conflict, in my view, began together with the refusal to acknowledge diversity. The anthropologists of the North and Siberia will object to this, rightly replying that they have been writing about how "their" practices and ideologies differ from "ours". However, in so doing, in place of the question of rights, social injustice, colonial inequality and, more broadly, colonial history, there were ossified clichés, empty rhetoric, silent mannequins instead of people, or else a constructivist monologue that substituted long quotations from interviews for voices and different habits of thought. In my view this was the refusal of *polyphony*, that is, an inability to acknowledge equality and diversity of voices and ways of writing, despite the well-known lessons of the twentieth century, which showed how dangerous a monologue is, and in anthropology too. I follow Clifford Geertz⁹ in proposing to interpret this situation with a double negative, as *anti anti-polyphony*, which may assist us in describing the field of conflict within anthropology, and, as far as possible, return us to the forgotten ideals of the discipline through a recognition of the mistakes that we have made, and of the fear and consequent opportunism that we are experiencing today, and, finally, through a re-examination of the conventions that exist within Russian anthropology. In my remarks I should like to touch upon several subjects where, in my view, the theme of borders and the departure from polyphony is most evident.

9 I have in mind Geertz's lecture "Anti Anti-Relativism" (Geertz 1984), written as a reaction to the growth of discussions about rationality within the so-called Science Wars.

*The monologue of power.*¹⁰ After the Russian head of state's address to "his" nation on 23 February 2022 there was no longer any doubt that a new round of the bloody war had begun. That attack was "the triumph of the will" of one man (and his thirteen sidekicks) who sat in front of the cameras giving orders and by the power of his word and inner malice imposing his point of view on the citizens of "his" country (and attempting to do the same for the rest of the world as well).

Literally on the day after the beginning of this criminal "operation", a group of Russian anthropologists, fully aware of the logic of the decisions that had been taken in contemporary Russian politics, applied to the heads of the anthropological institutes and the Association of Ethnographers and Anthropologists of Russia (an extremely amorphous organisation, but which nevertheless fulfilled the function of representing the Russian anthropological community – or at least, was intended to do so), requesting that a letter should be written to the government and president about the immediate cessation of military activities that were leading to an unthinkable tragedy for Ukraine and a social, political and humanitarian catastrophe for Russia. We also proposed an extraordinary meeting of the Association so that such a letter could be written collectively. The refusal that we received, accompanied by the wise and laconic admonition from Academician Valery Tishkov on the Facebook page (not yet prohibited in Russia at that time) "shameful cowards",¹¹ inspired a large group of anthropologists to draw up a petition against the military action on change.org, which produced the expected reaction – an official letter of the Association against our petition. In other words, the *anti-war petition* signed by more than a thousand anthropologists and like-minded people was countered by an *anti-anti-war declaration* by the president of the Association and four leaders of Russian anthropological institutes, which was mentioned in the news bulletins of the pro-government TASS.¹² I would note that the text of our "incorrect" petition was translated into dozens of languages: English, Estonian, French, German, Yakut and many more.

It seems to me that this episode laid bare precisely this problem of the impossibility of acknowledging not so much the idea as the practice of polyphony within Russian anthropology. The voices of many people raised without their belonging to the official institutions and not coinciding with the position of the official authorities

10 I refer the reader to the collective petition written by a group of Russian anthropologists immediately after the beginning of the so-called special military operation: <<https://chnng.it/zYXKTc8f>> [accessed 7.12.2023]. See also the reaction of representatives of the Association of Ethnographers and Anthropologists of Russia: <<https://aaer.co>> (the declaration of 3 March 2022) [accessed 7.12.2023], and my comments for the European Association of Social Anthropologists <<https://easaonline.org/news/russiapetn.shtml>> [accessed 7.12.2023], provoked by the discussion among representatives of EASA of the fact that the word "war" does not appear in the original Russian text of the petition.

11 The context of that accusation was that we were addressing him, as the president of the Association, and not the president of the country directly.

12 See <<https://tass.ru/obschestvo/13952707>> [accessed 7.12.2023].

are a source of peril, and, therefore, illegitimacy. Just as it was a hundred years ago, decentralisation and the acknowledgment of equality seem to those Russian anthropologists who are close to the centres of power, or would like to be, to be a new challenge, and yet another dangerous boundary which it is better not to cross, so as not to put the established hierarchies with their concomitant social, symbolic and economic privileges at risk.

Enclosing the “field”. This obstinate resistance to polyphony restricts, or, in the language of the media of the beginning of this century, “cleanses” the anthropological space within the country (which was small enough already), notwithstanding the illusion of control over the “field” on the part of Russian anthropologists who have remained (an opinion that it was my misfortune to hear not so long ago). I have had many occasions to discuss the difficulties of the new “field” with those colleagues who have not managed to leave Russia or for whom personal circumstances make it impossible. Their inner world, which categorically rejects the violence that is taking place, has shrunk as well as the “field”. The impossibility of protest at any level, from the street to inside their institutions, and the very fact of living in a country that is plunged into fear and collective mistrust, are circumstances that seem beyond human strength. Even “participant observation”, the principal method of anthropology, has become difficult to achieve under these conditions. For this reason the topic of the boundaries of the “field” has been particularly acutely palpable over the past months both from inside and from outside.

Siberian anthropologists will remember the article in *Sibirica* entitled “Who Owns Siberian Ethnography?” (Gray et al. 2004), which was an important step along the road towards making sense of the new internationalisation of the Siberian ethnographic “field” since its closure in the 1920s, with the support of Waldemar Bogoras among others. The authors were right then to recognise the enrichment of Siberian anthropology with the new ideas that were to replace the concepts that had prevented the description of post-Soviet life. Not only did the authors and many of their colleagues believe in the possibility of trans-national anthropology, they did everything to make it a reality.

Now the bitter time has probably come when we have to write that Siberia is being closed to (all) social research, because even those few of us who visit the “field” nowadays will hardly be able to publish texts in Russian on militarism or protests, corruption and nepotism, violence and persecution of LGBTQ+ people. Many Russian anthropologists anyway used to be characterised by the self-censorship and “blindness”, also cultivated within academic institutions, that were criticised by the “new generation” of researchers; now such devices will probably become obligatory. The inevitable distance, and the reality of the physical (outer) and discursive (inner) closure of the “field”, are producing great disquiet among colleagues the world over.¹³

13 Seminars and conference panels on this topic have taken place or are planned in various cities of the world: Vienna <<https://infranorth.eu/blog/on-the-future-of-anthropological->

Besides the research questions already indicated, problems of another sort have also arisen. Some people have already encountered difficulties during field work, when a “wrong” affiliation has become a barrier to carrying out research. Some people cannot visit “the field” because their university does not approve any research in Russia and/or with Russian researchers, and some, who have Russian passports, risk being mobilised and forced to speak with a weapon in their hands or in the name of the aggressor nation. Finally, for some people, who have devoted their lives to the study of Siberia, its closure simply means the end of their careers. All this cannot help reminding us of history a hundred years ago.

Bogoras, with whom I began this commentary, and who departed this life in May 1936, imagined, but, fortunately, did not see, the extent to which the isolation of the Soviet Union was fatal to the evolution of Soviet ethnography, destroying or breaking the lives of hundreds of his students in Soviet camps and prisons,¹⁴ pushing cultural relativism to the margins and replacing it with an illusory feudal control of the “field”, ironically described as “one researcher – one people”. The fear that ethnographical ideals would spread to politics and the outside world destroyed the discipline itself. It can hardly be doubted that the idea of nationalising the discipline and closing the “field” today, in the first third of the twenty-first century, will mark a similar degradation of the discipline.

It should be emphasised that, aware of the danger of the closure of the “field” and the isolation of Russian anthropology, many foreign universities have employed a large number of anthropologists from Russia on short-term contracts, so as to save them, and Russian anthropology, from internal aggression and complete annihilation, and with this to preserve the polyphony of anthropological voices. It is worth noting with some bitterness that during the years of wars waged by the Russian leadership in the name of its citizens, neither the Russian Academy of Sciences, nor a single Russian university announced programmes to save scholars from Syria, Georgia, Ukraine or any other endangered country.

Silent mannequins. “The decolonisation of knowledge”, “inclusivity” and “diversity” are words that we hear almost every day at present. The universities, museums and archives of the world are changing their programmes and exhibition projects, critically re-evaluating their past and the colonial legacy of their predecessors. It is not surprising that the history of science plays a most important part in this movement, because it is historians of science (in our case historians of anthropology) who provide the opportunity critically to interpret everything that has happened to us and

research-and-collaboration-with-russia/> [accessed 7.12.2023], Fairbanks <<https://www.alaskaanthropology.org/annual-meeting/accepted-sessions-papers-and-posters/>> [accessed 7.12.2023] and others, not to mention many informal meetings and faculty sessions.

14 According to the calculations of the historian of Russian and Soviet ethnography Aleksandr Reshetov, the number of ethnographers and archaeologists arrested and shot was more than five hundred.

which lives on in us today.¹⁵ In other words, there is such a fine line nowadays between the history of anthropology and field anthropology that it is hardly possible to begin fieldwork without some knowledge of the history of anthropology (the history of ideas and their rôle in the social life of people “here” and “there”).¹⁶ Moreover, the history of anthropology, like any other branch of knowledge, has its own diachronic dynamics and is included within a cultural context which needs to be translated every time it is used again.

One of the most outstanding recent achievements of the history of (Siberian) anthropology was *Before Boas* by the historian Han Vermeulen (Vermeulen 2015), in which he showed the rôle of the Siberian expeditions of the eighteenth century in the genesis of the anthropological tradition. Written on the basis of a huge corpus of documents in various languages, this research to a large extent follows the post-colonial intellectual tradition of “provincialising” metropolitan knowledge.¹⁷ But, as we know, the reader is also a co-author. For some Russian anthropologists this book, or rather the discussion around it, seems to me to have become one of the foundations of the revivification of the imperial discourse and talk of Russia’s special role in the history of anthropology.

During the bloody months of 2022, with the support of Gazprom, the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (the *Kunstkamera*) opened a permanent exhibition on “Multiethnic Russia” (*Mnogonarodnaya Rossiya*) in what is symptomatically called the Imperial Hall. This exhibition has already been discussed by a great variety of groups on Facebook, Vkontakte and Telegram.¹⁸ Many people found it shocking because of the name of the hall, the design, and the complete lack of any critical interpretation of the past of this “multiethnic” country. It is based on the idea of gifts to the emperors and empresses and the mock wedding in

15 Today, more than thirty years since the end of the Soviet period, historians of anthropology are engaged in translating the legacy of our ambiguous past into a language capable of being understood and integrated into current research within Russia and outside it. An example of this is the current project led by Sergei Alymov on the history of Soviet ethnography during the Cold War.

16 I must admit that I was surprised by the reaction of some researchers to my article on the political life of the ethnographer Sergei Shirokogoroff, which was based on documents from dozens of archives. I received published and unpublished responses declaring that about “everything of ours” one should say *aut bene, aut nihil*. This hagiographical rule, which has operated for many decades, is even now resisting any critical analysis or diversity of opinion about what Imperial and Soviet ethnography was.

17 We have in mind the discussion arising from Dipesh Chakrabarty’s book (Chakrabarty 2000). It is worth mentioning that Vermeulen is continuing this research logic in his latest collective work, which is devoted to a critical re-examination of Bronisław Malinowski’s rôle in the formation of the method of participant observation and field ethnography as such.

18 See, for example, the reaction of representatives of the Çavaş community:
<https://vk.com/wall28503273_1216> [accessed 7.12.2023].

the “house of ice” during the reign of Anna Ioannovna¹⁹ (who, as is well known, was the very embodiment of colonial policy towards representatives of ethnic groups and minorities), one of the projects which intellectually anticipated the creation of the “human zoo” (Demski and Czarnecka 2021). Moreover, the organisers noted that they had “in fact made the figures to match the costumes: they had sought out real people whose anthropological parameters suited the measurements of each costume, and the artists had based the mannequins on these people. For the faces they mostly used historical photographs”.²⁰ Here it is worth remembering the current critique of the use of mannequins in museum space, especially those based on real people, as a continuation of projects to impose power/knowledge inherited from the time of colonialism (Cooks and Wagelie 2021).

At the opening of the exhibition, the head of Gazprom Aleksei Miller, an adept of the intricacies of Kremlin politics, where the present-day aggression and “expansion to the Sea of Azov” are compared to “Peter’s successes”,²¹ declared, no less, that:

All Peter’s life, all his activity, all his achievements and actions were devoted to this idea alone – making Russia into a strong, unshakable empire. And he attained this goal in his own lifetime, by winning the Northern War, ensuring Russia’s access to the sea, and achieving the most glorious Russian military victory of the eighteenth century, that of the Battle of Poltava. An empire is an army, it is a navy, it is industry, it is science. Science is, of course, the *Kunstkamera*. And the *Kunstkamera* is part of Peter’s imperial idea of a single multiethnic Russia.

He was seconded by the governor of St. Petersburg, Aleksandr Beglov:

We are proud that our ancestors created such a state. The *Kunstkamera* is the oldest Russian museum, founded by order of the Emperor, Peter the Great. It is natural that it is here, and it is today, that this new exhibition devoted to our multiethnic country is being opened. Peter I was the gatherer of lands, the gatherer of peoples. When he proclaimed the country an empire, he said that everyone could live in peace in it. Many peoples, many ethnicities, many religions – that is our national idea. The new exhibition is evidence that Russia has preserved the culture of many peoples, their languages and their customs.²²

19 See the museum website, <https://www.kunstkamera.ru/news_list/museum/19542024> [accessed 7.12.2023], and the video on the museum VKontakte page:

<https://vk.com/museumkunstkamera?z=video-199642998_456239158%2F8bfbef9e44eda950d9%2Fpl_post_-199642998_5691> [accessed 7.12.2023].

20 See the publication in *The Art Newspaper Russia*: <<https://www.theartnewspaper.ru/posts/20221108-qkla/?ysclid=lcj5662tzo946361438>> [accessed 7.12.2023].

21 <<https://www.rbc.ru/politics/07/12/2022/6390a7869a79474a9b925f07?ysclid=ld9g4fvqnk124894328>> [accessed 7.12.2023].

22 <<https://spbnevnika.ru/news/2022-11-02/v-kunstkamere-otkryli-postoyannuyu-vystavku-posvyaschennuyu-narodam-rossii>> [accessed 7.12.2023].

Many words: the “parade of nations”, the “ice wedding”, the gifts to the emperors, the mannequins based on the faces and bodies of living people, with happy expressions like the heroes of the films of the time of “Soviet optimism”, the imperial-colonial speeches at the opening... But none of this says anything. The mannequins cannot be made to speak, any more than the museum can yet again be made a project of colonialism, when there are no voices of the people that the exhibition is about. And their voices can be heard today no less clearly than that of the man who gives the orders to attack a sovereign neighbouring country, a man obsessed with returning “the grandeur of empire” and rewriting Russian history.²³

Let us return to the story of Waldemar Bogoras. Remembering his revolutionary past and exile, he wrote:

Besides my scholarly baggage, I brought back [from exile] to St. Petersburg literary baggage as well: poems, stories, sketches, entire novels, and in addition an unquenchable thirst: Let's finish the fight! The fight with those in charge, of course! (Gagen-Torn 1971: 139).

He did indeed have to do a lot of fighting, but as he sank ever deeper into administrative life and negotiations with “those in charge”, he was no longer capable of resisting them, though he did experience those despondent feelings that he shared with Boas, a man whom he trusted entirely, whom he loved, but with whom his friendship could not withstand administrative pressure.

One more quotation from the short version of Bogoras's autobiography, written on 20 May 1926, that is, in the same year when he wrote to Oldenburg about the closure of the Arctic:

History has locked up the old literature, and that part of me that was Tan has faded, shrunken, and I have become a professor of private ethnography, and I am surrounded by pupils, assistants, students from the workers' faculty, students from the geography faculty, and students who have just wandered in, unacknowledged auditors. What a lot of learning [...] But that part of me that was Tan is not dead either, it is still alive. A reporter of the arts is a vast gramophone. His soul is made of sensitive records, and before he can play them for other people, he must record them for himself (Tan-Bogoras 1989: 449).

It is no less difficult to understand the experiences of the present participants in the tragedy of anthropology in Russia. Their gramophone is almost inaudible. And we all have difficulty in distinguishing its sounds and voices – what is happening to

23 See the discussions of museum exhibitions devoted to aboriginal peoples in other countries, for example, the Fields Museum in Chicago: <<https://www.sapiens.org/culture/field-museum-native-voices/?fbclid=IwAR2ZRIRoVjRpYriCTRiFqE1qhdsGDVHgF99xQzNFRFgwZZDxqgMoLhXofHU>> [accessed 7.12.2023]. One might recall James Clifford's idea of the museum as a zone of contact, expressed in his book (Clifford 1997).

us, to the “field”, and with everything that, it seemed, “would be forever” (until, as Alexei Yurchak put it, “it was no more”). It is already clear today that if anthropology in Russia survives this crisis it will be radically different. We are already faced with the questions upon the discussion of which the future of the discipline depends. How will anthropologists after the end of the “operation” evaluate the activities of those organisations of local communities and indigenous peoples that were actively involved in supporting military action, mobilisation, and propaganda of the aggression in Ukraine? To what extent did the boundary that emerged between “supporters” and “protesters” split local communities when there are such criminal organisations as the Wagner private army involved in the confrontation between the troops of Russia and Ukraine? And, finally, how will Russian anthropologists who supported the “special military operation”, openly or not, themselves formulate their research and ethical position when the military activity in Ukraine is over or frozen?

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Dmitry Baranov

If we are to speak of borders from an anthropological perspective, then there are no such things as impenetrable borders. Penetrability not as Lotman understood it, the crossing of the border and reworking the external as internal, but in the sense of an effect of revulsion. A border always creates tension or pressure from inside or from outside, which affects “the other” side. In this sense it reflects the structural heterogeneity of what it divides. The present situation in the world (the pandemic, the military conflicts) endows the border with subjectivity, making it a “player” in the field of social interactions. It has an immediate influence both on people’s life as a whole, and on their professional activity in particular. If we are speaking of scholarship, the border not only makes the representatives of the scholarly community change their forms and channels of communication under changed circumstances, but makes them look for new perspectives, methods and languages of description in the research that they conduct.

As for anthropology and ethnography, they themselves, putting it very simply, are always creating borders: whether it is a question of drawing the boundaries of the researcher’s social/academic identity (since being an anthropologist means constantly subjecting one’s identity to doubt, checking it for solidity, and even temporarily renouncing it), or of investigators’ actualising/constructing group boundaries in the communities that they are studying. In a certain sense ethnography owes its existence to the raising of the question of the border that divides Ourselves from The Others. Nowadays the heuristic potential of that border is not so obvious. Some borders – of ethics, ideology, outlook, quarantine, economics – no longer work towards achieving or consolidating solidarity. Rather, they lead to the segmentation of the most diverse

communities. It is enough to look at the posts and comments on social media to be convinced of this.

When I consider that there is a certain duality to a border – whether it is a “wall” or a “door” – I must stress that the functions of joining and separating are closely connected with each other and mutually independent, that is, they are never absolute. In some cases strengthening certain borders may create the conditions for weakening others and, correspondingly, forming new configurations of group identities. Thus the creation in 2022 of the Association of Ethnographical Museums of Russia under the aegis of the Russian Ethnographical Museum, against the background of the freezing of international co-operation between museums, was intended “to unite efforts towards creating a community (association) of ethnographical museums in Russia”. One aim of the association was “to strengthen the relationships of mutuality and partnership between ethnographical museums and museums with ethnographical leanings in the Russian Federation”. All the museums’ exhibition activities were directed towards mastering the internal space, which favoured the strengthening and activation of links both between central and local studies museums and between the local museums themselves. Moreover, new features have appeared in the “exhibition” discourse over the past year – that is, requests for exhibits that represent not only the local “native” populations or Russians, but also the cultures of those “incoming” ethnic groups whose diasporas are having a significant effect on the cultural landscape of one region or another. But the most important thing is that displaying Caucasian collections in the museums of Siberia, for example, is beginning to be described in the official discourse not as the presentation of something exotic and distant, but of something that has an immediate relevance to the formation of the local multicultural identity. It is understandable that this is not a tendency that came into being yesterday, but the international isolation of Russian museums has had, and continues to have, an influence on the formation of their internal cross-border space.

In speaking of the museum narrative, the closure of the external border has another consequence: the homogenisation of the cultural space, as is happening in the case of the Russian Arctic. Since the cessation of activity of the international Arctic Council, which was chaired by Russia, in March 2022, “polar” themes in museum activities have acquired a particularly Russian “residency”. This has been embodied in the Arctic Museums Section (coordinated by the REM) set up by the Union of Museums, the aim of which is “the development of the humanities and the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Arctic, and the dissemination of knowledge about the history of the appropriation of this severely beautiful part of Russia”. The entire non-Russian Arctic remained outside its scope, while at the same time it was stressed that it is to Russia that most of the Arctic territories and their population belong.

In the spatial dimension one consequence of the strengthening of borders is that scholars become less mobile, and this in turn changes the configuration of the process of the production of knowledge within the discipline. Indeed, participating in

person in discussions at conferences, conversations in the corridors, handshakes, coffee breaks, the very fact of being in the same place as one's colleagues assumes the acquisition of the sensory experience that is fundamental not only to our experience of reality, but also to the production of that knowledge that initiates joint activity in a common space (Dicks 2014). In this sense "sensory deprivation" obviously has a negative effect on the quality of an anthropologist's work.

When we speak of the concept of mobility, this does not only concern people (in the present case, scholars), but also material objects: limiting their movement has serious consequences for researchers' professional activity. This is primarily relevant to museum ethnography, which is closely linked to the world of objects not only because of its activity in curation and research, but also in collecting and exhibiting. Indeed, museum ethnographers go out into the field in order to return with the collections that they have acquired. It is this last circumstance, the collection of "material objects", that is almost the only factor justifying ethnographers' mobility on expeditions. The formation of new states, and, therefore, new frontiers on post-Soviet territory sharply reduced museums' collecting and expeditions in the Baltic States, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, since it was no longer possible to remove and not return those ethnographical collections to which cultural value was ascribed. It is another matter that the notion that we had (in the REM) of cultural value or, in Zbyněk Stránský's terms, the museality of material objects, did not coincide with that of our foreign colleagues or the state organs. I remember that when, in the 2000s, we first decided to try to put into action the official channels for bringing back objects acquired by an expedition that we had collected in Armenia, our Armenian colleagues were genuinely baffled by the objects from rural culture, since for them this collection was a completely unremarkable material element of everyday life and had no value for a museum. They did not even request export permits from the relevant authorities for it, because all this "rubbish" had nothing to do with cultural heritage. By and large, though, the closing of the channels for acquiring new collections has also had an effect on the field activities of museum employees: the number of expeditions has been sharply reduced, and the aims of those that still take place have changed substantially.

The mobility of museum ethnographers depends directly on the circulation of things among museums within the framework of exhibition activities. For this reason the next step on the road toward the further immobilisation of collections (and with them, of people) was when in 2013 certain receiving countries stopped providing state guarantees that the items of cultural value that left the country would be preserved and returned – a decision connected with the notorious "Schneerson Library case". Finally, cross-border movement of collections (and their curators, keepers, restorers, lecturers and museum administrators with them) ceased completely on 3 March 2022, when the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation issued a decree halting the temporary import and export of museum objects to and from the territory of the

state. Thus limitations on the mobility of collections introduce borders for the mobility of museum ethnographers that are hard to overcome.

Taking into account the classical understanding of ethnography as a research method of collecting field data in which the ethnographer conducts regular observations of people's interactions, has contact with them mainly in the format of informal (or semi-formal) interviews (which implies that the researcher spends a long time in the natural milieu of the community that he is studying), it must be acknowledged that the current political agenda is beginning to have a noticeable effect on it. In my own case, my research into the practices of veneration of saints in Nakhchivan was called into question because the Karabakh War and the restrictions connected with the pandemic made the Nakhchivan region temporarily inaccessible for in situ fieldwork. These circumstances in a certain sense gave the ethnographical field an extra-territorial character, even though the concept of "the field" is by its very nature loaded from the beginning with various spatial connotations as the "domicile" of a traditional culture.

External limitations fragment and decentralise the field, revealing its mobility and heterogeneity, and the penetrability of internal and external borders. One need only recall that since the middle of the 1990s there has been active discussion of the thesis of so-called polylocal ethnography, the polylocality of field research and the deterritorialised world (A. Gupta, A. Appadurai, G. Marcus), which affirms and engages the problem of the field and local knowledge not in a geographical, but a "mental" perspective. In this sense locality of knowledge does not correspond to the remoteness of its place of origin. In other words, if we follow this thesis, the sacral landscapes of Nakhchivan, the history of their genesis and transformations, and the practices and discourses connected with them can be studied "remotely", that is, for example, by interviewing people born in Nakhchivan in St. Petersburg. Both the informants' memories and the informants themselves can figure as "places of memory", if we follow Pierre Nora, no less than the actual *pirlər*, *ojakhner* and *surbk* of Nakhchivan. In such a case, understandably, it is not a matter of sacral geography, holy places or peculiarities of the landscape as such, but how and why people talk about them, that is, of the narratives that draw the mental map of the holy places, the map of the hierarchies of the events connected with them – and at the same time, the map of the things that are not mentioned. Essentially, we get from the interviews a verbalised representation of the sacral geography of Nakhchivan. In the best case these are memorates, the recollections of eye-witnesses, that use particular formulae and clichés and are organised in a constant structure. The commemorative narratives that arise blur the boundaries between invention and reality, since they are subject to particular rules of storytelling, and rely on a common semantic field of varying elements, when one concept is conveyed with different, synonymous lexemes.

All this initiates the question of the place of the ethnographic field, or rather of its actual local nature. Indeed, where is the ethnographic field, and where is the bor-

der that separates it from the researcher? Must the field necessarily be remote from the ethnographer and have a distinct territorial mooring? Perhaps it is situated right beside the anthropologist (as J. Thomas believes when he affirms that “archaeology and anthropology [...] are both attempts to achieve some kind of familiarity with worlds other than our own, even within our own immediate surroundings” (Thomas 2012: 226)? Or inside each individual anthropologist? Or could it be that thanks to the reduction in mobility we are dealing with a general tendency to turn ethnographers into anthropologists?

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Vlada Baranova

I should like to dwell in more detail on the last question, about the relationships between the centre and ethnic regions, and likewise about the role of anthropologists in these processes, but first I shall say a few words, suggested by the editors' first questions, about academic mobility, internationalisation and the closing off of scholarship. I must stress that this part is largely personal experience, not expert opinion.

Linguistics in Russia in recent years certainly was an international research centre in certain fields (typology, the languages of the Northern Eurasian area, Russian studies). It would, regrettably, be more accurate to say that it was represented by the academic and educational centres of particular major cities, because the academic inequality between Moscow, St. Petersburg and a few other places and the rest of the country was extremely great, which was not infrequently seen in their results. Russian conferences, publications and other ways of presenting the results of collective research, such as language corpora, determined the academic agenda in these fields for researchers from other countries too, alongside other academic centres. Other branches, such as sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, were examples of centres of the middling level: they had their own schools and specialists to carry out regional research, but no particular influence on the formation of new theoretical approaches. Other areas might not be represented at all, or else be the preserve of individual researchers who were part of scholarly networks outside the Russian centres (as seems to have been the case with formal semantics). Most important of all for the development of linguistics was the internationalisation of the labour market and academic contacts: some academic centres hired on the international market, in recent years they had quite competitive conditions, and there were exchange programmes for students and international education programmes taught in English; Russian scholars attended conferences and had placements or studied for degrees in other countries, and so on.

This internationalism now belongs to the past: some parts of it ended abruptly, like the departure of all foreigners from the National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE) laboratories, and some, such as conferences, gradually and

perhaps not entirely. As for the fate of Russian researchers, one has the impression that future developments will not be the same for Russian linguistics as a whole, but will depend on the branch of study: in some fields the researchers have changed location en masse and gathered (temporarily?) in other academic centres (for example, this is what is happening with Uralic studies in Hamburg or typology in Lyons). This seems to give the opportunity of maintaining scholarly approaches. In other cases scholars have remained in Russian academic and educational institutions or have moved, redistributing themselves in various academic groups with different approaches (in successful cases, amongst people who were significant colleagues for them), or have been getting to grips with the non-academic labour market. This variant will probably lead to the disbanding of academic schools. It seems that a new colonialism will develop in area studies. At least, I can observe several projects with this scenario and I suppose that it will become more general: Western researchers, or Russians who have found employment elsewhere, not having the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in Russia but having resources, will employ scholars in Russia, or recent emigrants without any status, to collect their data.

What resistance can there be to the destruction of academic life? Horizontal connections and co-operation. Technology allows us to work at a distance from one another. Several online groups (chats, online seminars) have come into being to discuss current research, and unite Russian-speaking scholars working both in and outside Russia. There are educational projects such as the Free University that may evolve further. My colleagues and I have been discussing setting up a Distributed University based on blockchain technologies and offering the validation of degrees as NFTs, with the possibility not only of online lectures, but also of mobile offline groups for reading sessions or seminars for students who have ended up working as waiters in Istanbul, for example. However, it must be understood that co-operation requires considerable efforts on both sides: avoidance of the censorship, or partial acceptance of it in for publications in Russia (since many people have paid a heavy price for the right to call things by their real names), resources for taking part in events and publications that do not win any points for one's academic career. This may sound excessively pragmatic, but if publications in foreign journals do not count for the Russian Science Fund, and journals from the Higher Attestation Commission list, or some other officially approved list, are required, are many people going to spend their time writing yet another article? And vice versa. As I was finishing an article, still for a Russian project, I remarked to a colleague that I was horrified by the thought that this might be the last academic text that I would write in Russian – and I write Russian much better than I write English, and I like the actual process of writing, and so I wanted to propose an idea for an issue, and an article, to a certain Russian journal. To this he replied that he too was grieved by the idea of no longer writing in Russian, but (with the exception of texts in fulfilment of past obligations or for *Festschriften* for senior colleagues) he found it hard to imagine himself writing articles in Russian

just to maintain the tradition when he was in the vulnerable position of an emigrant with a short-term contract who had to build a new career. And if the university will not pay travel costs or conference fees for people in Russia wanting to go abroad, or people from abroad wanting to go to Russia, will many people be able to go at their own expense? This responsibility evidently lies on the shoulders of better positioned researchers: those who have a permanent post outside Russia can contribute to publications in Russia; researchers in Russia whose reputation is sufficient for them to be invited to give lectures or keynote papers in other countries, and who have time to prepare publications besides those required for their grants, should let it be known what research is continuing here.

Now I move on to the question of the role of the scholars amid the war. Frankly, I was disconcerted by how it was formulated, but I shall try to note its substantial rather than discursive elements. In the nationality and language policies of the Russian Federation in recent years a progressive restriction of the rights of the republics and communities can be clearly traced. In the ethnic regions where I have conducted fieldwork (Kalmykia, Chuvashia and others) many processes connected with social inequality and attacks on civil and political rights were also additionally interpreted in national terms, but besides these there were actual ethnic and linguistic repressions. This repressive policy led to monstrously inflamed passions and led to a sense of injustice that was most strikingly expressed in the self-immolation of Albert Razin in 2019 in Udmurtia, in protest against changes in the law on education that restricted the teaching of native languages ("If my language is going to disappear tomorrow, I am ready to die today"). This may have been one of the last points of no return, when the voices of the dispossessed could still be heard, but social researchers, including me, were not mediators, or were hardly mediators, at that moment. Other manifestations of this position can be seen in the reaction of ethnic communities to the revisions to the Constitution in 2020 (Baranova 2023: 31f.). In informal conversations, colleagues working on nationalism, inequality, identity and other topics have long ago collectively reached the opinion that we can expect very serious conflicts of an ethnic nature, but there has hardly been any public discussion of this topic.

What changed in 2022? In public space, the decolonial perspective is being more frequently used with respect to Russian policy, and voices have begun to be heard speaking of ethnic prejudices. There have been discussions about further readjustments in demarcation. This quite complex discussion is taking place against a background of a noticeable number of people from the poorest ethnic regions dying, and an intensification of social and ethnic inequality. Aleksey Bessudnov's research has described how coming from an economically deprived region increases the risk of dying at the front. Coming from a poor region, such as Buryatia, is the most significant factor, independent of ethnic origins, but ethnicity is also influential (Bessudnov 2022). The tension will increase, and a coherent position on the part of the professional community is certainly important, above all from the ethical point of view.

At the same time, there is a greater call for legitimising practices: the manifestation of ethnicity by representatives of minority ethnic groups and academic catering for them by anthropologists and linguists. A good example of the first tendency is provided by the film clips put out by the Federal Agency for Nationality Affairs (FADN) about the production of body armour, with the formula “It doesn’t matter whether we speak Russian, Khakas, Chuvash or Bashkir, we are all united by our love for the Motherland and a great desire to help it”. Concerts to raise money for the mobilised troops and other events are often given names in minority languages: *Manāşmi saltaksem* (Çävaş, “Unforgotten soldiers”), or *Nègèdèe* (Buryaad, “Together”). In the second case I shall perhaps do without examples, but FADN is developing a revision of concepts on national, migration and language policy in collaboration with certain research centres. This activity will certainly lead to further division in society and in the professional community.

What can be done now? I am not sure that social researchers at present have the moral right to be mediators between the centre and the regions, particularly in view of academics’ central and generally privileged position. But it is important to have an explicit moral position and to use one’s professional resources to create an expert network and to disseminate information in society, in the first place among the Russian-speaking majority, since no change in the linguistic position or support for minorities is possible without work towards overcoming the prejudices of the majority. The attempts at public sociology by Michael Burawoy (Burawoy 2005) or the Multilingual Cities Movement in sociolinguistics (Rampton and Cooke 2021), in which I took part, show that researchers and academic centres possess considerable resources for work of this sort. It is important to use researchers’ existing social capital to support ethnic and linguistic minorities. The principle “nothing for us without us” applies in this case: it is necessary to provide fora for speakers of minority languages and language activists to express their opinions and to support the dissemination of information about their projects, since researchers from Moscow and St. Petersburg have more chance of being heard. The conflict between the centres and the ethnic regions will be prolonged, and if the worst does not come to the worst, one of the results will be a redistribution of roles within the academy and an increase in visibility for members of minority ethnic groups, and also closer interaction between the academia and society.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Tatiana Barchunova

[1] My situation does not fit into the concept of the change in the format of academic activity implied in this question, which connects radical changes with the situation of the past year. These changes began much earlier in my life. The most radical and abrupt changes took place at the beginning of the covid epidemic. I shall begin by considering them, and then add certain details from an earlier time.

I live in Novosibirsk and work at the Novosibirsk State University. The aims of my research are closely linked with teaching. My overarching goal is one of applied research: to use the results of the research to invigorate the courses I teach. That is, I try to show my students that scholarship can in some way explain what is happening to them, motivate them to conduct research of their own and to learn how to use the knowledge that they acquire in the lecture theatre to understand their own lives. My highest reward is when they discuss the material of my lectures and seminars afterwards, in their halls of residence, on chats and on social media. My efforts to invite specialists from other universities and academic institutions, both at home and abroad, are also directed towards this end. I have made great efforts to arrange visits from students at other educational institutions. The Covid epidemic seriously undermined the realisation of this programme. Specialists who were prepared to come to Siberia were ill or in quarantine. The logistics also became much more complicated. My colleague, for example, who came every summer to collect material for her book and regarded Akademgorodok as her second home, is never likely to overcome the Covid restrictions.

I have tried to use the resources of Google and Zoom for keeping in touch and for co-teaching, but have been hindered by three circumstances. Firstly, my colleagues' internet communications quickly became overloaded. Secondly, the time difference is a nuisance – four to six hours with Europe, and twelve hours with the East Coast of the USA. And, thirdly, it is difficult to fit the online format of collaboration into the standard conditions for programmes of academic exchange. The institution of education is conservative.

Substantial, but less abrupt changes in my academic life came about in connection with the progressive cessation of the work of Western charitable organisations' branches in the Russian Federation at the beginning of the 2000s. My academic mobility also began to come to an end. I found it convenient, as a lecturer in a provincial university, to work with private and governmental Western charitable organisations. Applicants were not required to be affiliated with the Academy of Sciences or to have senior posts. The methods of application and accountability to these organisations were straightforward and did not interfere with routine teaching. The programmes' thematic diversification permitted movement from one topic to another. It was particularly convenient to work when branches of certain grant-awarding bodies were situated in Novosibirsk and accepted applications and carried out their activities where we were. And although the route of any lengthy journey practically always went through Moscow, the decentralised management of the programmes made many formal operations simpler, in particular obtaining visas for conference attendance.

Our university is developing a programme for academic mobility, thanks to which I have been able to go to various places. But there is only one such programme for a large group, and if I receive support from it, I know that someone else from among my colleagues does not.

For some time, I managed to maintain a level of mobility that allowed me to combine teaching and research. This was possible thanks to an affiliation with the Siberian Studies Centre of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle. The Centre readily invited us to its seminars and conferences and sent its own colleagues to us. The guests of the Institute had access to a magnificent library, open twenty-four hours a day, the opportunity of contact with leading specialists on various regions and cultures, and young scholars, and also technical support. However, at a certain point the programmes of the Siberian Studies Centre were cut. I had managed to do something, and had collected a certain amount of material for future use. Now we have to look for other ways of collaborating.

Since it is hard to get away from a taste for variety and life in an open world, I am trying to take part in Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov's online seminars, and I am studying German at courses run by the Siberian branch of the Goethe Institute, which is developing very interesting programmes in German.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Elena Danilko

[1] The erection of new borders could not, of course, help being reflected in my life and in the life of the academic community as a whole. Nevertheless, I would refrain from generalisations, and write about my own experience. There are no more long-term plans, it is simply impossible to make any. There are no more easy ways, and even the difficult ones are becoming more and more convoluted. However, the February panic was followed by an understanding that after so many years of a natural and habitual absence of walls, it was not so easy to put them back again. So many different links and relationships have been formed over those years, so many acquaintances and solid friendships have grown up, so many contacts, necessary and unnecessary, have appeared, that no border restrictions can cancel them. And now, thanks to these connections, the official borders are being overlaid with invisible ways around them and complex logistic chains are being constructed. An anthropological film recorded on a disc bought for me at the Pennsylvania Museum will pass through dozens of hands and cross several state borders before it reaches Moscow, where I shall show it to my students. Someone has taken care of my subscription to a professional journal, and I in turn send them scans of some Russian works or verify something in the archives. Personal interactions have replaced academic exchanges and institutional interactions. One could probably call this academic civil society. Of course, this is far from being an optimal model, it is a resource for survival, not for growth. It allows us not to disappear and not to become disconnected from what is happening in our discipline. And it only works provided that we who have remained here are separated (even if not literally) from our institutions and represent nobody but ourselves. The

no-man's-land crossed by our (my) way around is a marginal space, and in a certain sense a lonely one. How long this will continue is unknown.

[2] I have remained in Russia and have not resigned. So formally nothing has changed, but in essence a great deal has. International projects and plans are paused. Our anthropological film festival, which we love and have taken such pains over, is suspended, like a film, in the middle. When everything had just begun to work, when we had found a better venue, made connections, begun to make ourselves known, gained viewers, volunteers and even fans... But a festival is a celebration, and what celebrations can there be now? Still, we have not been expelled from the European association of festivals of visual anthropology, quite the reverse, they have done everything to let us see the programmes of the other festivals on line, and to be present at their seminars. But we are not participants, we are viewers. This is perhaps the most painful loss for me. Other projects have also come to a stop – collaborative fields, collaborative books. Not finished, but paused.

The communities inside Russia to which I belong in one way or another have also been reformatted. They have been polarised and divided. And these suddenly arising internal borders, which it seemed quite possible to get over, have turned out to be more profound for me. I have become more selective in social contact, take less part in conferences, and meet my colleagues less often. As if the pandemic is not over, and all interactions are still virtual.

[4] In my view the Soviet model of the relationship between scholarship and authority is to a large extent still in existence. This model assumes a practical application of our studies, and ritual ideological gestures. Soviet ethnographers justified the “Soviet people” ideologeme, and now our colleagues write about the Russian people... The accretion of knowledge, the solution of research problems or the confirmation of hypotheses were never enough, and a so-called “practical scientific significance” is present in our grant applications, and in dissertations, and in research institutes’ plans. How many times have we included the usual standard phrases (such as “may be used in educational or in outreach work”) under that heading, how often have we noticed that in the justification of the relevance of dissertations (particularly regional ones) research and ideology are inextricably intertwined (national unanimity, inter-ethnic tolerance, preservation of spiritual and moral values, blah, blah, blah)! And those planned anniversary conference-clones all over the country: the xth anniversary of Slavonic literacy, or Peter the Great, or the Soviet Union... Without fail, there is a speech by an important official at the opening ceremony, and a letter of greeting from an even more important official. Have we anything to do with this? Seemingly not. But still, we were involved in all that. I may not have had any serious experience of participating in the social and political life of the country: a few attendances at meetings, Facebook posts, expressions of support for everything good and against everything bad can hardly be taken seriously. So it turns out that we have missed everything. Occupied

with our own affairs, carried away with our own splendid research, we did not notice that all those stupid formalities and conventional phrases had turned into actions. And the Association of Ethnographers and Anthropologists of Russia has suddenly turned out to be anything but a free society of scholars. Therefore as yet I find it hard to say anything about lessons learnt, everything slides into the subjunctive, guilty or denunciatory, and far too emotional and helpless.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Natalia Drannikova

[1] 2022 was the most awful and tragic year of my life. The Special Military Operation has once again drawn borders within scholarship. I shall write of my personal experience.

In March the European Commission took the decision to stop co-operation with Russian organisations in the field of research, scholarship and innovation. My personal scholarly contacts remained, but officially things became much harder. Some of my international projects were shut down. In addition, the leaders of collective projects demanded the deletion of my Russian affiliation, so that I can now participate in them only as a private individual. Some foreign grant-awarding bodies stopped working with researchers from Russia, and others imposed limitations: it is possible to be a participant in a project and even its *de facto* leader, but no longer possible to get a Schengen visa to take part in an academic event.

Since the beginning of the Special Military Operation it has become impossible to conduct international education work in Russia. At the Northern (Arctic) Federal University (SAFU), I was in charge of a master's programme in which some of the modules were run by Finnish colleagues, but after 24 February it became impossible to put it into practice. The university has cut the staff of the department of international co-operation.

Unlike official contacts, my personal contacts with certain foreign colleagues have deepened over that time. I have felt their support and understanding of the difficulties in the position of someone who does not support the ideology of their country.

Some years ago, I went beyond the limits of my own research into the field of folklore, and began to assimilate new directions and methods. The situation in the country and the state of Russian society prompted me to study the role of cultural memory and its local types.

[2] A great deal changed in my professional life in 2022: I left SAFU because I did not share the official policy of the directorate. According to this, since 24 February lecturers should engage in research that is needed by the state, and not topics that they themselves are interested in. I am assisted in this situation by the scholarly community.

[3] I consider the question of whether there are different kinds of scholarship in a geopolitical sense relevant and worth discussing separately. The problem of “metro-politan” versus “provincial” humanities is acute in Russia. The latter is less well integrated into international scholarship and more often continues to use obsolete research methods, using them to promote the ideas of the “Russian world” at a regional level.

[4] 2022 confronted the Russian scholarly community with the problem of the value and popularisation of scientific knowledge, which must resist militant ignorance and pseudo-scientific absurdities. In the period of political transformation that the country is undergoing at present, the rôle of specialists in the humanities, primarily historians and ethnographers, is increasing in importance as never before. Over the past twenty years, a national identity based on the idea of war and territorial size has been being constructed in Russia at the state level. In the future when a period of political transformation begins, we shall have to reformat this identity, and for this we shall need to engage with our country’s “inconvenient” past, open the archives and create a new official discourse of cultural memory. Scholars can include regional knowledge in the national narrative. For many years I have participated in the social life of Archangel Province, studying the local identities of residents in northern towns, popularising knowledge in the field of folklore, making films, creating an archive, and working with the regional pages of the “inconvenient” past (researching into the identities of forcibly resettled or dispossessed peasants exiled to the North, and studying memories of the places where people were shot in the vicinity of Archangel, and of the Gulag).

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Stephan Dudeck

Frontlines Turning into Borderlines Turning into Frontlines

I am grateful for the invitation to participate in the discussion, as it allows me to exchange ideas on the disruptive effects of recent events in Russia on anthropological research and my own work as a German researcher studying the Russian North and Siberia.

At the same time, such an invitation is problematic for several reasons. Primarily, it excludes the voices of Ukrainian colleagues by default. Even if they were invited and wanted to participate, they would not be able to justify such participation in their home country. Ukrainians are facing the violent consequences of political decisions made in Russia that have affected myself to an incomparably lesser degree. Secondly, I’m not able to freely reflect on the consequences of the ongoing events on my work without also discussing the causes, which automatically provokes censorship or self-censorship to avoid myself or even the institutions involved in publishing getting into trouble – but assessment of such risks is difficult from afar.

Anthropology, as a child of colonialism, is often engaged in the rehabilitation of the voices silenced by it. It is in itself a mission impossible, but nevertheless one worth trying. Communicating in situations where the means of communication are unknown and the conditions are adverse might be something that is intrinsically anthropological.

In situations of censorship, the dialogical character of any kind of speaking and writing, producing its polyphony and hybrid results, takes on a different meaning as it becomes a negotiation between opposing forces that try to separate or unite, to speak up or to silence, and to evaluate the same things as either delegitimizing or legitimizing their actions. In the case of self-censorship, these two voices are struggling with each other in one's own head.

For those who grew up during times of so called real existing socialism, Aesopian language, the hybrid way of speaking simultaneously to and against authority, was a weapon of the weak and a part of everyday life. I feel unable to use Aesopian language in this case and have no idea how to circumvent the fact that important circumstances affecting my work and life cannot be spoken about publicly in Russia without putting those involved in danger. This is not a completely new situation, as forms of political repression and legal frameworks fostering violence against dissent or minorities have existed and been extended throughout the time I have been working in Russia (e.g. Kondakov 2019). In retrospect, I realise that even while publishing about issues such as war memory (Dudeck 2018) and gender diversity (Dudeck and Habeck 2021), I did not pay enough attention to the growth of aggressive militarist rhetoric, xenophobic discourses and violence.

Networks and Institutions

In my writing, I can highlight the risks faced by the people I work with, such as colleagues and research partners, as well as the risks faced by myself. In real life, however, these risks are often dominated and marginalised by the risks perceived by institutions, be they research institutions or government agencies themselves. Their need for security leads to the need and means for solidarity through networks of support in order to survive objectification by bureaucratic measures and regulations. These regulations can control access to research funding, working contracts, and travel visas, as well as dictate where one can stay in the country or whether one is barred from entering or being expelled from it.

What I observe at present is the disappearance of institutional loyalty and the sense of belonging to scholarly schools. On the other hand, I see the growing importance of networks of mutual support and feelings of responsibility towards personal ties. However, status and position in academia continue to play an important role in securing means of survival and research and are controlled, managed and channelled through institutions, funding agencies and publishers. These institutions are becom-

ing less places of belonging or self-governance and more like alien, neoliberal organisations pursuing their own agendas.

The collaboration of EU countries with Russia in the field of research was heavily based on these institutional frameworks. According to my own experiences, German research institutions have demonstrated a great deal of spinelessness when sensing the risk of distressing authorities in Russia in the past. Now they have stopped almost all official ties and collaborations with research in Russia. At the same time, private contacts are not only tolerated but encouraged, in order to prevent harm to necessary research and to secure the potential for future collaborations.

My Personal Experiences with Borders

What once were administrative regulations and installations that enhanced the mobility of some and the immobility of others, to paraphrase the new mobilities paradigm of Urry and Sheller (2006), have now turned, at least in part, into frontlines separating conflicting actors hostile to one another. Growing up in East Berlin during the 1980s, living in close proximity to the Berlin wall was one of the formative moments of my childhood. The wall was a very palpable, yet hybrid, frontline of the Cold War that gradually became a semi-permeable membrane of a state-regulated border allowing for visits from relatives from the West and private contacts, despite its symbolic and material violence and the hostile rhetoric on the official level.

I find myself perceiving present-day developments through the lens of my German upbringing, not only the experience of the Berlin wall, but also the historical memory of aggressive German militarism and imperialism leading to two world wars. I recently rediscovered the letters of my grandfather who had died as a member of the German occupational troops in Ukraine when a gun went off (most likely accidentally) while he was cleaning weapons shortly before he was about to be sent to the frontline. He is buried in an unknown grave not far from today's frontlines near the city of Dnipro. The seeming fatalism of his last letter and his unreflective complicity with the Nazi regime reminded me immediately of some of the reactions of people today.

I am still puzzled by how useful such comparisons may be. They obviously have their limits. Not only do the mechanisms of propaganda differ but also the political and ideological framework at large in which policies are being passed to justify military actions. Nevertheless, I recognise similarities in revanchist propaganda, discursive closures, and immunisation against outside critique in the way military advancements into neighbouring countries and acquisition of new territories with military means are ideologically legitimised by propagandists and ordinary people alike. In a situation where I feel my intellectual capability is unable to understand and analyse events I never considered possible, I resort to such personal experiences and memories.

What adds a silver lining to the picture is another personal experience, the more or less peaceful fall of the authoritarian regime and the border that dominated my childhood and youth and the diverse forms of resistance and solidarity that contributed to its dissolution. My decision to pursue anthropology as a discipline was in part a result and consequence of this experience. My choice to focus on a field site in the former Soviet Union, and specifically on groups who were engaged in resistance against political and economic domination and dispossession, was also motivated by my experiences of injustice and my interest in emancipatory movements and anti-colonial resistance during my student years (see Dudeck 2000).

Leaving Russia at the Start of the Pandemic

Border closures put in place during the pandemic, which greatly limited mobility, turned state borders into frontlines in the fight against the virus. This came with calls for voluntary limitations of movement in order to save human lives. It brought with it material and psychological insecurity, separation from relatives, friends, colleagues, and students. In March 2020, after a three-day conference visit in Norway, I was unable to return home to St. Petersburg in Russia and continue my work at the European University. I could not imagine at the time how long this situation would last and that I would eventually lose my Russian work permit and contract, unable to regain them as of now.

Communication through the internet appeared to be a saviour but brought new and previously unknown challenges as well as limitations. I continued to fulfil my teaching duties remotely. Surprisingly, participation in a video project by my St. Petersburg colleague Ilya Utekhin who had asked for daily short video clips with impressions of life under lockdown, proved to provide important psychological support for myself (Utekhin 2022; 2021).

In February 2022, my Russian colleagues reassured me the rising threat was pure rhetoric. I trusted their expertise on the Russian political system but was soon proven wrong. I have not dared to travel to Russia since then. The question of fieldwork in Russia was discussed among colleagues outside Russia quite actively in the summer of 2022. Some were unable to receive a visa for Russia due to visa bans remaining in place since the pandemic for some neighbouring countries (see Leete 2022). Some colleagues visited their field in Russia in the summer of 2022 and have stressed the importance of maintaining ties with research partners there. I would have been able to receive an invitation to travel to Russia but was ambiguous until mobilisation started in the autumn of 2022 and convinced me otherwise. I understood the need to keep alive my connections and trustful relationships established over decades, as well as to support long-time partners. On the other hand, the possibility of providing legitimacy to military aggression and becoming a pawn for authorities became an incalculable risk.

During February or March of 2022, I was planning to travel to Western Siberia at the invitation of one of my long-time Khanty research partners to document the traditional ritual knowledge of one of her relatives living near the sacred lake Numto. I had met this family more than fifteen years ago and had recently learned that they still remembered me and would be happy to host me again. The elder we were supposed to visit is a performer of sacred songs of the bear ceremonial that the Khanty are trying to preserve. Research and documentation carried out under the guidance and principles defined by the Khanty have become a part of the bear feast tradition (Dudeck 2022). The bear ceremonial is meant to maintain social relations within an environment shared by humans and bears, and more generally, by human and non-human inhabitants. The visit to the Khanty elder, along with my long-term Khanty research partner, was supposed to be the next step in our ongoing research relationship but had to be postponed to an undefined point in the future.

Collaborative Anthropology

It might not be without irony that my first exercise in collaborative anthropology had to do with the establishment of borders along a kind of frontline. In the 1990s, when I asked Nenets reindeer herder, poet, and activist Juri Vella what anthropology students could do to help support the cultural survival of Siberian Indigenous peoples resisting the influence of extractive industries, he suggested helping him build fences. Fencing large pastures with kilometre-long fences to prevent reindeer from being killed on oil fields and roads leading to them had become necessary due to increasing conflicts with oil extraction on Indigenous lands. These fences and warning signs were built as visible borders of Indigenous lands. Fences had been part of traditional herding techniques for small-scale reindeer herding in Western Siberia, but never to this extent.

In the 1970s and 1980s, reindeer herders' settlements were sometimes removed by bulldozers but in the 1990s, Indigenous peoples of the Khanty and Mansi autonomous district managed to gain limited acknowledgement for their land. Conflicts with oil workers shooting reindeer, dogs attacking them, or reindeer being killed by traffic on the roads made it necessary to adopt new forms of delineating and materializing the border between pastures and oil fields. This unequal fight continues to this day.

One of the many lessons I learned from my Khanty and Nenets friends was to never give up the hope for dialogue, even under circumstances of life-threatening aggression from much more powerful oil companies (Toulouze and Niglas 2019). However, in recent years, I have noticed the public discourse shifting in Russia from Indigenous people being seen as defenders of the future generations' right to a healthy environment against the interests of greedy private companies to a narrative in which oil companies are seen as defending the nation's common wealth against the greedy demands of minorities for compensation for environmental destruction. This discus-

sive shift has occurred alongside a conservative, “patriotic” turn in Russian politics, rising authoritarianism, and militarism.

Dialogue Without Ignoring Conflict

What conclusion can be drawn from this? I believe that forms of conflict, frontlines, violence, and resistance have always been a part of our work as anthropologists, as well as the exploration of, and at times illusions about, forms of dialogue and border crossing. Anthropologists are mostly socialised in Western-middle classes and are often overly focused on naive beliefs about well-being and harmonious dialogue, but anthropology receives the most important impulses from people coming from the margins or outside of these dominant socio-cultural settings. Taking the lessons from my Nenets and Khanty friends seriously means that I must also never discard the perspective of dialogue, whatever form it may take. I now find myself grappling with serious questions about my responsibility towards the relationships I have established over the last almost thirty years of work in Russia. How can I maintain my contacts with colleagues and research partners in Indigenous and academic communities in Russia, and how can I exercise solidarity with friends and colleagues?

Responsibility and Opportunism

There are various reasons why researchers and research planners opt for the easy route in strategic planning and cancel or omit collaborations with Russia to avoid potential risks. This was the initial reaction of research institutions and state actors, leaving it to the private initiative of scholars, civil society activists, and their networks to deal with the “ruins” and to salvage what they could. Unfortunately, there is a general tendency to speak about Arctic issues without considering that half of the Arctic territories are located in Russia. To me, it is clear that no comparative Arctic perspective is possible without taking the Russian Arctic into account.

Moreover, there is a danger that issues and themes related to the Russian Arctic are no longer pursued, financed, or considered due to their perceived risks and potential problems, even if research does not involve support from state institutions in Russia. The competitive nature of academia has also led to what I would consider self-centred reactions, focusing on optimising starting positions for research as soon as the Russian Arctic becomes available for foreign researchers again. This includes avoiding anything that may upset state authorities and influential figures in Russian academia.

My contacts with colleagues and friends with Ukrainian background have reinforced my sense of responsibility. I maintain communication with my Ukrainian students, one of whom has even returned from Poland to Ukraine to support his family. I helped, along with a colleague from the US, to evacuate friends from their home-

town of Odesa to Germany.²⁴ In 2021, I participated in an online educational project in Kharkiv. I regularly receive updates on the situation in Ukraine and have learned that the room where students were listening to my lectures in Kharkiv has now been destroyed by bombings. This has served as a practical guideline in my decision-making process, as I must consider how I can justify my actions to my Ukrainian friends and colleagues when it comes to collaborations with Russia.

How to Keep the Dialogue Alive Across Not Only Borders but Also Frontlines?

The ambivalence of borders as both regulators of mobility and frontlines of conflict persists. While some former state borders have become more permeable, certain conflict lines have been marginalised in public discourse. As a young anthropology student in the mid-1990s, I recall our futile attempts to inform the German public about the social and ecological problems associated with resource extraction on the “other side” of the pipeline in Western Siberia. This was the moment when political decisions were taken to replace domestic lignite with Russian natural gas and oil presented as an ecological friendly and unproblematic alternative. The recent developments also have to be seen as a consequence of such past decision-making.

One strategy of addressing this issue is to delve into the wealth of archival materials amassed by anthropology, both within official archives and in private collections. The present-day research funding model prioritizing short-term projects and quick results often leaves a significant amount of fieldwork material unanalysed and unpublished in the possession of fieldworkers. I have found collaborating with organisations such as the Foundation for Siberian Cultures, a German NGO,²⁵ to be an effective way to make fieldwork materials available to the source communities. Additionally, museum archives contain a wealth of untapped materials that warrant further examination. Provenience research and the development of collaborative methods and ethics for digital sharing practices are crucial topics that must be addressed, particularly in regards to historical materials from the Russian North (Doering et al. 2022) but crucially also address colonial legacies and power imbalances, enhance mutual trust, and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, to be successful, collaborative research projects have specific requirements regarding research designs, timeframes, and dissemination of results, which often do not fit into the frameworks of academic calendars and funding guidelines. Funding agencies in particular play an important role in enabling (or disabling).

The most urgent activity that I have invested significant time and resources in during 2022 was providing support for people in need of relocation due to displacement from their home country, resulting in loss of income and livelihood. The most

24 <https://dh-north.org/dossiers/flucht-und-vertreibung-in-osteuropa-im-zusammenhang-mit-dem-ukraine-krieg/en> [accessed 7.12.2023]

25 <https://dh-north.org/> [accessed 7.12.2023]

challenging and pressing issue was helping those who fled from the destroyed town of Mariupol. Without support from friends and colleagues within wide national and international networks of solidarity, I would not have been able to manage this task. The methodological approach of anthropology which does not impose clear divisions between work and personal life, between personal relationships and public engagement, may have had a positive effect in turning working relationships into friendships and subsequently into networks for solidarity and support. This holds true for political and social activism as well as artistic practices. Private time, material resources, and emotional support were necessary to assist those affected by the military conflict. These private resources were also often required to maintain and support work-related relationships, as institutions were slow to act and sought to avoid risks. A significant effort was required to collect and coordinate information on resources and support available. Not having a permanent job and not working within regulated regimes proved to be beneficial in organizing this type of help and allocating the necessary time.

Maintaining connections with Indigenous communities and long-time research partners is a crucial aspect of my work. With the availability of various technologies for remote communication, such as email, telephone, social networks, and messaging apps, it is possible to stay connected despite geographical distance. I actively participate in conferences and workshops organised by Indigenous scholars in my field region in Western Siberia and engage in regular exchanges with students and colleagues in my former workplace of St. Petersburg. I also share research results and archived materials electronically.

One particularly noteworthy example of this was my participation in the Khanty-Mansi autonomous district's opening conference of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages on February 21, 2022, which was held for the first time in the Khanty language and attended by colleagues from Budapest and Munich as well. There is knowledge, access to which becomes more difficult in Russia now especially for students and young researchers due to the current policies of isolationism in Russia. The question remains open though with whom to collaborate and with whom not to and where the limits are due to limited resources but also due to moral and political considerations.

We have to do all of these activities in our free time as research institutions in Europe tend to consider collaboration with people and institutions in Russia as too risky now. Keeping online contacts with the field also means monitoring socio-political developments in Indigenous communities of the Russian North in a collaborative and transdisciplinary manner with colleagues and partners both within and outside of Russia.

The developments of the past year have highlighted the need to address certain topics in the anthropology of the Russian North and Siberia that may have been neglected or inadequately addressed in the past. These include the impact of political

change and forms of social and cultural domination as well as the “patriotic turn” in Russian society. I believe that the anthropology of the Russian North has neither sufficiently addressed issues of hegemony and paternalism, nor the role of foreign actors in supporting these developments, including the effects of the “oil curse” for Russia.

A last area of focus for me in terms of work planning is the future of anthropological education in Russia. I am concerned about the negative impact of ongoing isolationism and disconnection from global academic discourse on students in Russia. Despite the availability of information through modern technology, political and ideological pressure on universities and educators may prevent access to relevant methodologies and theoretical discussions. I am confident that this situation will not persist indefinitely and I look forward to the day when I can return to Russia to teach and collaborate with colleagues in Russian universities and Indigenous communities in Siberia. In the meantime, I will continue to support solidarity networks and work with colleagues and friends to create favourable conditions for change, peace, and future collaborations.

Simon Franklin

[1] On the impact of the hardening of borders: for me personally the effects have been somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, on the other hand. On the one hand: my own academic engagement with and in Russia has not diminished. Indeed, in some respects it has become more intense. I continue to take advantage of the cross-border or borderless opportunities that proliferated thanks to COVID – above all, the availability of virtual or hybrid participation on conferences and seminars. Vastly more materials are now available – to all sides – in digitised form, which likewise reduces the impact of a hardening or softening of physical borders. And I have continued to travel both to participate in conferences in person and to work in archives. If anything, my archival visits have been even more productive than usual: I have the impression that at least some of my hosts are particularly keen to be helpful in current circumstances. On the other hand: travel is difficult, and unpleasant. And, more importantly, regardless of my own position and decisions, exchanges are impoverished because of the sudden and very significant reduction of international participation. My worry is not so much for the present moment but for the longer term. It is easy to break off relations in a crisis, difficult to see a scenario in which they can straightforwardly be restored any time soon. The effects on fieldwork are obvious. One must fear for the enforced insularity of postgraduate research for the foreseeable future – more precarious than even the mid-Soviet era, when there were functioning cultural agreements. Harder international borders have very rapidly been made still more impenetrable by even harder self-imposed restrictions on behalf of many, many western institutions and individuals. For very large numbers of scholars, therefore, collegial relations have been very severely disrupted or severed. Effects on the discipline? The immediate

effects are not so much a consequence of the hardening of borders but of a widespread new introspection and questioning. The consequences of severed collegiality will perhaps emerge over time.

[2] Translocality and me personally: see above; as it happens not a great deal of change; but I'm perhaps not typical. I am no longer an employee of any institution, so I can choose my own ways of dealing with the situation.

[3] The three-tier model: I don't know about changes in relevance. There have been mass relocations before, whose structural impacts can better be observed over time. It may well be that, at any rate in the Humanities and Social Sciences, the global map of Russian academics won't look quite as it does today.

[4] Role of Anthropology: really not for me to say – except that I would imagine, as an amateur/outsider, that the recent upheavals give anthropologists a lot of new and shifting communities to study (as in this survey...).

Bruce Grant

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the USSR, borders seem everywhere to be stronger than ever, even if crossing them is easier for some rather than others. In the Caucasus, where I do most of my research, this polyglot, super-mobile region has never seen more obstacles to mobility than in the past thirty years. At this time of this writing, borders into Azerbaijan are closed to virtually all motor and train traffic, absent government-approved shipping by truck. Only the relatively wealthy are coming and going by air.

With the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, scholarship on Russia in virtually any field that benefits from cross-border human contact, which is to say, every field, is suffering. The number of applications to doctoral study in the subject areas I know best – anthropology and history – are down seemingly everywhere, in every country where programmes exist. While current Ukrainian scholars meet greater opportunity abroad than ever before, and while Ukrainian Studies as a field is surely to benefit in the near future, paradoxically, from the Russian decision to move on its territory, Russian Studies, as such, seems only to be able to look to a new *korenizatsiya*, a focus on Russian students working in Russian areas guided by Russian citizens. The good news is that Russia has an abundance of superb scholars; the bad news is that no kind of area study benefits when undertaken in this way, since we all depend on conversations with others.

Anthropology in Russia proper appears limited to Russian citizens for the time being and for the immediate years to come. Those of who live and work abroad and who already hold steady employment, have the luxury of turning to library-based topics, or to other world areas. But for any field of the humanities or social sciences or

sciences where archival access, conversation, or shared laboratory work are vital, it is a sad time for engagements with Russia.

[3] I do not find cosmopolitanism is to be a helpful analytic in this context, as no worldview is more normative. Cosmopolitanism has maintained a steady hold on the liberal imagination since Kant, steeped in the inequities of global economy, and predictable in its aesthetics, drives, and desires. If, instead, by metropolitan, we can consider pluralism, that may take us in more creative directions. Either way, the goal in any scholarly research should find its core in the “search”, meaning a freedom to be driven by curiosity, to follow all lines of thought and, when needed, to travel across the boundaries of conventional thought and practice. Within any given country, such a three-tier model suggested by Sokolov and Titaev may find resonance, but no scholarship thrives, at any tier, if curiosity is not given full rein.

[4] The best that anthropology might offer in Times of Trouble is a deep practice with contestations over what constitutes the real, the normal, and the appropriate. “The appropriate” may at first seem like an adjective but is, instead, a past participle, the product of that which has been appropriated and then subsequently folded into the world of the normal by those who have made the property of others their own. Our quarry is how those struggles unfold, how politics deploy the symbolic, and where different groups across social worlds land. Anthropology has everything to offer the current moment, and is, in the sense that it was first designed – as a set of conversations across worlds – structurally absent.

Hubertus Jahn

As someone who visited Eastern Europe and travelled through the Soviet Union many times well before perestroika, I remember academic (and many other) restrictions too well to be taken aback by the recent changes. In some ways, the current situation comes as a *déjà vu* to me. Indeed, by a rather symbolic coincidence, some of my oldest and best friends in the USSR had spent time in prisons and camps in the Brezhnev years, a fate now shared by a former student of mine, who is one of the recent prominent victims of political persecution. Although history supposedly doesn't repeat itself, the Soviet/Russian carceral tradition clearly straddles generations, and continues to live up to its reputation.

The fate of my elderly intelligentsia friends who are too old now to emigrate, the future of my courageous student in prison, anxious emails from younger colleagues asking for help to find jobs outside Russia, hundreds of life stories by displaced Ukrainian colleagues which I read as part of an application round for placements of academic refugees – this all has made the current situation deeply personal. I am experiencing a profound feeling of loss and anger. The enthusiasm for a country and a subject I lived and cared for most of my life has been dragged into the mud. The

genuine motivation with which we taught Russian history and culture, the excitement we instilled in our students are gone, or at least hard to sustain, in light of the ongoing atrocities. How can we teach history when the present is all-consuming, and demands action rather than contemplation and bookish pursuits? The actual destruction of Russia herself carried out by the current regime in addition to its war against Ukraine deeply affects everyone who studies the country. I can understand and feel the despair and shame of many of my Russian colleagues just too well. Russia, its history, literature, and culture have become pariahs.

Leaving aside personal questions, the long-term impact of the war on my field, Russian history, is hard to gauge at this point. Luckily, I am retiring in a few months and will not be responsible for graduate students any more. But if I were, I would presume that long forgotten practices from Soviet times will soon become useful again. They include above all informal networks and keeping personal contacts with trusted scholars (and, as much as possible, protecting their identity!) in Russia who can help to gather archival materials, as long as travelling to Russia is impossible, logistically very difficult, or simply morally repugnant. Then there are the various alternative repositories. Depending on someone's research topic, archives in the former Soviet republics, from Riga to Tbilisi and, hopefully soon again, Kyiv could be a helpful way forward. Not to forget some of the well-established and easily accessible Western institutions such as the Helsinki Slavic Library, Dumbarton Oaks, the Hoover Institution etc. There will certainly be an increased reliance on electronically available sources and data collections or published sources such as newspapers and other print and visual media, but these will be limited to a relatively small number of research areas and methodological approaches. Consequently, people will have to adapt their topics and take accessibility of source materials more into consideration than they used to in the past. Indeed, if there is one positive aspect of the current war, it will be a closer focus on the histories of the peripheries of the Russian/Soviet empires. As someone who has been studying the history of Georgia and the Caucasus for quite some time, I can only recommend having a closer look at libraries and archives in former Soviet space.

The inevitable changes in research topics will in the long run affect the discipline of Russian and East European history more generally. The job market will necessarily change and move further away from a Russian/Soviet focus. Recent advertisements already reflect a shift towards the inclusion of non-Russian regions. My own university has been running Polish Studies and Ukrainian Studies programmes for a number of years, and the latter in particular has been completely overrun by students as a result of Russia's aggression. But the elephant in the room is not research logistics or the future development of an academic discipline. It is much more essential, and it is crucial for the future of Russia and her people. The question is how we can properly decolonise Russian history and, moving on from there, how we as historians deal with the current situation in the future. The former requirement will require going back to

the roots of our discipline in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and dissecting historical mythmaking and imperial historiographic traditions from the Normanist Controversy all the way to Putin. The latter will be an even more daunting task. As a German, I grew up with the Nazi legacy and the many attempts to come to terms with this ugly past. I know that this de-Nazification process was not easy, and it took a very long time, indeed two generations, starting with the Nürnberg Trials, Western re-education programmes, and the 1968 student movement to achieve its goals. How and if Russia will eventually engage in a post-imperial *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, a proper de-Putinisation and de-Stalinisation, is the biggest challenge of the present time. The answer to this challenge will define not just the future of academic disciplines but the order and wellbeing of Europe and the world more generally.

Catriona Kelly

My first reaction on 24 February 2022 was not concern about academic contacts across borders. The scale of the catastrophe was much larger. Since then, I've felt all the allegedly sequential stages of grief – disbelief, anger, distress, acceptance – at the same time. Reading the news becomes not just a daily practice, but almost an hourly one, accompanied by moments of despair, horror, or rage. A friend in Russia said, “When I wake up, the first thing I think about is this.” Me too – and it has become worry no. 1 in sleepless nocturnal moments.

Of course, you can't live your entire life at that pitch, any more than you can live through a bereavement in mourning mode 24/7. Work is a way of coping. There is also the impetus to use professional skills for public interventions: op eds, interviews, talks. I've never had so much media interest, much of it international, as in March to June 2022, though fortunately it then died down to more like a normal level. Work on historical topics, on the other hand, seemed paralyzingly abstract (though I did manage to pull the different imperatives together in a piece on rewatching Sergei Paradzhanov's films in the new context) (Kelly 2022).

But academic life resurfaces, and the question of cross-border contacts also, as a concern and a problem. Brexit was a blow for the UK so far as relations with EU countries went, but if anything it helped relations with (official) Russian institutions. Covid created serious obstacles, but it was clear the pandemic couldn't last for ever. 24 February 2022 was a rupture of a different order. Just a week later, the organisers of a conference in a European capital wrote to say that they proposed not to go ahead, despite its strong programme and impressively international list of contributors. The expressed spirit wasn't vengeful “cancelling” of the kind that has so often been cited in rumours on the Russian internet; the organisers expressed concern for the dislocation between the topic and people's lives, and also for participants' personal safety: “An opportunity to exchange is valuable but we are also aware that many of you are unsure about taking part in our conference next week. We realise it is radically disconnected

from the immediate tragedy. Worries about staying safe or urgent personal matters to attend to may make it – understandably – impossible for some of you to take part.” There was talk of a special issue of a journal for the conference papers, but months of silence followed – and then an invitation to contribute on the basis of a completely different call for papers that now focused on the autonomy of the different (post-) Soviet republics and explicitly invited a comparative approach.

Typical in this episode was the switch to a different research agenda. In the UK, university departments that were formerly “Russian” have retitled themselves “Slavonic”, and positions are advertised in “Russophone” literature and culture, or “the history of the Russian Empire and USSR”, rather than “Russian and Soviet history”. However, contact with Russia has not stopped. British universities (unlike those in some other European countries) still accept students from the Russian Federation, and scholars from the Russian Federation continue getting invitations to present conference papers and guest lectures. The difficulties that arise are largely to do with policy relating to foreign relations and immigration in a broad sense. The very long processing times for UK visa applications are a serious obstacle, particularly for scholars still in Russia, who have understandable reasons for not wanting their passports lying round in the British consulate for months on end. So far as travel in the other direction is concerned, the biggest problem is less the complicated and expensive itineraries required, and the likelihood of an interview and a long wait at the border, than complications to do with financial sanctions. There are insurance companies that normally underwrite, for a price, travel to countries that are on the FCO “advice against all travel” list (Ethiopia, Yemen) – but even these specifically exclude travel to Russia and Ukraine.²⁶ This means that no university can allow official travel by students and staff, since to permit it would be to assume financial as well as moral responsibility in case of accident. And, while there is no overall policy sector-wide about travel by university employees to the Russian Federation, or contacts with colleagues there, there is what one might call informal arbitration. This affects not just whether administrators are prepared to sign off grant applications and permit joint conferences and workshops, but how specialists in the field police each other.

One widespread view is that contact with state institutions in the Russian Federation should be avoided. The problem about this is that no academic or cultural body can preserve more than one degree of separation from the state, given the legal requirements for regulation, dependence on grant income, the fact that pluralism (*sovmestitelstvo*) is common, and the realities of collegial cooperation between institutions from day to day. No-one can do research in the humanities and social sciences without using state-run libraries, even if they avoid archive work. Nor is the state system monolithic. I am reliably informed that some institutional archives (*vedomstvennye arkhivy*) refuse to deal with foreigners – for instance, won’t supply research materials long-distance.

26 See e.g. <<https://www.highriskvoyager.com/>> [accessed 7.12.2023]

On the other hand, a restriction on access to the reading rooms of archives managed by the St. Petersburg Archive Committee which operated from September 2022, and which required non-citizens of the Russian Federation to originate a request (*otpravil zapros*) through their local Russian Consulate, appears now to have been lifted.²⁷

Personally, I have stayed in touch mainly with contacts of long standing, while not ostracising those whose views may be different from my own. I have never supported academic boycotts. Their effects are indiscriminate, and they inhibit dialogue with those who adopt a critical stance to government policy, as well as those who endorse it. Part of the background to my stance is that my year group of British undergraduate students travelled to the USSR for ten months in 1980, when relations between the USSR and the West were at a historic low point, against the background of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the bloody war that resulted. It was a tough but revelatory experience. In any case, I am not certain how breaking off relations with Russia would help Ukrainian academics. A preferable recourse is to participate in schemes, such as the British Academy's Scholars at Risk Fellowships, which give financial and structural support to refugee scholars, to set up collaborations with Ukrainians working in one's own area, to attend events – in person or at long distance – with speakers and discussants from Ukraine, and to donate to foundations that support scholars in and from Ukraine.

Yet the maintenance of contacts with academics inside Russia is controversial, though less, in my experience, with Ukrainian scholars (or Russian scholars who've moved abroad) than with scholars from the West. Take my experience in October 2022, when I was in St. Petersburg for just over a week. After visiting an exhibition relating to the life and work of a major pre-revolutionary artist, I put a post on Facebook where I criticised some of the decisions made by the curators, and especially, the decision to focus on an autochthonic approach to the artist, with no sense of international context. I thought my drift was pretty obvious – the exhibition was an expedient response to the boosterish “social command” (*sotsialnyi zapros*) of the day, at the expense of historical depth. My comment, “The selection of paintings had a preponderance of self-pitying style russe that didn't perhaps find its most sympathetic audience in me right now” was intended in a spirit of ironic understatement. However, alongside engagement with Facebook friends who understood exactly what I meant, the excursus also provoked a direct attack from an academic based in Western Europe whom I'll call Professor X:

27 When I asked for clearance from the Consulate of the RF in London, I received within 24 hours from the Scientific Attaché a copy of a letter sent with the signature of the Russian Ambassador to the UK – evidently this was a question of a local rule, not of a requirement imposed by a department of central government. It was also clear that the archive staff themselves were embarrassed about the imposition of the rule, particularly since the archive concerned declassified its entire holdings back in the early 1990s, and since I have myself worked there for over 30 years.

I'm puzzled as to why you're there, Catriona. How can you treat going to Russia as "normal"? You'd have a bit more trouble sight-seeing in Kyiv thanks to Russian missiles. Where's your conscience?

To this I responded,

I am not "sightseeing". I have spent quite a lot of the last 15 years working on museums and their contents and could be said to have a professional interest in the subject. Coming to Russia was not (quite obviously) intended to endorse the appalling treatment of Ukraine. However, nothing is (to my mind) achieved by wholesale boycotts at the academic and cultural level. Even my most anti-Putin friends have been saying that they find the combination of disapproving the war and being punished as Russians despite what they think difficult to take. Over the last 6 days I have had a lot of very positive contact with Russians who (as one might not gather from social websites) are extremely and deeply worried about the situation, aged from late teens/early twenties up to late seventies (and beyond). Personally, I feel one's conscience is best addressed by trying to help people on both sides – and I am, by the way, helping Ukrainians in whichever way I can.

Dr X was not satisfied with this:

I cannot imagine how it is possible, in good conscience, to go to Russia for research purposes at this time. However many good Russian friends you might be speaking to, and hearing antiwar sentiment from, that doesn't validate your choice to be in a country that is actively committing war crimes. You're producing a discourse of normality with these pictures and comments. The Russian government is threatening to use nuclear weapons against its neighbour. I don't think you can justify a research trip to Russia when it's acting this way.

Though Dr X then vanished from the discussion, given the amount of attention the post was attracting, the next day, I returned to the topic, setting out the views that I've aired earlier in the present text: nothing is achieved by boycotts, dialogue is vital, and to observe and comment on a situation is not the same as voicing approval of it or "normalising" it. At this point, Dr Y joined the discussion:

Posting as you have done on FB about your visit has further increased the number of people who will feel it's OK to follow your example. In [the European country where I work], attending a conference would not be permitted and I am surprised that [your university] has not advised against this.²⁸ I think it vital that we in the west support Russian scholarship, but I believe the way to do this is by helping the scholars who have managed to escape from Russia to continue their studies in the west, south or wherever they end up; to give moral support to those Russian pass-

²⁸ I should point out that I am not employed by a university and that in any case, since February 2022, I have visited Russia on a private basis, paying my own way in order to avoid institutional sanctions breaches, or implication of corporate approval.

port holders long-time resident in the west but who now are too afraid to travel to Russia because of their critical research; to fight against the blanket visa bans on Russians who want to leave (I know this is controversial); and try to do what we can to keep academic journals like *Laboratorium* that have been forced to flee, afloat. [...] Finally, the point you miss about the British Council exchanges was that they were state-to-state and were negotiated precisely at a time that was ripe for bridge building. [...] The western academic community has a responsibility to make its view on the war absolutely clear, which for those of us in Russian studies includes making sacrifices in relation to our own research. [...] Really think, if all of us followed your example, what a feast day the Russian media would make of it.

Discussion on social media tends not to be pre-meditated or coherent, and these comments exemplified those characteristics. Dr Y argued that I was setting the wrong example by “posting on FB”, yet, when I pointed out that no-one who had read my posts could possibly think that I approved of the treatment of Ukraine, Dr Y observed: “but that only works, Catriona, if people know who you are”.

The issue of the possible influence, or otherwise, of the original post is a peripheral one. Likewise, while it astonishes me that anyone could consider 1980 “a time that was ripe for bridge-building”, the aptness of this historical analogy, as of all historical analogies, is a matter of opinion.²⁹ The more important contentions related to whether one can visit a country without endorsing its political policies, whether people who remain in the country deserve support (or on the other hand, their decision to remain is also a tacit endorsement of the “general line”), and whether it is acceptable to visit a place when others have, for moral or practical reasons, made the decision not to. Of these arguments, two are familiar from other situations where academic boycotts have been proposed (South Africa in the apartheid era, Israel), but the third is, I would say, more novel. It seems to me that this is less a relic of past debates on boycotts than it is an echo of the “is your journey necessary?” talk that surfaced during the COVID epidemic, when individuals with multiple citizenship and/or the funds to pay for lengthy quarantine on arrival, had a level of freedom of travel not available to most people on the planet. If we translate this to the academic world, researchers from universities with significant on-the-spot research infrastructure in the form of libraries and document collections, and substantial travel and research support budgets, lived in a different world from those in financially challenged institutions. Having (reasonably) concluded that in those circumstances, to travel when others could not was “selfish”, we now conclude that, in a different context, the same applies.

It was clear that the exchange of views hit a nerve. Some participants in the extended Facebook discussion shared the views of Dr X and Dr Y. Many others did not.

29 That said, it was startling to observe commentators on my post assert that the Afghan war of 1979–1989 had simply been a “partisan conflict”, with insignificant casualty and destruction levels. The internationally accepted figure for deaths is 870,000, with 3 million injured, and 1 million internally displaced persons and 3 million refugees. (*The Cost of War* 2009: 3).

Alongside public comments, I got a number of private messages of support. One came from an anthropologist who wondered how Dr Y could suppose that anyone could do research in the social sciences without the opportunity for participant observation. An argument could be made that the situation in the Russian Federation after 24 February 2022 is of an order where such participant observation, at any rate by outsiders, is simply not possible. But to establish that would already be a research finding. In any case, participation in the academic world is not only a question of “research”, but also a question of the exchange of opinion and transfer of knowledge and expertise in a broad sense. Yes, this can also be done by Zoom; but then, there are institutions and individuals who argue that even exchanges by Zoom constitute a form of collaboration, in the negative sense of the word. And Zoom would not let you hear off-the-cuff complaints from establishment figures about the “politicisation” of their subject and the difficulty of teaching it in schools, or generally give you a glimpse of the fabric of academic life in circumstances of extreme psychological stress.

International ties were already severely strained during the pandemic. But the plus was that institutions which had closed to the public often developed an unprecedented digital presence. This included archives and libraries in the Russian Federation. St. Petersburg’s Central State Archive of Cinematic, Photographic and Phonographic Documents allowed free browsing of its rich holdings of digitised images; the Russian State Archive responded to my request to digitise two letters from Nataliya Sats to Sergei Prokofiev promptly, and sent excellent images at a modest charge. In many cases, the goodwill is still there, but the situation now is much more vexed, and becoming more so by the month. Yet my sense is that by adding professional cold war to the tragedy of real-life hot war, we risk harm and distress to those we agree with, as well as refusing all understanding to those with whom we do not.

Roman Khandozhko

[1] My professional life as a historian of Soviet science has, over the past ten years, presupposed a constant crossing of borders and regular changes of my place of residence. As a citizen of Russia I have worked in universities in Russia, Germany and Sweden, financed by short-term (eighteen months to two years) projects and grants. Since September 2021 I have been working at the Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg. From my experience I can say that crossing borders and overcoming bureaucratic obstacles when moving to a new country was not easy or “routine” even before February 2022. In particular, I encountered significant difficulties in obtaining work at a Swedish university, which were connected with the country’s overall policies towards migrants and the lack of any mechanism to assist international scholars on temporary contracts in obtaining residence and work permits. Besides that, during the pandemic even short trips to conferences or to work in archives were practically impossible. At the same time, during 2022, after Russia’s full-scale war on Ukraine

had already begun, I travelled to Europe several times to take part in conferences and workshops without evident difficulties.

I would say that in this year the collegial relationships between me and my partners in Europe (Sweden and Norway), with whom I am connected by our experience of joint projects, have become even closer. In this difficult political situation, my colleagues (in particular, professor Per Högselius at the Royal Institute of Technology and Dr. Peder Roberts at the University of Stavanger) gave me moral support and were sincerely interested in preserving the links that had been established before. They made great efforts to ensure that the reinstated boundaries remained as (semi-) permeable as usual. Logistic problems have certainly had a most serious effect on the mobility of scholars from Russia, and specifically the cancellation of direct flights to Western European countries. This has concerned me and my colleagues from Moscow and St. Petersburg less, since we have access to the relatively short routes via the aviation hubs of Turkey and Transcaucasia, but I know that a number of scholars from the remote regions of Siberia and from provincial cities in European Russia where the airports were closed because of the war have declined to travel to foreign events because the logistics were too complicated and expensive. At the same time, since the outbreak of war members of Russian academic institutions have tried to find new areas of contact between the Russian academic community and the outside world. Thus, in November 2022, I took part in an international conference in Baku organised jointly by scholars from Russia and the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, this forum was similarly unable to become a viable meeting-place between the academies of Russia and Europe, and also because of a war, this time a flare-up in the conflict in Karabakh.

[2] After 24 February 2022 I did indeed have difficulties in using my Russian affiliation when working with Western institutions. In particular, the receiving side at one major European conference on the history of science and the environment did not indicate the affiliations of participants from Russian universities, and at one local workshop I was asked to register as an independent scholar. As far as I know, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft has frozen all joint Russian-German projects and excluded scholars with official Russian affiliations from participating in new applications. At the same time the Humboldt Foundation, from which I had previously had a grant, recently supported my individual application for three months' research at the University of Munich, and my current employment in Russia was not a problem.

I am sure that people who are more closely associated with Russian state institutions than I (my contract with the HSE ends on 31 August 2023 without the possibility of renewal) have encountered more difficult challenges over the past year. To a certain extent the precariousness of my research career has turned to my advantage and helps me avoid any strict institutional self-identification, which in present conditions helps me to get round some of the limitations that have come into being. I can iden-

tify myself as a researcher from Russia, a member of international research groups, an employee of the HSE, a post-doc or a specialist historian working on the Soviet period. My real professional identity is connected with my research interests and projects, which go beyond the frameworks of institutional differentiations and with which from time to time I engage in different collaborations. On the whole I put more trust in people than in institutions, having been taught to do so by my experience of professional socialisation in Russia.

Although so far, I am still managing to preserve my usual capacity for translocation relatively painlessly, I can feel that in the relatively near future I shall have to choose which side of the new “iron curtain” to pursue my career on, or whether to pursue it at all. This choice is made more difficult by the fact that although in terms of values and professionalism I consider myself part of the Western academy, the subject of my research – the history of late Soviet science and technology – and the methods I use to study it – archival searches and biographical interviews – require my regular prolonged presence in Russia. And whereas during the pandemic interviewing was partially transferred on line, it is practically impossible to do detailed archival research remotely. In connection with this, in order to continue my research projects I am compelled to concern myself with the possibilities for visiting Russia without hindrance in the future, even if my employment is connected with Western universities. This, besides everything else, limits my freedom to express my anti-war position in order to preserve my relative “invisibility” to the repressive Russian state.

[3] The past year has dramatically weakened the part of the academic milieu in Russia that orientated itself on Western centres of knowledge generation. This is connected with the emigration of those specialists who were most in demand and integrated into international networks, the freezing of a large number of international collaborations, the exclusion of politically active lecturers and researchers from Russian universities, and in a number of cases the halting of academic work on topics that the regime finds sensitive. Correspondingly, one could speak of a relative strengthening of Western universities and research centres (which had incomparably more resources even before) thanks to the Russians who have relocated there and the increase of qualified supply on the academic labour market. Therefore, I shall perhaps not agree that the present situation calls into question the unipolarity of the academic world – it has only increased it. It may be that one side effect of the cutting of ties between Russian state science and Western science will be an increase in the influence of research centres in countries that have not joined in the sanctions, if they take on the functions of “contact hubs”. However, in my view, too little time has passed since the beginning of full-scale war in Ukraine to draw conclusions about a persistent trend in this direction.

I suppose that the institutional base of “provincial” scholarship in Russia will contract, and the “nativisation” of the humanities in Moscow and St. Petersburg continue, bearing in mind the voluntary isolation from international discussions of the

Russian-speaking academic humanities community connected with the state. And orientation on what is happening in world centres will probably become even more the province of “partisan” academic and educational initiatives and extra-institutional projects.

[4] I am not an anthropologist, but I have studied the influence of historians on the knowledge that they generate about the formation of the regional political scene of the late 1980s – early 1990s. We are now in a different phase of the historical cycle, but social research is inevitably involved with current events and plays its rôle in them. Whereas in the period of the disintegration of the Soviet empire historians offered social narratives for the formation of alternative identities and helped to de-legitimise the existing centralised state by re-evaluating its historical foundations, in today’s circumstances the wide public circulation of such ideas is limited by the censor and directly suppressed by the state (for example, the Memorial human rights centre). At the same time, in the era of the internet, media space is harder to control, so that a professional intellectual deconstruction of authoritarian and colonial discourses can even now be welcome in a limited public discussion (for example, the historian Aleksandr Etkind’s many interviews). Nevertheless, at the present stage the political result of such activity is in my view largely limited to the consolidation of the already existing liberal stratum, and cannot produce any radical social shifts.

I am now working on a small project about the experience of the international boycott of Soviet science during the increase in tension of the Cold War at the end of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. Thereby I hope to make a contribution to the current debates about the possibility and desirability of integrating illiberal and aggressive régimes into the global order of knowledge generation. One serious factor at that time that determined the attitude of international scientific communities towards collaboration with the USSR was the infringement of human rights and the persecution of dissident scholars. This project does not directly deal with the agenda of Russian internal politics, but it could help to make more visible the problems of intellectuals of various countries in surviving in a difficult political context, the ethical challenges connected with it and the consequences of political involvement for scholars in Russia and abroad. In addition, studying the subjectivity of society and its protest groups from a historical perspective seems to me to offer a challenge, however small, to the stability of the present dictatorship. I am presently engaged only in academic research and do not aim to convert it into broad public statements, for reasons outlined above. Nevertheless, this activity might be perceived as a kind of preparatory work, the results of which will become evident and requisite at the time of the inevitable escalation of centrifugal and anti-authoritarian tendencies in Russia.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Ilya Kukulin and Maria Mayofis

[1] First, “the erection of borders” you mentioned in your question has not been an independent, spontaneous process: it has been an element of a global transformation that started with the second phase of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (the first phase having been in 2014). On consequence of the invasion was a sharp increase in authoritarian tendencies in Russia, which led to a tightening of censorship (which had, however, existed *de facto* even before 2014, although it is expressly forbidden in the Constitution of Russian Federation) and to a considerable restriction of academic freedoms.

We were forced to emigrate, like many of our colleagues. One weighty reason for leaving was the apprehension that in the very near future we would no longer be allowed to say and write what we thought about the current political situation, including that which pertained to our research. Before we left, we taught on cultural studies programmes in which much attention is paid (or should we now say, “was paid”?) to the links between contemporary culture and contemporary political processes. It was necessary either to renounce the tracing of such parallels or to give up teaching altogether. This was our reasoning when we left the country.

It may be that for some of our colleagues, when deciding whether they should leave, it was more important for them to remain with their students and continue their teaching mission. For others, like us, it was essential to break off the relationship with the Russian higher education system, which is today more and more consistently controlled by the state and in that sense hardly leaves any room for free academic expression and free contact with the students.

Under these conditions it was very important to us to preserve our professional and human contacts with those of our colleagues who have remained in Russia but nevertheless have a distinct antimilitarist political position and give clear ethical assessments of everything that is happening, aiming to be as honest as possible in the prevailing circumstances with their students, their readers and themselves. Over the past months it has become clear that maintaining such contacts, simply at the level of private correspondence, sending over publications, and reacting to articles and books is easy enough, whereas creating resilient channels of communication (transnational connections that exist across state borders and are grounded on common interests and common projects) is a much harder task, which so far only a few people have the courage and opportunity to achieve. But in our view, it is necessary to constantly keep this task in mind: it is relevant both to the formation or maintenance of academic communities and to the development of new ideas and concepts, and to fruitful reflexion on the successes and failures of the past.

We have always worked across disciplinary borders – at the intersection of intellectual history, social history, the history of literature and the sociology of contemporary culture – so that any talk of “the boundaries of the discipline” within which we define

ourselves turns to be rather conditional. What became clear almost immediately after the current stage of the war began was the necessity of an in-depth reconstruction of what is at present called “Soviet studies”. It is already, at the turn of 2022 and 2023, clear to see that in relation to current events the Soviet era has become a hopeless pluperfect: it is not the past, it is the pre-past, if not an even more “ante-ante-contemporary” period of social development. However, some subjects within the Soviet period, which used to seem historically quite marginal, are now in need of a new interpretation, because their logical and intellectual connection with today’s events has become newly significant. For example, the institutional and social history of the Soviet Army and special services after the Second World War, or the cultural history of the 1970s with its inherent atmosphere of cynicism and (amongst a significant part of the intelligentsia) diffuse feeling of historical defeat.

As for research into contemporary culture, it seems to us that it can today only be carried out and published in an area free of censorship, where there is no need to use euphemisms and the actions of state and non-state actors may be clearly evaluated.

[2] The most difficult challenge facing students of Russian culture who are themselves of Russian origin, irrespectively of where they live, is the need for restraint, sometimes even silence, in discussions about how contemporary research into Eastern Europe should be remapped from a regional and thematic point of view. Not that Russian researchers should not express any opinion on that subject; they may, but they should remember that at present Russian culture is reproached by many for having hegemonic aims and for the appropriation of other people’s cultural territories. The problem is that any monologic research, confined within the borders of Russia, into topics connected with Russian culture already looks like (or at any rate may be perceived as) a claim to a hegemony of power. In this situation it is difficult to operate with such categories as “interesting”, “worthy of attention” and particularly “undervalued”.

What is productive in this situation is the study of Russian culture not as closed in upon itself, but as involved in a dialogue with the other cultures of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and containing both hegemonic and emancipatory tendencies which are often in acute conflict with each other. Such research did begin to appear in the 2010s and 2020s (Kirschbaum 2016; Sozina 2020; Babak, Dmitriev 2021), but now this sort of approach is becoming even more needful than before. In our view it is very important to arrange a dialogue between Russian scholars and the writers, artists, musicians and social activists who are students or practical representatives of the cultures of the peoples of Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia³⁰ (what used to be called “post-Soviet space”) – insofar as it is possible today, because, for the very reasons mentioned above, such a dialogue in the immediate future will be extremely difficult.

30 Here we use the term “Northern Eurasia” proposed by the editors of the journal *Ab Imperio*, the authors of the collective monograph (Gerasimov 2017).

Technology obviously plays a primary role in the process of “saving” existing communications and arranging new ones. It is a question of the possibility of online participation in conferences and seminars. However, the Russian authorities will in 2023 probably continue their policy of selectively but more and more consistently blocking the channels of communication that connect Russia with the outside world. If this blocking affects academic contacts on the Internet, it will be a question of “who beats whom” in the immediate prospect: whether scholars’ resourcefulness or the special services’ repression will win.

[3] In our view, the concept put forward by Mikhail Sokolov and Kirill Titaev was already very biased³¹ even when it was first published; however, our colleagues at *Anthropological Forum* evidently understood how radical the article was, since they included a discussion of it in the journal at the same time as its publication. We disagree with this article in that it programmes the perception of the Russian academic field: it basically reduces the interpretation of discussions in the Russian social sciences to the question of whether authors of texts have orientated themselves on the standards of English-speaking academia (which Sokolov and Titaev propose to regard as “metropolitan knowledge”) or not. One could give counterexamples of successful reflexive (and not ritualised) interpretation of established academic concepts applied to Russian material. Such has been the work, over many years, of the journal *Ab Imperio*, whose editors and contributors have created their own version of the new imperial history developed in English-language scholarship; the works of Elena Zdravomyslova and Anna Temkina, reflecting on the applicability of the feminist viewpoint to Soviet history (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2007), and introducing the productive concept of the “statist gender order”; or, for example, the recent collection of articles *The Imperfect Public Sphere* (Atnashev et al. 2021), which no less productively reinterprets Habermas’s concept of the public sphere with reference to Russia. None of these projects fit into the framework of a dichotomy between *provincial* and *native* scholarship.

However, the work of Sokolov and Titaev can today no longer form the basis for discussion, not only because of its bias, but because of substantial changes in historical-political conditions. Let us remember one sentence from that article: “Until there is a particularly sharp turn in the political course from modernising to traditionalist authoritarianism, there will be no particular external threat to the dominance of the provincial science” (Sokolov and Titaev 2013: 271). Obviously, even if there was such

31 Biased, but not altogether wrong. At a round table as early as 1990 the philosopher and art theorist Evgenii Barabanov had commented ironically on people who regarded the USSR as Plato’s cave, into which rays of “reality” were shone from the West. Both the “provincial” and the “native” impulses do undoubtedly exist in Russian scholarship, but Sokolov and Titaev, who initially defined these two régimes of knowledge’ production as “ideal types” in Max Weber’s sense, later wrote as if the reality of the production of knowledge could be reduced to precisely these “ideal types”.

a thing as “modernising authoritarianism” in the Russia of 2013 (and there was every reason to doubt its “modernising” tendencies even then), today the authorities are quite clearly traditionalist in their attitude. Moreover, the intensification of the censorship, which we have mentioned, makes it extremely difficult to interpret publication by scholars of Russian origin (no matter whether they live in Russia or elsewhere) in Western Europe or the USA as “integration into the metropolitan”: nowadays such publications are once again, as in Soviet times, acquiring the status of uncensored (*tamizdat*).

We are wondering why the authors of the questionnaire are convinced of the “unipolarity” of the academic world before 2022. In our opinion, this is obviously wrong. The development of the humanities and social sciences proceeds in such a way that first one, then another group of universities, first one, then another group of countries takes first place in the course of its evolution. It goes without saying that the English language, as the *koine* of modern scholarly communication, plays a role in this international dialogue, as do non-academic factors (for example, the wealth of certain universities, or the readiness of certain countries’ governments to put money into education and independent research, etc.), but in our view none of this eclipses the main point: the modern world of the humanities is not “unipolar”. Nor was the world of international politics before 2022 “unipolar”: the tensions between the USA and its European allies, the growing influence of China, India and Turkey, and other factors were all important for it. Even today the agreement between the USA and the countries of Western Europe in their condemnation of Russian aggression and on the need to assist Ukraine with arms, money and humanitarian aid is no evidence of the creation of a “unipolar world” in other respects.

Having made all those qualifications, we can try to answer the question. The migrations that have taken place, we believe, must prove very fertile for Ukrainian humanities, though the actual circumstances of the war, the killing of the civilian population, the deaths of soldiers and their officers on the front, and the destruction of educational establishments will have a negative impact. That huge international leap forward in respect of Ukrainian scholars made by the countries of Europe, the USA and Canada may in a few years’ time lead also to the take-off of research into the history and culture of Ukraine (Ukrainian Studies): greater funding, a greater demand for courses on Ukrainian history and culture, and, finally, clear, penetrating academic concepts that will become a subject for discussion not only by narrow specialists, but also by the communities of people with an education in the humanities in various countries.

There are today many scholars in exile, not only Ukrainians but Russians as well, but it does not seem to us that there is any guarantee of such a result for them: whether the new émigrés will be able to provide a new impulse of openness and international integration to Russian scholarship depends to a large extent on them. We are well aware that we are now speaking also about ourselves.

[4] On the one hand, this experience teaches that politicians ought to listen to ethnographers, ethno-psychologists and anthropologists – provided, of course, that they are well qualified persons who have no desire to conform themselves to the politicians' orders or to those of their own superiors. One of us (Ilya Kukulín) remembers Galina Starovoitova's speech on the development of ethno-psychology in the USSR, delivered at the Seventh Congress of the USSR Society of Psychologists in February 1989. In her paper, Starovoitova said that conflicts between nationalities in the USSR broke out because the country's leaders did not take account of cultural differences and accumulated psychological tensions. For the most part she analysed the situation in Nagorny Karabakh and around it. After she finished there was a question from the audience: "Which part of the USSR will "flare up" next?" – Starovoitova answered almost without a pause: "The South Ossetian Autonomous Region." This was about ten months before the declaration by the South Ossetian parliament proclaiming the region the "autonomous republic" and the beginning of the violence that followed. The people in the hall were in shock as they listened to Starovoitova, but even today it is hard to say whether there were any politicians in the USSR at that time who were able and ready to take any measures at all to avert further bloodshed.

On the other hand, the ethnographic and anthropological knowledge generated in the imperial centre or in major imperial universities is too often used to justify the policies of that very centre, which creates tension among those who are "administered" in the regions or former colonies. (This does not refer to Starovoitova, who, for all our possible political or methodological disagreement with her, was, precisely, a critic of imperial hegemony: there is an anti-imperial tradition in Russian anthropology too.) Culturally specific experience and analytical reflection upon it have great significance. The voices of researchers and social activists who come from the "national regions" of Russia and discuss the possibilities for the future self-determination of those regions are today heard more and more (perhaps the best example of such an analysis is [Sibgatullina 2022]). Therefore, if the present configuration of power changes in the foreseeable future (and today's "advice" has any meaning at all), future ethnographic and anthropological knowledge in Russia will only be sound if it takes the form of a dialogue and is based on the search for mutual understanding between "central" and "regional" anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and, we beg to repeat, political and social activists. It is important to take account of the activists' practices because it is already perfectly clear that in the next phase of the existence of Russia or its successor states the democratisation of knowledge will be critically important, particularly of knowledge connected with policies of public administration – so that knowledge was shared between the administrators and the administered and could be the subject of public discussion.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Pavel Kupriyanov

Thinking about the topic of borders that has been suggested to us, I realised that my perception of it is twofold. On the one hand, I am periodically seized by a distinct sensation of plunging into the depths of isolation: there are more and more barriers to collaboration with colleagues abroad, fewer and fewer windows of opportunity, the fence is higher, the voices feebler... It seems that with a little more, the gates will be shut altogether, and we shall be left alone with our “sovereign” scholarship, confidently reposing on equally “sovereign” values (although a scenario of total isolation still seems unlikely). On the other hand, apocalyptic though the present situation may be, when I consider my own experience, I cannot say that the restrictions that have come into being have, purely technically, radically hindered my work. Yes, an intended international project did not materialise, yes, I have had to cancel my participation in a conference abroad, but my contacts with my colleagues in other countries remain, and I still have access to foreign texts (in part thanks to the said colleagues), and overall my work has not come to a halt. This may be explained by the fact that we are still only half-way, and it will be some time before we feel all these negative effects in full. It may be that even before all these events I was not very heavily involved in international collaboration. One way or another, the suddenly hardened external borders have not been a real impediment to my academic activities.

However, internal borders have become an impediment. The split that took place in Russian society in 2022 naturally involved academia as well. It would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that everyone has split into two camps, but I have felt very clearly that a new boundary has appeared in academic life. There were, of course, differences in ideology, politics and *Weltanschauung* before, but they were obviously not so significant and were, generally, secondary, so that there was no need to mention them. The question of one’s attitude to the war, though, was different in kind: it was somehow impossible to fence it off and ignore it in conversation with colleagues. And when views diverged, it was impossible to see how people could continue to work together and even walk along the same corridors. For this reason one was so afraid of discovering that a co-worker did not think as one did oneself. I remember at the very beginning, as I was walking to work, I saw a colleague walking in front of me, and instead of catching her up and walking together, I deliberately slowed my pace so as to avoid a conversation which had a high probability of ending in conflict. In time, however, the situation changed somewhat: not that the question became less acute, but the boundary between “us” and “them”, which had at first seemed an evident and impenetrable barrier, became more complicated and started to lose its significance. Now I do not slow down as I approach the institute, because I know how to talk to my colleagues avoiding subjects of conflict and not raising dangerous questions. Like many other people, I have learnt how to interact with people across that border (which of course does not stop it from existing, but makes it somehow less obtrusive). It is hard not to

acknowledge this strategy as constructive – not only because it is built upon an acceptance of the Other, but simply because it is aimed at avoiding conflicts and ensuring the unity and workability of the collective or corporation. But it is not so evident that these good objects are obtained at the expense of the exclusion or suppression of one's civic position and of silence on subjects about which, in many people's opinion, it is impossible to be silent.

It was precisely this contradiction and separation between social opinions and academic interests that was the origin of something that happened to me literally a couple of days before 24 February, in which I am surprised to discover (or into which I read in retrospect) marked parallels with what started to happen afterwards and is still continuing.

So, on the evening of 22 February 2022, accompanied by my grown-up son, I set off for the museum of Soviet everyday life in a certain major Russian city. Our trip was exclusively determined by research aims: I needed answers to a series of questions, for which I should view the exhibition, study the labels and souvenir cases, observe the visitors, talk to the people who worked at the museum – in a word, it was supposed to be the usual museum field. This time, however, everything was different.

When we entered the museum we saw that, apparently, either there was going to be a concert, or they were going to film something: in the middle of the exhibition hall there were young people with musical instruments, microphones and loudspeakers doing sound checks, and standing beside them a video camera and two journalists. We were already about to turn round and come back another time, but one of the museum workers (as it turned out, the owner himself) stopped us and assured us that our arrival was very opportune. We understood from his explanations that an informal thematic concert in honour of tomorrow's Day of the Defender of the Fatherland was going to be videoed, and it would be very good if we could be in the background walking about and looking at the museum. The only thing was, that to set the scene we would have to put on ... Soviet army tunics (which were also being worn by the man we were talking to and by the musicians). Although this unexpected proposition was expressed as a request, in fact it was a condition, so that it seemed that we had no choice. At the same time neither of us had the least desire, nor any justification for demonstrating our association with the army, particularly in the militarised atmosphere of February 2022, and still less on the eve of the professional military holiday. In every sense, those were not our clothes. But the field is the field, and following the imperatives of participant observation, we overcame our feelings, put the tunics on and went to look at the exhibition.

It was awkward. Firstly, the tunics were for some reason very small and were constantly slipping off even our not particularly broad shoulders. Secondly, the act itself and our role looked somehow ridiculous and rather stylistically dubious. Finally, it was hard, in those conditions, to concentrate on what we had come for, that is, our own research questions. Moreover, it soon became quite impossible, because we

were asked to play active listeners, not just looking at the exhibition cases, but sitting in front of the musicians, clapping and singing along with them. At this stage the amount of our involvement in the improvised show increased, but the degree of absurdity increased along with it, because what was happening did not much resemble a relaxed concert in an informal setting, but looked like a gathering of peculiar people in old army tunics who were singing and listening to Viktor Tsoy's "Mother Anarchy" [*Mama Anarkhiya*] against a background of innumerable Soviet pennants, bottles, toys, skates and pioneer neckerchiefs. And still, summoning up the remains of our tolerance and empathy, we did as we were asked, trying not to think about where and by whom the video we were taking part in would be watched.

But even this was not the final stage: after "Mother Anarchy" came the turn of "Don't Cry, Lass, the Rain will Stop" [*Ne plach, devchonka, proidut dozhdi*],³² which the organisers intended should not merely be enthusiastically listened to, but sung in chorus with the other visitors. They even had the foresight to hand out printed sheets with the words, which indeed were hardly necessary. After the first verse and chorus there began a quite daring modern arrangement, to which we were not supposed to sing, but dance energetically – that was what the museum owner was encouraging us to do, standing behind the musicians and demonstrating it. Judging by his excited appearance, if we did join in the proposed dance, we could count not only on his agreeing to an interview, but on his total support for the research. However, this barrier was more than we could handle: the dubious spectacle in which we had become involved became almost physically intolerable, so we both spontaneously threw off our tunics and (surely for the first time in our lives) literally ran out of the museum.

This curious story with our flight from the field, very much in the genre of the tall stories told on expeditions, became for me an extremely traumatic experience, connected precisely with the problem of borders, which made me return once again to some difficult questions. What am I prepared to do in order to obtain the material that interests me? What am I prepared to give up? And should I? Does it matter what tunic I put on, what dance I join in, what song I sing along to, if this is all only for the sake of research? Does scholarship justify everything that needs justifying (not from the point of view of the morality of society or of my community, but in my own eyes)? Where is the boundary between me the anthropologist and me the human being? And where is the limit beyond which I should not go if I am to remain both of these? Is it worth "agreeing to the tunic" at all? Is it worth enduring to the last moment, when it turns ugly? And what possibility is there of participant observation of that in which one is reluctant to / one cannot decently / one must not participate?

All these questions are, firstly, far from new, but nevertheless they confront researchers again and again, probably because the answers to them are extremely personal: everyone draws his own boundaries (and perhaps different ones at different

32 In this famous song particularly well-loved in the rendering by the crooner Eduard Hill, the lass in question is saying goodbye to her young man as he departs for the army. [eds.]

times) and establishes his own limits. And secondly, although they relate to a specific case, they resonate in a surprising manner with our experience of the current situation. In other words, I am asking myself these questions again today, only now they are not about the tactics of actions in the field, but about research activity as a whole. How can I collaborate with institutions/projects/persons who have declared their support for that which I do not support? Can I work in this establishment, participate in this conference, receive money from this fund? Is such collaboration possible, is it allowable, and if it is, in what forms, to what extent, within what limits? Can one do one's work wearing someone else's hat, a hat and a tunic that are alien to you? And, finally, how do you work with or alongside colleagues who do not share your views? In essence the problem remains the same – the combination of a civil/social/human position with academic work – but the scale and format are noticeably different: it is no longer a question of briefly playing a part proposed to you, but of existing constantly in the circumstances that are proposed. Now the notorious tunic is proposed (not to say prescribed) to be worn not in the limited time and space of the museum, but very nearly everywhere, which seems to make all these questions more acute and vital, but still requiring individual answers. Everyone decides for himself when and how to put on and take off other people's tunics and caps. For now.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Igor Kuziner

[1] We should begin by saying that a certain “normalisation” of closed borders began long before February 2022. While the pandemic formally made borders completely impenetrable, but only for a short time (roughly half of 2020), their curious partial reopening after the first wave of the infection had passed added new degrees of inequality within the academic worlds. Firstly, the very practice of crossing borders was now open only to those academics who were ready to spend money on numerous tests and find the possibility of being vaccinated with “the right” vaccine, recognised in the country they were going to. Secondly the practice of crossing borders was seriously influenced by the obvious fact that the process of emerging from the coronavirus quarantine was neither universal nor equivalent in different countries. Even if an academic found the energy and means to “break out” of Russia with its selective and chaotic anti-covid policy, at their destination they could encounter obstacles such as new quarantines, the closure of universities and research centres, or a reorganised everyday urban infrastructure. In other words, it had become necessary in a strange city to take into account many things that in one way or another increased the cost of foreign travel: to book a room in a hotel rather than a hostel, to eat in a restaurant rather than a university canteen, to plan one's route avoiding those countries that had brought in additional anti-covid measures. As a result, by the end of 2021 academic

mobility had either become the privilege of well-off scholars, or demanded a readiness to plunge into a diversified international bureaucratic whirlpool, accumulating numerous medical certificates and entry/exit permits. It would seem that the spread of the practice of online lecturing had created new possibilities of virtual mobility. However, as in the times before Covid, the most important discussions at academic conferences took place in the corridors and were only accessible to those who had been able to get there “on their own two feet”.

The events of February 2022 transformed the regime of partially penetrable borders into one of borders that could not be crossed. Moreover, for understandable reasons it was Russian scholars who found themselves cut off from global collaboration, which, in contrast to the state of things during the pandemic, had not been paused. A vast number of my colleagues have left Russia and are settling into a new place. Those scholars who for personal or professional reasons were unable to find themselves a position outside Russia at short notice have encountered pressure from three sides. Our Ukrainian colleagues, many of whom are working in related fields, have, logically and rightly, taken a sceptical attitude towards possible collaboration with Russians even within the framework of virtual conferences. Many European and American scholars and academic managers have also refused to collaborate with Russians who have remained in Russia. In this case it was not scholars' individual participation in global academic life that proved toxic, but their affiliation with Russian institutions. And here we should proceed to the third factor in the erosion of the system of academic mobility in 2022.

I can say from personal experience that it was not at the moment when Russian troops crossed the border into a neighbouring state that Russia became disengaged from the global academic world. Even after that many of my colleagues were ready to assist Russians and to continue their collaboration, distinguishing scholarship from the political regime. The breaking point was 4 March 2022, when the leaders of Russian academic institutions and universities, in pursuit of their supposed aims (and many of them quite sincerely) signed a declaration in support of the actions of the political regime. After this most of the agreements about co-operation between foreign and Russian universities of which I am aware were cancelled by the foreign partners. Hardly anyone of our foreign colleagues could entirely imagine how the Russian academic world is organised and what a gulf (ideological and social) separates academics from the academic administrators who control them. It was, however, after this event that we ceased to be perceived from outside as something separate from our institutions, with all the consequences that that entailed.

Russian universities evidently decided to respond to the break in relations “asymmetrically”, hitting their employees and students. I personally did not attempt to find any possibilities of university finance for academic mobility, but from my students' experience I know that it proved impossible to take up a placement at a European university and count the courses taken there for credit, and in the bureaucrats' offices the phrase “unfriendly country” is pronounced without a shade of irony.

I have managed to preserve a good relationship with many of my colleagues abroad. In private conversations an absolute majority of them support me (but not my institution). I would like to believe that in one form or another I am still part of the global academy and have not lost at least the possibility of publishing in international journals. However, apart from this remote format of taking part in academic discussion, 2022 seems to have put an end to live academic contact for me and my colleagues who remain in Russia for an indefinite period.

[3] Undoubtedly, the hierarchy and inequality of the academic world is the background against which Russian scholarship has existed, developed and become self-aware since the collapse of the USSR. A banal thought: post-Soviet scholars looked with envy on their European and American colleagues, who seemed to them better adapted to the situation of constant competition for resources in the humanities. Against the background of their impoverished post-Soviet colleagues, foreign Slavists, historians and anthropologists were perceived as the wealthy envoys of an extraterrestrial civilisation visiting a native society to collect data on its exotic history and way of life.

What has been said above is partly true both of the 1990s and of the present day. Moreover, the division into centre and periphery has continued not only in the material sense. In 2021 a text in English was still esteemed more highly in Russia than a text in Russian, and an English-speaking reviewer could allow himself to speak ironically about the awkward wording of an article by a Russian colleague writing in a language that was not his own. “I presume a Slavic / Baltic author,” wrote an anonymous reviewer from a prestigious academic journal to my colleague, condescendingly rebuking him for “many linguistic errors”.

However, the further we got away from 1991, the more the situation changed. Young Russian scholars (and here I speak for myself and my colleagues, historians of the Russian empire and the USSR) became more and more involved in the global academic network, and their knowledge ceased to be markedly “native”. Colleagues from European and American universities referred to our articles and studied dissertations written in provincial Russian universities in search of the factual data they needed. Furthermore, our interaction only increased over time. We came to have virtual platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, where we could share our opinions of an article or monograph that had come out “here and now”, and agree to meet or exchange memes touching on our subject. All of these were of course factors in global integration, and the boundaries between the academic centre and the periphery, though still palpable (the average grant for a European graduate student is €1500, for a Russian €40), were becoming more penetrable. As things stood at the beginning of 2022 young Russian scholars seemed to have every reason to think that over the next decade global integration would reduce academic inequality to a minimum, or at least it would become something problematic and unacceptable.

Unfortunately, for reasons beyond the control of Russian academics, this hard and winding road towards integration was interrupted at the end of February 2022. Those of us who were most involved in global academic networks left Russia, to continue our research abroad. Those who remained were forced to think twice before indicating their affiliation when they submitted an article to a journal or applied to an international conference. Russian universities' attempts to re-profile their international activities at short notice towards the Global South can hardly raise any serious hopes of creating a new global academy for historians of Russian and Eastern Europe. The age-old academic, political and social inequalities and hierarchies have led to a situation where our Slavist colleagues dwell on both sides of the North Atlantic, but not in Johannesburg, Delhi or Teheran. While a vast number of high-class and multifaceted academic schools unquestionably exist in South America, and in Africa, and in South Asia, the prospect of collaborating with them does not appear productive for historians. Those Russian scholars who have studied these regions have in any case formed their own academic networks, and it is hard for the rest to see how or why they should start them from scratch.

[4] At the end of February 2022 I was finishing my dissertation. It was about a small community of radical Old Believers, who despite their eschatological ardour had boldly and successfully adapted themselves to the constantly changing realities of the first third of the twentieth century in Russia. Now, as I look back, I think I have greatly romanticised my heroes. I wanted to show that Russians born into provincial peasant families could simultaneously be consistent followers of a radical escapist doctrine and march in step with the times: energetically assimilate the rudiments of late imperial capitalism, find a place for themselves in the early Soviet social space, and even somehow adapt to the conditions of Stalin's repressions. In other words, I was aiming to de-exoticise the people I was writing about, showing that Old Believers are people with two arms and two legs, and not some mysterious hermit-mystics like the Lykov family, nor well-heeled manufacturers like the Morozovs or Ryabushinskiys. My heroes did all the same things as millions of their contemporaries, looked for and found for themselves social niches in the whirlpool of historical events.

Of course, when, working like a *narodnik*,³³ I transferred my observations of the Old Believers of a hundred years ago to the present day, I wrote that the organisation of society is more complicated than it appears to the authors and agents of large-scale political projects, and that a person's views are far from determining the strategy and tactics of his behaviour. In general, as it seemed to me, these are fairly banal thoughts. Nevertheless, even before the dissertation was finished, it turned out that people really can be poisoned by ideology, and in defiance of any sort of rationality many of my compatriots had received the beginning of military action with enthusiasm and were

33 A member of the "going to the people" movement of the 1860s and 1870s, who took a romanticised view of the character of the Russian peasantry and working class. [eds.]

ready to sacrifice their wellbeing if not their lives for purely imaginary goals. Thus, my attempt to say something about today using material from the past was, generally speaking, a failure. Ideology and eschatology had overcome pragmatism.

Besides this, as I told my story of Old Believers, I believed that this subject was not a specific part of Russian history, but a part of the global processes from which not even the most convinced provincial Old Believer was exempt. It seemed to me that in constructing my argument in such a way, I was making a contribution to the historiographic debate about the *Sonderweg* of the Russian people/state, or rather about the insubstantiality of such a concept. It might have been that a line had already been drawn under these debates, which had been going on for forty years at least – there was no such “special way”. Russian history, even in its darkest periods of the twentieth century, was a part of world history. However, the military action that began at the end of that winter seemed to breath new life into the arguments into the arguments about a “special way”. Thus Stephen Kotkin, one of the pioneers of research into Russian modernity, who made considerable efforts to include Soviet history in world history, said it in so many words in an interview for the *New Yorker* on 11 March 2022 – Russia was, and still is, Russia: “What we have today in Russia is not some kind of surprise. It’s not some kind of deviation from a historical pattern” (Remnick 2022).

This denormalisation of the history of our country from outside coincided with the same sort of apologia for a Russian *Sonderweg* inside. History, or rather a notion of the exceptionalism of the history of our country, became practically the current political régime’s justification for the present and project for the future. Russian propagandists and politicians did all they could to make Alexander Nevsky, the Cumans and the Ukrainian armed units during the Second World War more real and more alive to many of my acquaintances than their own relatives in a neighbouring country. Will there be any place, in an intellectual space caught between two master narratives, for an utterance that normalises Russian history? Is it appropriate at the moment? And to whom will it be addressed, and who will be ready to accept it? Honestly, I have no answer to these questions.

I feel close to the work of Francine Hirsch, Vera Tolz and Marina Mogilner on how social scientists of the late imperial and Soviet periods influenced, albeit with difficulty and inconsistently, the policies of pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary officials (Hirsch 2005; Mogilner 2008; Tolz 2011). Despite all the criticism of some such works, I found the very thought of social science’s productive political agency attractive in its optimism. Nevertheless, I will not speak for anthropologists and ethnographers – I cannot imagine how historical expertise can have been politically productive or of good quality in Russia in recent years. In conditions when loyalist historical organisations such as the Russian Military History Society have had a practical monopoly of expertise, and independent organisations like Memorial have been excluded from legal space, I see no space for activity as experts for myself or those colleagues with whom I collaborate. With our confused explanatory schemes, we can

hardly compete with experts who can in a few sentences clearly separate our age-old “geopolitical enemies” from our “geopolitical friends” or find the right historical rhyme for the events of today.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Dmitry Oparin

[2] I am probably different from many of my colleagues, but my professional and/or academic identity has not been either formed or determined by an institutional affiliation. For ten years (2011–2021) my basic professional affiliation was the Faculty of History of Moscow State University. After 2015 I also worked at the Higher School of Economics, and from summer 2021 to spring 2022 at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

I hardly ever felt that I belonged to the academic world. I found it interesting to conduct research and write articles, but I did not come to think of myself as an employee of this or that university or laboratory. I do not think that such a position is favourable or useful to either side. To a certain extent my alienation was connected with the fact that all the academic establishments mentioned above are huge hierarchical structures. Besides, I always had my doubts about whether it was worth continuing with scholarship. The only workplace that I associated myself with was the Bulgakov Museum, where I led a project from 2014 to 2022 on the history of the families that lived and live at No. 10, Bolshaya Sadovaya. I think that my sense of belonging to this museum was connected with its small size, exceptional team, and the sincere avoidance of officialism and conformism in the museum's projects. Besides, my work at the museum was a counterweight to my academic and pedagogic load. This was probably the most lively and freest of all the state museums that I know. My “flight” into museum work, local studies and journalism, work on popular science projects, socialisation in the milieu of journalism and around the humanities were all in opposition to the academic activity in which of course I was involved, and continue to be so. My translocality manifested itself in this academicism/non-academicism: I was both here and there. Translocality was essential so as not to be in one particular place, so as to attain ambivalence and a state of not belonging. Even within the framework of scholarship I had two unconnected research fields: 1. the Muslim practices and ideas of Central Asian migrants in Russia, and 2. the everyday religious life of the native population of coastal Chukotka.

My academic affiliation often meant nothing to the editors of international journals, nor to many of my colleagues at major international conferences. If a researcher is not a specialist on Russia, then he/she probably does not know either Moscow State University or the Higher School of Economics. After my unplanned forced departure from Russia in March, primarily for family reasons (I do not know whether I would have stayed in Russia but for my family), I was forced to resign from the Academy of

Sciences, the Higher School of Economics and the Bulgakov Museum. Now I have a French affiliation. Too little time has passed, but I very much doubt whether the change of affiliation will result in greater academic opportunities or a greater degree of individual openness to international collaboration. However, my interdisciplinary translocality has collapsed as a result of my emigration and detachment from Russian projects. So far I see no possibility in the West of attaching myself to non-academic projects, or inventing any for myself, be it in museums, journalism or local studies.

In May I was negotiating with the editor of a British journal about the publication of an article that I had submitted. I had to indicate a Russian affiliation: since the research had been conducted when I was a member of a Russian institution, I had no right to put myself forward as an independent scholar or with a foreign affiliation. When I asked whether it was possible to indicate a Russian affiliation, the editor answered in the affirmative: “Personally I am like many others in not supporting the invasion of the Ukraine by Russia, but we are academics here, and we do not want to punish individual scholars for what is happening in the Ukraine.” This is not an indicative example, but it is what I can share.

Last summer a colleague from France and I published a special issue of the Canadian journal *Inuit Studies* entirely devoted to Chukotka and including over twenty articles. The Russian affiliation of some of the authors did not raise any questions with the editorial board. We expressed our position regarding the war in the introduction to the issue, and two American contributors expressed their anti-war position at the end of their article. It is probable that someone among the contributors to the issue might not agree with their position or with ours, but I consider that an author and an editor have a right to their political positions and to state them clearly, without resorting to roundabout language, even in an academic article. Anthropology as a discipline does not exist outside politics – nothing in this world exists outside politics. And I still do not see that it is possible to be silent about what has happened and what is happening, neither in social media nor in academic publications. However, speaking out must be a matter of free will, and not an imperative. And if an author wants to avoid a difficult subject, that is his right.

[3] Alima Bissenova wrote very well about the colonial order, hierarchy and unequal rights in the academic world in her essay “Of Decolonization and Its Ineluctability” (Bissenova 2022). The question of the need for the decolonisation of the academy was raised by Madina Tlostanova in her article “Global Colonialism and the Post-Colonial Condition” (Tlostanova 2020: 14–37). The academic world, both in Russia and in other places known to me is colonial, hierarchic and unequal. In Russia the hierarchy of academic life is complicated and reinforced by a hierarchy of regions, the centralisation of the country, and the hegemony of institutions in Moscow and St. Petersburg over the humanities. Another level of a dangerous hierarchical character of the Russian academic space is the hierarchy within universities. In recent years any horizontal student

initiatives in Russian universities have been repressed by every means (one only has to follow the fate of the *Doxa media*). The academic world does not exist in isolation, but is correlated with the social processes taking place in the country, and, I regret to say, is often much more conformist and loyal than the political situation demands. Therefore, in my view, before talking about the “unipolarity” of the academic world (with which I do not agree), and about the world picture, it would be better to sort out the unproductive local hierarchies and relationships with the authorities.

Inequality and hierarchy in scholarship are also manifested in the breadth and quality of the friendly relationships that researchers have amongst themselves. Most likely, an editor or organiser invites researchers whom he/she knows or is in sympathy with to take part in a collection or panel. There is nothing frankly wrong with this overall, nor anything that distinguishes the academic world from any other professional sphere, but it does raise the question of access to connections. This access is restricted by hierarchies of academic institutions, regions (in Russia's case) and by the language of communication (in the case of the whole world). All researchers create a social milieu of friendly researchers around themselves, and the problem is not that academia is divided into circles, but how it is divided into those circles and how much power the members of one or another circle obtain (depending on the prestige of their university or the wealth of their region). A scholar's success depends to a large extent (but not entirely) on his ability to communicate, his alma mater and the social milieu that formed him. Scholarship is stratified and has a class structure. Social capital plays a decisive part in access to resources. The whole world is organised like that, unfortunately, but one might wish that the academic world were more flexible, less stratified and hierarchic.

[4] There is a well-known thesis that, along with colonial administrators, entrepreneurs from the metropolitan centres, and the intellectual élite of the West as a whole ever since the time of the age of exploration (a very debatable historical concept) and to this day, scholars are also guilty of orientalising the East (Said 1979; Marranci 2008: 33). Many of my colleagues who study different cultures on the territory of Russia are aware of their responsibility both for the tragedy that is taking place now, and for the recent past. Many of my colleagues, ethnographers and anthropologists, have conveyed and continue to convey the ideas of decolonisation. The discussions that are taking place now in anthropology (both in articles and papers, and in posts in social media and columns written by researchers) seem to me unprecedented in their urgency and even radicalism. The radicalisation of thought in the humanities and the intensification of the transmission of the ideas of decolonisation seem to me a positive turn. Russian ethnography and, more broadly, Russophone humanities have long been in need of a “shake-up”, self-critique and self-reflexivity.

As I wrote above, my two spheres of academic interest are migration from Central Asia and the world of the native peoples of the North. The anthropologists who study

these questions are in my subjective opinion at the vanguard of anthropological decolonising thought in Russia. I am sincerely delighted by the texts (and not only academic texts) written by S.N. Abashin.³⁴ It seems to me that he is working for us all in this field. It is becoming clear from how, for example, social discussions on the subject of migration are proceeding, that it is precisely Russia that is in need of a “denazification” of the humanities, and has been for quite a long time. The anthropologists’ task is to normalise the conversation about migration, to destigmatise migrants, and to draw the attention of the authorities and of society to the problems of migration, and to the painful manifestations of racism and xenophobia in the country. The anthropologists’ task is to de-exoticise the native peoples of the North, to draw the attention of the authorities and of society to the local problems of the North.

However, there are many more problems on which the Russian research community bestows less attention: problems of research ethics and the presentation of research, the need to develop participatory research in which the informant is an equal participant in the research and not just a source of information to be interpreted by the ethnographer. As I wrote above, the academic world is hierarchical and stratified. Researchers who are not from the capital (or not from the city), including those from native peoples, specialists in local studies and experts on local culture often have no chance of joining in the academic conversation “on an equal footing”. Russian anthropology must not only declare a decolonising turn (some researchers think that it is already too late for that), but expand its borders also as a discipline that is sensitive to the experience of other people, become more flexible and more receptive to a different (not only academic) presentation of knowledge. Frequently it is the artists,³⁵ curators, theatrical people,³⁶ journalists³⁷ writers and human rights activists who raise anthropological questions more distinctly, interestingly, profoundly and, most importantly, boldly and freely than learned anthropologists, know the local situation better, do not work in the field, but live in it and create it. Of all the humanities, anthropology is the least academic and most open to society, and this is its strong point that can be used to widen the borders of the decolonising discourse and scale up the transmission of decolonising ideas. Anthropology has much to give to contemporary art and human rights activism, and vice versa.

For three years the art historian and journalist Maria Semendyaevs and I ran the podcast *Russia Too*, on which we invited different researchers, mostly anthropologists, to talk about various identities and manifestations of Russian contemporaneity.

34 For example, his recent publication “Decolonizing Decolonization” (Abashin 2022).

35 See Madina Tlostanova’s article about the artists Saul Sulejmenova and Taus Machačeva (Tlostanova 2020), and also the work of the Chechen artist Aslan Gojsum and the recent anti-war art event by the artist Alis Gorshenina from the Urals.

36 For example, the Kazan project Avazlar/Golosa, based on reading ego-texts in Tartar <<https://monkazan.ru/memorylanguage>> [accessed 7.12.2023].

37 On of the best things said about the Central Asian migrants in Russia has been Ksenija Diodorova’s multimedia project *In the Cold* <<https://inthecold.ru>> [accessed 7.12.2023].

A fair number of them were devoted to ethnic cultures – Altai, Nenets, Roma and others. However, we never spoke to Altai, Roma or Nenets people. True, we did record one episode with Nenets people, but for regrettable technical reasons it did not go out. I have just found out about an episode of the podcast *The Republic Speaking*,³⁸ characterised by its makers as “the first project in Russia about the Asiatic national regions of the country in audio format”, where you can hear “voices of people from the republics: Kalmykia, Buryatia, Tuva, Sakha, Khakassia and Altai”. At the very beginning the presenters say that they are tired of other people – ethnographers, documentary makers, journalists, museum workers – talking about them and their republics and cultures. And if we are serious about talking about decolonisation, we must begin with ourselves: why am I not conducting real participatory research? Why am I on air instead of the local inhabitants when Chukotka, for example, is being talked about? How far do I make my research accessible to the local population? Why did I invite a Russian researcher to the podcast to talk about the Altai? And why, finally, are two Muscovites presenting a podcast about the regional identities of the country?

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Lidia Rakhmanova

The Temporalisation of the Field and the Revelation of the Hidden through πρᾶξις

Last year, 2022, showed us the most sarcastic way of associating and distinguishing state, linguistic and academic borders, a way that makes your hair stand on end. The absurdity of how people and texts find themselves in different ways “cast out” and excluded from fields, spaces and territories that are marked in a particular way requires reference to the pre-war condition of academic identities and their interweaving. In recent years we have often had to juggle our affiliations in different contexts and for totally different reasons. Both inside and outside the borders of the state the combination of different “belongings”, their alliance and putting together is often not associated with partnership, enrichment and synthesis, but with the condition of “dispersal”, fragmentation and the enfeeblement of the individual parts. Even an unwritten, unborn text already belongs to the leading organisation or project, as if to a family of gentry. Just as a male infant was enrolled in the army from birth, so that by the time he was old enough actually to engage in military service he would have “reached” an officer’s rank, an article that is ready for proofreading after it has been reviewed already has its rank.

It is not only we who bestow affiliation and weight upon a text – it bestows it on us. The text leads us through the institutions, teams, unions, and classifications

38 See the pilot episode of the podcast: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JABA5AMemvY>> [accessed 7.12.2023].

of specialities that make sure whether the research was carried out in the spirit of Soviet ethnography, social anthropology, cultural studies, ethnology or the social sciences as a whole. While the review process is taking place a journal might change its status, quartile and rating: this is all significant for the organisation, but it does not change the value of the aggregation of articles in the journal, in which texts are woven together and therefore not so liable to lose their value.

However, the new world realities after 24 February 2022 have shown us that it is not only the text, but the field too that has the power to change our “face” and status. The field and the sphere of research can at times determine whether we must remain anonymous or whether we can give our name, omitting, however, our institution. If we give our full affiliation, the journal’s editorial board or the research group may have questions about when and how we collected our field material.

While preparing publications this year I encountered a new temporal boundary: “data collected before 24 February on the territory of the Russian Federation” and “data collected in the period after 24 February”. An interesting turn like this leads to a shift of focus from the territorial exclusion (which is so clear and obvious in wartime) to the temporal exclusion, which acquires the form and language of history and at the same time a painful calendrical precision.

So, on the pages of this book, we are aiming to record the state of our minds and hearts, and the series of practices which have become familiar to us at the moment that we are now experiencing. In fact, we have become subjects of research and observation for ourselves: where, then, is our field situated? Since 24 February it has been localised temporally, not spatially: up to that moment such a field exists as foreboding, as a means of interpreting the future before it happens. In such a way, in field ethnography, with the beginning of the war, the temporal dimension has predominated over the territorial. Whereas before, regional characteristics were inseparably linked with cultural ones and lay at the foundations of unique cases, situations and communities, today, when we read texts produced by researchers immersed in the reality of Russia after the beginning of the war, the information we derive from them is not about the region or the ethnoses, but about the times.

Does this transition also mean that field material in the “early”, pre-war field, marked with the indication of spatial rather than temporal borders, is becoming an archive, archiving itself under pressure from the events that are taking place and the new ways of speaking about the present and about history? Whether this is bringing the historical and anthropological discussions closer together, or, on the contrary, sharpening disciplinary boundaries, remains to be seen.

One way or another, if we return to the question of borders and affiliations, we shall see how the views and relationships that researchers inside and outside Russia have with their field differ. If for someone affiliated to a foreign university or research institute the possibility and chance of conducting ethnographical field research in modern Russia is a huge success and is only limited by citizenship, legal and visa ques-

tions, for a researcher who is still affiliated to Russian organisations, works in the Russian field and lives in the country, the problem is to publish the results of his research on international platforms. Whereas in certain cases it is the person (the citizen?) who is refused publication, in this case it is also possible for the publication of ideas supported by field material relevant to a particular historical period to be refused.

Thus an extremely specific condition for continuing collaboration has been the limitations regarding the differences between ethnographical data collected before 24 February and after that date. This proposition may at first sight appear a total absurdity: as one of my colleagues sarcastically put it, if we adhere to this principle and do not use data collected on the territory of the Russian Federation after 24 February 2022, then all we can do is analyse “old”, earlier ethnographical material that casts light on the subject of research, and in the period of uncertainty, in wartime, we can plunge head first into theory, pretending that the field has not changed its inner life since the last expedition, the last time we visited it. Considering what may have motivated such a condition on the part of a foreign university or fund, I can only suppose that it is not the data themselves, but the process of fieldwork that gives rise to doubts: it is important that the foreign partner’s funds should not be spent on supporting the research work of scholars who work in Russian academic organisations. The result is that the data (diaries, interviews, photographs) are “poisoned” by the very fact of working in wartime. This is only one example of the hard to obey rules of the game that arise in a hybrid reality with rules that are constantly being renewed and rewritten.

Considering this in a joint collective on both sides of the “borders”, we came up with the idea that in that case we should stop the progress of thought, give up its power to produce ideas, because all ideas produced after 24 February are just as unsuitable for publication in the European space as are reflexions in the text of everyday life “caught” by means of participant observation. Halt observation and dialogue with informants, freeze the social space of the present, stop the movement of a thought if it is localised in the minds of people who are bound by the chains of a Russian academic affiliation. This condition nevertheless leaves us the possibility of continuing research, publication and discussion within the Russian academic and institutional milieu.

This sort of new, unusual translocality functions because none of these demands are unconditional and they vary from team to team, from university to university. In one instance a researcher must renounce his professional and institutional identity, in another his field, and in a third he must delete the time of his fieldwork after February 2022 and rely on previous ethnographical experience.

If we go beyond the perspective that I suggested above, in which the researcher is localised and defined in three dimensions – his institutional affiliation (connected with state borders), his field (as a territory and as an element of his disciplinary orientation) and the possibilities for and limitations on publication (the language of the

discussion, the platform of the discussion, the country where the journal is published) – we are faced with a person who finds himself in a social space in which the inter-connection between the gender, power, intellectual and sensory orders has changed radically.

The opportunity and right to teach in person in Russia and to continue to conduct field research are now no longer unconditional, but are unambiguously clearly marked for gender. In the context of field ethnography, particularly in relation to the remote regions of Russia, the hard to reach and seasonally isolated communities of the Arctic, Siberia and the Far East, the female experience of participant observation in one-person expeditions (Mikhaylova 2015) has over the past half-century raised acute questions about physical and psychological safety, which in the Western anthropological tradition had been discussed in depth and in various aspects long before (see, for example, [Behar 1996]). Research together with guides from the local inhabitants or with male colleagues is now possible, but there is still a question mark over it. When, on an expedition after the beginning of mobilisation, you dial the number of a guide or important informant and hear the number unobtainable signal or a recorded message that the subscriber is outside the network, you cannot help thinking about whether any further meetings, conversations or research will be possible. An important role here is played by the partner's age, life experience and skills. The possibility of turning to the irreplaceable people who guarantee your safety and the organisation of difficult logistics, as well as mutual help and support, is hanging by a thread. Two intensive waves of migration, of researchers (both men and women) after the beginning of the war and of people liable to be called up (predominantly men) after the beginning of the mobilisation in September and October 2022, have raised the question of who among ethnographers and anthropologists is going to conduct prolonged fieldwork in the regions of the Russian Federation, and how they are going to do it.

Women who work in the field and have not left the country to follow their nearest and dearest, their families, their husbands, are working in a field where questions about memory, identity and personal biographies may be received in the local community with great caution or even with suspicion. It is debatable whether the world of academic research and teaching in Russia is or is not becoming more “feminine”, and after a year we cannot make a final evaluation of the consequences of the gender shifts that have taken place. One can, however, already say that they create an additional dimension to the spaces formed by the boundaries of states and languages, and to the critical view of the boundary between metropolitan, provincial and native science (Sokolov and Titaev 2013). What strategies are suitable for the people who have remained in the country? The public position of an academic or teacher in regional capitals now not only affords extra opportunities, but also presents a greater risk. Writing texts, escaping into the space that used to be the field, offers a refuge in the provincial context. Thus if the “provincial” and “native” may be used as a resource for concealed disloyalty and lesser publicity, can it not be said that in the academic

area what men say is being provincialised in order to provide safety and an opportunity to speak? Since the end of February 2022, and particularly since mobilisation was declared, gender differences between university lecturers have acquired a new dimension: male bodies, which previously promised greater stability and privileges than female ones, are now in a zone of heightened state supervision which threatens greater risks, which forces male researchers to look for places of invisibility and escape. In a situation where the actual, and not remote presence of lecturers in university lecture theatres is regularly monitored, female bodies have become more visible than male ones, and for the universities themselves women have become the bulwark of more stable pedagogical work.

The internal boundary between research and personal, research and political, is also under review, but this time the requirement for uninterrupted reflexion on this border and its crossings emerges not so much from the methodological call to transparency in the production of anthropological knowledge, as from the ethical and moral imperative. Here I would like to direct attention rather less towards the traditionally discussed responsibility of researcher to the field that they change, into which the intrude, which they leave (not) to return again. Although this question is not abrogated, it seems to me that today another question is becoming particularly acute: where do we go back to in order to think and write about what we have seen and heard? Do we have a responsibility towards that world of life that we use as a gigantic “study” in which we can “digest”, analyse, interpret and constantly write?

Wherever we might be, in Moscow, Berlin, Bishkek or Erevan, we take our field with us, into hurriedly and badly furnished rooms, the refuges of people who are in motion. This nomadism and translocality is not academic and no longer expeditionary. It is the dance of those who seek refuge. It is the search for refuges, and not for a world to live in, one in which one might settle, that transforms the time that used to be devoted to analysis and profound experiential immersion in diaries, experience and memories into a time of an unceasing field. Such a field continues, stretches out, but does not invite one to remain and does not become a home, “a point from which” it is possible to write.

My life, my urban everyday, full of the odds and ends of intellectual labour, has become a prolonged field, and hard-to-reach corners of the taiga with a broken-down, badly functioning transport infrastructure open the door for me not so much to research as to a particular existential *modus vivendi* where physical labour still means something, and another form of particular political participation is, as it were, revealed in its intensity. A broken-down everyday life, severed links, this rough, half-demolished reality becomes the focal point of what is real, whereas at the “starting point” – the place where we write and whence we depart on our expeditions – a sense of the unreality of events reigns.

Therefore the main challenge for me is not state, regional, linguistic or disciplinary borders, but the transformation of ordinary life into a historical moment, a determinant of some other, new mode of existence. In this situation the question of the anthropologist's identity becomes more acute, as does the dilemma between word and action that is important to our profession. In pre-war reality word, writing and act were the results of intellectual labour and at the same time served to demonstrate successful work: they were reckoned in reports and ratings and made the basis for the confirmation of academic status and positions. Today intellectual labour and work are not only divorced, but opposed to each other. We cannot manage to convert our labour, which requires the articulation of observations and experience, into work outcomes recognised by our institutions: thoughts, considerations and conclusions frequently cannot be published, reckoned and officially accepted in Russia. Our work, by contrast, requires efforts to restrain ourselves, find forms of parabolic language and silences. The connexion between the meaning of academic activity and its formal expression is fundamentally undermined, and this makes many anthropologists seek refuge in other forms of activity. Some of us, faced with the need to survive, return to the places that were once our field, turning them into new "homes" and places of ordinary life – the application of simple physical, manual, everyday labour that does not require the effort of interpretation in the new conventional language of academic institutions.

This is a new symbolic boundary for me, and I find myself at a loss when I turn to Hannah Arendt's words:

"An insight into who someone is is provided implicitly by both words and deeds; but just as the connection between acting and beginning is closer than that between speaking and beginning, so words are obviously better suited to providing information about who-one-is than deeds" (Arendt 1981: 167).

Later on, in a reference to this assertion, Arendt cites Martin Heidegger:

"Since speaking and revealing or, as Heidegger says, 'unveiling', are more closely related to each other related to each other than acting and revealing, Plato thinks that speech – λέξις – has more to do with truth (in Heidegger's sense of 'unconcealment') than Action – πράξις" [Ibid.: 353].

The necessity of being (involuntarily) in a state of concealment and silence in the process of teaching, passing on experience, discussing with colleagues and students, makes us constantly experience an internal contradiction. Without the opportunity to open up, trusting the act more than the word, are we moving away from the truth?

Our *vita activa*, by a strange irony of the world, is so strongly linked to speaking and writing, our research labour as anthropologists before the war was so unconditionally directed towards the joy of revelation, that today it is particularly painful for me to recognise the necessity of acting more than speaking. And the very thing that

was my field only yesterday may today become my support and opportunity to “bring things out of concealment” through *πραξις*, but not through *λέξις*.

Meanwhile, returning to the first topic indicated, concerning the expectations of the academic community, the new requirements for publication and our affiliations, it is obvious that all these requirements concern the process of defining the subject through the word. Here I would like to put the question more radically, whether we are experiencing a unique period when prolonged participant observation, life in the field, going away and immersing oneself in the field on the territory of the Russian Federation, is becoming a special type of intervention, an intervention that combines civil and ethical action and ethnographical expression. This expression should be understood more widely than a “stage” to be followed by a theoretical intervention in the discussion, because it is connected with the courage and readiness to travel the long road, through silent action, only hoping that it will one day be possible openly to put into words and connect all the meanings with which it is imbued.

My argument about the exclusion of “field time”, and not of the field as such with its history and life over the past century, fits interestingly into the same picture as the idea of the shape-shifter, “the field as home” for Russian researchers. “Yes”, I reply to the request of foreign colleagues who prefer not to see references to field data discovered and published in Russia after 24 February:

“Yes, you are quite right. Because after 24 February any journey of mine, any presence in the landscape and on the territory that I used to perceive as the field and the community under study, now becomes a means of finding my home and that point ‘from which’ I can write. The former alienation and analytical and ethical distance are no longer possible. Therefore it is no longer my field. My field ‘disappeared’ (and reappeared in some other place?) in the ethnographical sense in 2022. Colleagues, you are right.”

Home has acquired the properties of the field, because it has ceased to be stable, ceased to be a fulcrum for the research perspective. The field, though, has become the refuge that life relying on everyday physical labour provides. We can see the replaying and renewal of these complex relationships between field and home taking place in a temporal perspective. The field and home have not only changed places (the field is often a safer place for the anthropologist than home), but the boundary between them is practically effaced.

What happens to the position of the participant observer against the background of these transformations, when informants and guides are no longer just guides? Trust and openness towards each other now require a completely different type of field research and human emotional labour, going beyond the limits of the conversation and the interview. It is about a bodily, almost mechanical co-presence, co-existence in this half-silent “field” *vita activa*, in the expectation of revelation; revelation not through the word, through conversation, but through action. I see this space of the

field as providing a temporary liberation from control over the position of bodies in space, and from the dominant Platonic idea, maintained by Heidegger, that the word is closer to the revelation of truth. Perhaps borders in the forms of walls and fences are growing more quickly for the very reason that we believe too much in λέξις and the languages of description, when the world of ruins has another beauty and another vitality – slow, silent, active.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Petr Safronov

[1] It should probably be recalled that the question of “borders” emerged with renewed vigour already in 2020, after the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The disruption of physical mobility did not, however, cause a critical blow to the density of academic communications. The conversation continued online. Therefore, the problem is neither physical boundaries as such, nor “travelling”, which is a privilege in itself, and additionally supported by the network of international academic communication. It was not the borders question that suddenly appeared in 2022, but the full scale aggression in Ukraine, started by Russia, that rudely upturned all previous academic life. For those involved in the humanities or social sciences, war cannot be just part of the background, a frightening but distant information-noise. Every war sharply raises the problem of borders and the boundaries between positions, between professional choices, between institutional and individual connections. This means constantly keeping in mind the question of why this or that research is being carried out – not in the mode of reporting on fictitious “relevance”, but in terms of an internally clear definition of what it is for and why it is worth spending energy and time on. What exactly should we talk about and why should we continue to talk and not stop talking? On what grounds is this or that choice made? These questions directly shape my life at the moment.

According to my private observations, made during conversations with colleagues and friends in Moscow in the spring and summer of 2022, a burden of omissions and elisions, ill-considered rhetorical tropes, aggressive simplification of positions and intolerance for the lack of immediate and simple answers to all doubts has become noticeable. But it would be over-hasty to say that none of this happened until February 2022. I cannot help but see now how my own naivety, refusal to think through certain topics, and easy agreement to equate the limits of academic freedom in the country with the atmosphere in just one or two universities, indicate a clear inconsistency of thought and action. How and under what conditions can various forms of collective political thinking develop in Russia? – I think it’s important to think about that right now.

At the centre of my reflections is care as a principle of civil society, ensuring the distributed interaction of many people in addition to and on top of personal connec-

tions. Caring requires focus, acceptance of one's own imperfections, and calm desperation. It is these feelings – caring, acceptance of imperfection, and quiet despair – that permeate my academic life today.

[2] My understanding of this question is: “Is it true that after the start of the war it became more difficult to invent one's academic identity?” Or: “Is it true that now you can't just not notice which passport you have in your pocket?” The answer to these questions is obvious: of course, the outbreak of war forcibly returned many to locality from translocality, and the possibilities to combine both turned out to be very limited in many cases. But, on the other hand, they were limited before. First of all, because, outside of individual enclaves of modernisation or exhibition projects, science and education in Russia continue to be characterised by critical lack of resources. There are still schools in the country that do not have heated toilets! Intellectual life in Russia existed and exists in conditions of chronic poverty. You need to remember this all the time. In addition, I see my own task as continuing to do the little that I can: to the best of my ability, connecting colleagues located in different places for an equal discussion of interesting topics. Together with historian Timur Atnashev, in early 2023, we launched an online academic seminar on social sciences and humanities. This seminar is designed for researchers who are ready to discuss drafts of their future publications with colleagues. We especially welcome participants from outside the academic “centres”. Today, it may be hard to write academic papers, but one must do it.

We hope that our seminar will contribute to unblocking academic writing, make it balanced, open to criticism and open-minded.

Maintaining academic communication is not, of course, an end in itself. The main thing here is to find a way to communicate the “work of mourning,” to find words that can resist the all-consuming hatred. Can we say that there is little room left for professional life? I don't think so, because I consider myself a philosopher, and from my point of view, philosophy is not a profession but a way of life. If one talks about why it is worth living, the first answer is: in order to highlight to each other new possibilities of understanding. Death would be too simple and naively final.

Speaking about teaching to which I devoted quite a lot of time, my teaching life changed more than once before the war broke out. Denunciations from students, bullying from colleagues due to excessive independence of mind – I have dealt with this for a long time. This is partly why in recent years I have been teaching outside of Russian state educational institutions. I cannot imagine how hard it is today for those who want to continue teaching with dignity. As for “technology”, teaching has always been about technology, about repeatable practices and clear goals. In this sense, online has added new practices (and made some optional or placed them on the shoulders of students), but has not revolutionised the goals.

[3] I am somewhat puzzled by the exact meaning of the question. “Where did those who could run, run?” – I don't have reliable statistics. Can the flight of several thou-

sand academics change the hierarchy of the world's academic centres, if this flight itself is oriented towards the supposed centres? If by hierarchy we mean the location of the richest universities or places with the largest number of Nobel Prize winners, then the current emigration has not changed anything and could not change anything, because it is taking place in countries that belong to the academic periphery. If we talk about how this hierarchy generally correlates with the complexity of the modern world and the ability to adequately express it in one's research, then here the answer is also relatively clear: it is naive to equate the possession of resources with the ability to pose interesting intellectual questions.

[4] I am not an ethnographer and do not have much experience in ethnographic field research. In 2011–2013, I participated in a large project to study the ethos of the scientific-and-technical intelligentsia in Obninsk, led by Andrei Zorin and Galina Orlova. In 2016, I participated in a collective project on the ethnography of education in a Moscow school. This experience, among other things, became an occasion for reflection on the methodological challenges of collaborative ethnographic writing, which I and my colleagues expressed in an article for the journal *Ethnography and Education*. It seems to an outsider that so far cinema has done a much better job when it comes to the ethnography of the former Soviet Union: take Vladimir Menshov, Kira Muratova, Alexey Balabanov, Alexander Rastorguev, Zhora Kryzhovnikov, Nigina Sayfullaeva, or Vadim Kostrov. Can Vadim Volkov's book about violent entrepreneurship be considered an ethnography? I don't know. In my opinion, this is the most important book about Russia after 1991, which we will have to read and re-read for a long time. Citizens of Russia have painfully developed the skills of non-violent interaction. I hope that the hatred now unleashed will not be able to completely erase this experience and will not restore the poisonous power of the violent entrepreneurs. I believe that anthropologists, ethnographers, as well as representatives of other social and humanitarian professions can still do a lot to study the experience of shared civic benevolence, caring coexistence in the past and present. This necessarily means that they will also be attentive to the experience of contemptuous suppression of differences, mutual hostility and implicit imperialism. Russian citizens will have to learn again how to interact non-violently among themselves and with others. And Russian academics will have to learn not less, but more than others.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Victor Shnirelman

[1] Peter the Great is said to have "opened a window onto Europe". This was also a window onto Big Science. For at the foundations of Russian science, which, essentially, came into being in the eighteenth century, were Europeans and European knowledge and practices. But this was a long time ago. Before my time. But the window onto

Europe is being boarded up before my eyes, and I will remember this for the rest of my life. It is worth noting that the present scandalous discussions about putting up new monuments focus on the figures of Stalin and Ivan the Terrible rather than Peter I. We are also told to turn to the East (this call was recently even on the lips of Patriarch Kirill). Things are becoming ridiculous. Now even the television weather forecasts begin with Japan, China, India and Iran and Syria, when earlier they used to begin with European countries. We are even advised to keep our savings in yuan rather than dollars or euros. And there are voices in the State Duma calling for the abolition of Latin script on Russian territory, and there is also a campaign to erase “foreign” borrowings from the Russian language.

Until recently, when we applied for grants, we had to indicate that the results of our research would be comparable with the “world level”, by which was meant, the level of Western scholarship. What “world level” could be meant nowadays – the Chinese, or perhaps the Syrian one? So far nobody has explained this to us. However, there are proposals to extend the teaching of the history of Asia and Africa in schools, at the expense of the history of the Western world. Until recently we were required to publish in high-rating journals (Scopus, WoS), but now we have our own rating system (RSCI), which, as I understand it, will be compiled and curated by academic administrators. And if not them, then again people from the HSE who ignore the specifics of the humanities. Today several academic institutes are working within the framework of the prestigious programme “Advanced (World-Class) Research Centre”, that is, essentially, we ascribe to ourselves an “advanced status” to meet the administrators’ requirements.

In other words, as in imperial and Soviet times, “Potemkin villages” are being built, and people are getting used to “pulling the wool over their eyes”, writing made-up reports. Naturally, this helps keep the authorities blissfully convinced that we are “ahead of the whole planet”. But this does not leave a sweet taste in one’s mouth, the real level of scholarship under conditions of growing isolation is falling, negative selection is beginning again, and looming on the horizon is not merely “stagnation” but a catastrophic collapse. Yes, in the beginning of the post-Soviet period the boundaries of our academic fields were expanding. We were discovering new and promising fields, assimilating new methods, broadening our terminology. Now all this is shrinking again like the wild ass’s skin. Who can now carry on with gender studies, if “gender” provokes an adverse reaction in the authorities? How can one study cultural memory, if the authorities have already decided for themselves what “the people’s memory” means and what it ought to be? How can one discuss the preservation of cultural heritage (the Pushkin Institute of the Russian Language named “heritage” as the Word of the year 2022 (*Institut...* 2022), while in the “Year of Cultural Heritage” proclaimed in the Russian Federation the Russian army is deliberately destroying Ukrainian cultural heritage (Farago et al. 2022)? How can one critically study radicalism, if its ideas have been appropriated by the authorities? How can one analyse

modern terrorism, if discussion of it is covered by the new prohibitions passed by the Duma? How can one carry on research into contemporary ethno-politics without risking putting particular ethnic activists in danger? How, under this environment, can one follow the rules of scholarly ethics (*Zayavlenie...* 2022)? For this reason, it is becoming difficult to study contemporary life, and some of the most sensitive issues have become dangerous for research and discussion. Whereas it was not long ago that we were surprised at Soviet scholars' fixation upon ethnic culture at the turn of the twentieth century, today that fixation is awakening again. All this is promoted by conservative political rhetoric with its admiration of "traditional society" – not the one that corresponds to scholarly criteria and knowledge, but a romantic image remote from reality invented by the authorities themselves. And it is a justification for that image that the authorities expect from scholars.

Today the authorities are trying to establish a monopoly over history and historical memory. Officially a struggle is being pursued with "the distortion of the memory of the nation" – this has been declared more than once by Patriarch Kirill and by members of the Duma. But "the memory of the nation" is by its very nature a distortion of true history, because it is situational, dynamic, selective and uses history instrumentally, as do the authorities.

How should scholars react to this sort of views, which are so far from reality? Is any scholarship possible under such conditions? Or is it a matter of the "sovereign scholarship" that corresponds to the "special path" of Russia's (Russian, Eurasian) civilisation? Some specialists accept this willingly, others obey because they have no choice, and only a few try to resist it, and these last have a hard life. In other words, an ever-deepening chasm is opening up across the Russian academic community, as it once did in South Africa, which was brilliantly discussed by Adam Cooper in *Current Anthropology* at the beginning of the 1980s.

[2] I was fortunate to work in several international research centres in the post-Soviet period, including the Centre for the Study of Nationalism led by Ernest Gellner. Thanks to this I have written and published about thirty monographs over the last twenty to twenty-five years. Without the support of international research centres this would have been impossible. I learnt a lot there, having access to a rich literature not available in Russia, taking part in conferences and discussions, being in contact with foreign colleagues and observing their scholarly activity, discovering new research fields and new methods and techniques, in fact, simply becoming acquainted with the ordinary life in very different countries, which was different from what I was used to at home. This in itself made me ask new questions and think about issues that had never occurred to me before. And, after all, that is the very essence of cultural anthropology. It is the very reason why we study it. Unfortunately, all of this is becoming inaccessible to the present generation, just as it once was to Soviet people.

Not long ago our Western colleagues used to invite us to international conferences, and even covered travel expenses and accommodation. Today the new law on “foreign agents” makes such practices impossible. And now that Russia has been declared “a sponsor of terrorism”, we no longer have access to international research funding (not to mention the problems of logistics and obtaining visas). As a result, even though I am still invited, I have stopped taking part in conferences abroad, though this used to be a routine practice for me that took place several times a year. Of course, Zoom helps partially to overcome such barriers. But since the internet breaks down from time to time, this does not always work, and simply meeting and talking to colleagues in person, which is what makes conferences so enjoyable, cannot be done in such a format.

That is not all: now, in order to be declared a “foreign agent”, there is absolutely no need to have been financed from abroad. Now it is enough “to be under foreign influence”. And this erects a further barrier not only to contacts with Western colleagues, but even to the use of Western scholarly literature and methods and approaches arriving from the West. Is it even allowed to quote the works of Western researchers now? Of course, this law may not be put into practice to such an extent, there is a chance that it will stay on paper, as often happens in Russia. But it is extremely vaguely formulated, and if desired it can always be used against scholars who for one reason or another have fallen into disfavour. Precedents are already emerging. Even before I had finished writing this, on 9 December 2022 the well known philosopher Ruben Apresyan was declared a foreign agent, using the formulation:

“Along with other scholars who have declared allegiance to the West he has opened the gates of Russia to a ‘Trojan horse’, having helped to ‘upload’ into Russian scholarship more than twenty metaprogrammes (all kinds of ethics of non-violence, genders, multiculturalisms, feminisms, etc.) that have seeped into the media agenda and culture” (Evseev 2022).³⁹

Following this initiative, the “patriots” launched an attack on the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Meanwhile a law is being developed in the Duma to forbid the use of foreign words, admittedly so far only “at the state level”, whatever that means (Sobakina 2022).

[3] I was once struck in the USA by the high degree of decentralisation in American academia. This is achieved by the high mobility of American scholars. Anyone who has trained in a first-rank university moves on: the law obliges them to look for work elsewhere. The system of temporary contracts also encourages a lot of movement. If a monograph worthy of attention is published, its author is constantly invited to give

39 See the commentary by the journalist Michail Fishman, also declared a “foreign agent”, from the television channel Rain: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXq_ExI3-uo> [accessed 15.12.2023].

talks at different universities and research centres, where his/her ideas are extensively discussed. Thus, there is a swift exchange of information which stimulates research effort. That is how American scholarship progressively evolves, constantly renewing its repertoire. Of course, there is a difference between the ten or so first-rank universities and the rest, the provincial ones. But even so, for the reasons discussed above there is not such a gap between them as one finds in Russia.

As for the relationships between the academic communities of different countries, an imbalance made itself felt even earlier. For example, the Western, mostly American scholars (with a few exceptions, let us say) who study Russia frequently ignore publications by Russian authors, pretending to be working in an empty space. More than once I have encountered a situation where, although they were doing research in my field (nationalism, radicalism, racism, anti-Semitism), they ignored (or did not want to know about) my books – and these were people who spoke Russian, including Russian emigrants. Some of them did not even know those of my books that had come out in English and been published abroad. I could recall a curious case, when specialists of that sort were surprised to discover one of my books which had been published twenty years ago and was directly related to the subject they were discussing. Why this happens remains a mystery to me. I imagine my colleagues can also recall such cases.

[4] At the beginning of the 1990s there were naïve expectations that ethnographers (ethnologists) would serve as assistants and advisers to government departments and make a valuable contribution to the harmonisation of ethnic relations. At the beginning of the 2000s I gave many talks for the members of various administrative bodies as well as at academic conferences to explain the nature of racism and xenophobia. Now I understand that where the so-called “power vertical” operates, only top-down information has any significance. No one is interested in horizontal communication, and information disseminated through such channels is neither received nor assimilated. Therefore, it seems to me that the roles of experts under the conditions of an authoritarian regime and under those of true democracy are different in principle. Only in the latter case does the expert have the opportunity for productive contact with a mass audience and through it to have an impact on policy. With respect to scholarly experience of participation in the political life of the country, it seems to me that in the present environment, these issues cannot be openly and frankly discussed. All I can say is that at present not a few specialists are obediently fulfilling military requests, and others fully approve of what is happening around them. But (!) the request from higher authority for a definition of the term “fascism” seems not to have had any response from the scholars. Apparently, no one willing to fulfil it has been found. Thus, there is no unanimity in our academic community, and different scholars behave differently, which does inspire some hope.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Aleksandra Simonova

On the Borderlands of Ethics and Scholarship

My son was born shortly after the outbreak of war. I have watched him smile for the first time, try to say “mama”, cut his first tooth and start to crawl. I can see him growing, and with horror tick off each new month of war. That is my calendar. Lev was born in the USA, where I am finishing my PhD in anthropology at Berkeley. He has never seen his family in Russia, and there is no telling when that will happen. Before the war I had quite a comfortable existence between disciplines and countries, crossing state and academic borders freely. Unexpectedly for myself, with the beginning of the war I became clearly aware of myself as an American anthropologist with an exclusively American affiliation and extremely selective links with the Russian academic community. I have a Russian passport, and I lived in Russia until I was thirty, but in a war situation it is no longer possible for there to be “anything between” the Russian and American academic communities.

It is only fair to say that I first became an anthropologist in the USA when I began the PhD programme at Berkeley. In Russia I was lodged for a long time in interdisciplinarity, interested in socio-political theory, urban anthropology and research into science and technology. I felt part of an interdisciplinary academic circle of social scientists relying on qualitative methods, also united by the values upon which they orientated themselves. My academic circle at the European University of St. Petersburg was made up of anthropologists, sociologists and historians, and to a large extent we had a common understanding of academic freedom and mobile borders, both borders within disciplines and international ones. My supervisors were professors from the USA and Europe, I took part in international conferences, and after the European University I was able to enrol directly at Berkeley in 2016. I see the separation into disciplines more clearly in the USA. The anthropologists are distinguished by their particular style of writing and their pool of theoretical texts. In my first year at Berkeley I was surprised by the approach to the basic course: each graduate student had to take an introductory course in anthropology, and although it was compulsory, it was delivered by different professors every year, each of whom constructed it according to his own ideas of the basis of the discipline. However, by the end of the programme, thanks to different courses and one’s own research, one does form an idea of anthropology as a discipline.

The year 2014 should already have made serious changes to Russian reality and the links between Russian anthropology and the Western academy. It did not happen then, but to the rhetorical question “What have you been doing for the past eight years?”, so often asked in pro-government Russian circles with no expectation of an answer, I do in fact have an answer: I have been trying to understand what happened in the Crimea. In 2016 I began to work at Berkeley on the question of how the annex-

ation and referendum in 2014 could happen, and what unanswered questions for post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine that event points to.

It was already evident in 2014 that the question “Whose is the Crimea?” was not simply a question, but a determination of a whole political picture of the world. The answer to it was a marker of belonging to one or another socio-political group. However, for me, as an anthropologist, it was important to separate my political position from my research position, and to document as neutrally as possible what different groups in the Crimea and Kyiv thought about it. The difficulty for Crimeans was that their life was not determined by the question of which state they wanted to be a part of: they had existed for many years tacking between Russia and Ukraine.

Amongst American anthropologists the Crimean question was not as politicised as it was in the interdisciplinary field of Slavists. American anthropologists traditionally work in conflict zones, examine (post-)colonial practices from different sides and study the reasons for contemporary nationalisms and inter-state conflicts. From that perspective the question “Whose is the Crimea?” hardly played any part in my research. I am not too squeamish to document opinions that might be interpreted as justification for the Russian annexation of the peninsula. For example, in Sevastopol the memory of the glory of Russian and Soviet arms is built into the architecture of the city and everyday life, and is hard to separate from its identity. Ethnography of this sort was quite legitimate amongst American anthropologists.

In 2022 the memory of past wars was quite easily transformed into support for the so-called Special Military Operation. I maintained links with many informants in the Crimea and soon began to find out that some of them had decided to go abroad, while others, on the contrary, had begun actively helping the Russian army and had volunteered even before the mobilisation that autumn. Before my eyes, participation in the patriotic marches of 9 May was converted into participation in the war. This situation confronted me with many ethical and methodological questions, in particular about whether I could maintain my anthropological distance in the final text and analyse material that had been collected before the war and present the positions of people who later justified the war of 2022. And the most important question: how would research that was in conflict at a distance with its own field be received in the current situation?

My distance during field research was quite different from what it was at the time I was writing up my dissertation. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, one of my professors at Berkeley, studied the trade in human organs (Scheper-Hughes 2009). In particular, she herself presented herself as a buyer of human kidneys: this was her form of interview, which ended with her putting all her cards on the table. She taught her students that in such a field nobody is “innocent”, and the anthropologist cannot remain “whiter than driven snow”. Only through complete involvement is it possible to understand the answers to acute ethical questions: how do people decide how much their kidney is worth? Or (in my case), can one take up arms against another person, and in what

circumstances? The thesis that it is impossible to remain “pure” is confirmed by the deliberations of Philippe Bourgois (Bourgois 1990), who worked with political refugees from El Salvador at a refugee camp in Honduras. On one occasion some refugees proposed that he should visit their relatives in El Salvador. The whole group crossed the frontier illegally, and the village that they came to was attacked by the Salvadorian army. Deliberating on war and the anthropologist’s place in it, Bourgois admitted that he had broken all kinds of state and ethical laws, but only in this way could he have shared the life of people who do not acknowledge state borders and rules.

In the field I followed the principle of involvement quite actively: I became friendly with people, and they responded in kind. When I left I kept up contacts on social media and messengers. At a certain point at the beginning of the war our contact came to an end and my American telephone number was deleted from our shared chats. I understood that if social media and even closed chats were monitored, it was better for the safety of the people I knew. Later I re-established personal correspondence with some of them via the new secure messengers. At that stage those correspondents who were left moved into the category of unconditional friends, “outside the field”. Our contact was no longer any different from my Moscow or Petersburg chats, where friends and acquaintances wrote that they were quietly packing their bags, though in the end by no means all of them decided to leave.

Amongst the people I knew in the field there were some Crimeans who refused to acknowledge that anything unusual was happening. It became difficult to maintain contact with them: they had gone into a parallel reality in which there was no war, only the cares of this life, new projects, and hopes for the future. We did not stop communicating because this position was politically and ethically distant from mine, but because there did not seem to be any meaning in this communication. I understood the direction of their thoughts and decided that I would not burn my bridges and would try to come back later, when these people had passed from the stage of denial to some other subsequent stage.

Hardest of all were contacts with people who openly supported the war or were inclined to do so. I must acknowledge my failure to maintain field distance. Even when I understood that there was no point in arguing, I could not retain my equanimity in answer to a communication that someone was thinking about volunteering and reply “Alright, write and tell me what it’s like there.” Firstly, I was sincerely sorry that they were voluntarily making up their mind to risk their lives in this senseless war. Secondly, I could not suppress my anger. I shut down these contacts for myself, although they did not shut me down, and some occasional communications from them still reach me. There were some who did not ask my opinion but automatically put me down as “a supporter of NATO”. This was the easiest category of people to deal with: they did not exclude the possibility of contact, but I could maintain my distance precisely because no friendly relations were expected of me. Moreover, what they thought of as distancing from the enemy side was what I called normal working

distance from an informant. The people who had left the Crimea in 2014 were a more homogeneous group. In correspondence with acquaintances who had moved to Kyiv, I clearly understood that in 2022 it was impossible to discuss nuances: anyone who talked about the nuances of war must be justifying it.

Is it possible to maintain distance in a war situation? In the case of Ukraine and Crimea I have to understand the positions of both the aggressor and the defenders. However, the difficulty is not only in my personal position, but in the perception of the topic. Before 24 February it was possible to talk of grey areas and complexities in the self-determination of the Crimeans, but afterwards evaluations in the public sphere became unambiguous. I remember that in 2021 I was listening to an episode of “Parfenon”, the programme presented by Leonid Parfenov, whom nobody could suspect of supporting the Kremlin or Putin’s policies. Parfenov stated that he intended to say “on” rather than “in” Ukraine,⁴⁰ because according to the norms of the Russian language the latter was wrong. In 2022 his position became much more cautious (Parfenov 2022). This change concerns everybody, including the professional community. Nevertheless, unlike the media and Slavonic studies, where the position regarding the war was defined unambiguously, anthropologists, if they have not distanced themselves, begin with a different system of co-ordinates.

One has the impression that the principle of involvement and the impossibility of remaining ethically unstained is undergoing a transformation in the present-day American academy. Everyone is more and more conscious of the new moral imperative. Some years ago the theoretical canon that I wrote about at the very beginning was under threat from demands by students to exclude from it those anthropologists who had disgraced themselves by dubious racist remarks or an insufficiently anti-colonial position. Young American anthropology students are actively formulating a requirement to review the base, which, given the colonial history of anthropology as a science, strikes a blow against many of its foundations. Anthropology seems to be moving towards transformation and a search for new theories and names that would indicate a rebirth of the discipline and a purge of its colonial and racist roots. Whether these roots are in fact so hopeless is of course a major question. Nevertheless, the topic of the post-Soviet space, it seems, might be interesting, if that field can offer something theoretically new.

Russia’s aggression in Ukraine faces Slavists and anthropologists working in post-Soviet territories with similar questions. Of course, even before 2022 anthropologists were making active use of post-colonial approaches in research in post-Soviet space, and were having lively discussions about the limits within which they could be applied. Soviet policies towards minorities and national groups, which clearly defined the limits of self-determination and collective memory, make these approaches rele-

40 The equivalent of saying “the Ukraine” rather than “Ukraine” in English [*Transl.*]

vant. At the same time, according to the experience of my research in the Crimea and Ukraine, the question of the applicability of these approaches is connected with the limits of Crimeans' and Ukrainians' self-determination. They may have different ideas about the nationality that they belong to, but hardly anyone thinks of himself in terms of colonial subjects, or of the USSR as an empire that took possession of their traditional way of life and culture and obliterated it. Serguei Oushakine indicates the same problem in the example of research on Central Asia. In a recent Harriman Institute podcast at Columbia University he said that until the subjects of colonisation "decolonise themselves", i.e. acknowledge themselves as colonial/post-colonial subjects, no new theory will be successfully constructed (Lipovetsky and Efremova 2022).

Many American scholars who work on Ukraine disagree with this approach and use the concept of colonies incontestably and cite historical justifications for defining Russia as an empire. So far historians are acting as isolated individuals in this sphere. The most prominent example of a fairly unsubtle reconstruction of the historical narrative, in my view, is Timothy Snyder. In his autumn course on the history of Ukraine at Yale he asserts that the Russian Empire and the USSR always suppressed Ukraine as a national community, and this led naturally to the genocide of the Ukrainian people in 2022. Snyder points out that for all its history Russia has refused to recognise the existence of the Ukrainians as a separate people, and now Putin is not recognising Ukraine as a separate state. The aim of Putin's war is an aggressive russification of Ukraine intended to efface all traces of Ukrainian culture, which is what Snyder calls genocide (Snyder 2022).

While war crimes committed by Russian troops in the occupied zone are already well documented, genocide is a more complicated legal term, the application of which from a legal point of view requires more detailed justification. What has happened to the people who are in one way or another involved in the space of Russian culture, and where the boundary lies between the idea of "Russianness" and war crimes, and perhaps also the genocide of a neighbouring people are precisely questions for anthropologists. As I was told by one person I know, a Russian-speaking Crimean, educated in literary studies and working on Pushkin, but who went to fight on the Ukrainian side, the separation of Russian culture from its imperial roots is an ambitious, complex project which so far no one has seriously attempted. It can already be seen that the top layer of culturally active Russians is engaged in "pulling off" the "growth of birches and rowans", as the rapper Vladi has called it on his most recent album (Vladi 2022). It is obvious that in a situation of rigorous political propaganda inside Russia the processes will be polarised. And somebody will have to study not only the "pulling off" but also the reverse process – the depositing of even greater cultural layers based on the contemporary ideology of war. These growing layers are potentially the hardest to analyse, and anthropological approaches developed on Soviet material may be useful here: for example, the anthropologist Alexey Yurchak's analysis of the correlation between ideological postulates and their use by people in conditions of "ritual"

actions in their everyday lives (Yurchak 2006). Anthropologists are once again faced with the question of the analysis of ideology.

The decolonisation of anthropology does not simply mean the application of the theory of decolonisation to the post-Soviet area, or the recognition or non-recognition of the current war as genocide, but also a restructuring of universities and their approaches to teaching. Serguei Oushakine recognises that the shift of the centre of science from Russia to the other regions that were part of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire in fact means the teaching of the languages of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the history of those regions separately from Russia. The question is, how far the universities of the USA are prepared to adapt themselves to such a radical reform of Slavic studies, history and even anthropology.

In practice the first steps towards diversification are being made by faculties of Slavic languages. In advertisements for vacancies this year, besides specific expertise, knowledge of any Eastern European language other than Russian was required. The call for the teaching of these languages reflects student demand. In the words of a doctoral student from Harvard, they are observing a fall in recruitment to Russian language courses, but courses on Russian literature, Dostoevsky and Nabokov, are still full to the brim. This sort of hiring policy that takes into account the need to develop new directions may have a direct effect on Russian-speaking scholars. This problem was partly recognised when at the beginning of the war news began to come in about the exclusion of scholars from Russia from publication plans and conferences. It was the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) that published a statement on the inadmissibility of disadvantaging scholars on the basis of their nationality (*Joint Statement...* 2023). In the sphere of the humanities it was mostly people who took a critical attitude to the war and the Kremlin authorities that had unleashed it who were affected by anti-Russian rhetoric (or “cancelling Russia”). For many scholars this situation is a direct threat not only to their career, but also to their physical safety. While, with the beginning of the war, initiatives to relocate Ukrainian scholars appeared, less was said about scholars from Russia and help for them. It goes without saying that the threats to the lives of either cannot be compared. Nevertheless, in situations of ideological purges of institutes and universities, the danger to scholars who express an anti-war position and are engaged in anti-Putin activism is entirely real. I have observed “spot” assistance to Russian scholars by American anthropologists, but their circle was not defined by discipline, rather, based on personal networks of acquaintance.

When people in the USA speak about the future of anthropological research on Russia, they almost unanimously recognise that the field will be limited for an indefinite period. It is not only the anthropologists themselves who will not be prepared to carry out fieldwork in Russia, but their institutes and universities will not fund such projects. A round table on the future of research on Russia was organised at a recent

meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Seattle. I was unfortunately unable to take part in this meeting, but I discussed it afterwards with a Russian colleague who had been present at it. She was puzzled by the discussion of Russia as absolutely inaccessible and closed to field research for a long time. She was also surprised that the Fulbright Commission had decided to give her supplementary travel expenses – yes, she had two flight changes and would be travelling for twenty-four hours, but so what?, she wondered. Many Russian anthropologists consider that the field in Russia is perfectly accessible still, only access to it must be discussed individually and depends on the topic and personal circumstances of the researcher. If a researcher draws attention to himself or herself, probably no one will have anything to do with them. However, no one can give guarantees and write in their application that they “promise to remain unnoticed” in the field.

Another serious question connected with the field relates to the requirements of research ethics. The difference between American and Russian anthropologists is colossal. Americans write detailed justifications of their methods and questions for the ethics committee. In my experience “Human subject protection protocols” have been among the most difficult forms to fill in. In the end, I managed to describe all the questions and methods in such a way that they were approved, but that does not mean that I entirely avoided difficulties. For example, I was allowed to take photographs in public places only with the permission of everyone whose features might be recognised. Nor could I manage an exact list of all the questions for the interviews or an exact list of respondents.

At the beginning of the war an American colleague told me that the excitement surrounding it would soon pass and everything would return to some sort of normality: American society lives on sensations, and would soon find some new ones. Nevertheless, Ukraine has been on the front pages of the newspapers for ten months, and it takes incredible efforts for Russian students and researchers to get American visas. Whether this situation within American society be transformed into an increase in the number of academic positions and an interest in Russian-speaking scholars in anthropology is a big question.

Until 24 February I thought that after my PhD I would always be able to return to Russia. Now the state frontiers have become palpable and almost insuperable. Against the background of the Ukrainian tragedy I cannot bring myself to call myself a refugee, but in applying for postdoctoral positions I write that I am in a situation of forced emigration. This is probably my only advantage on the American academic market, which is built on a policy of supporting minorities. Russia is practically completely closed for field research, but even without access to the field, I can cross over into interdisciplinarity, analysing those sources that are accessible via the media, social networks and correspondence with those who have not left.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Mikhail Sokolov

In their professional capacity scholars cross borders for various purposes and on various pretexts. An incomplete list of these would include:

- conferences;
- education and receiving degrees;
- visiting positions (something intermediate between the first two);
- expeditions and other trips to collect data, for example work in archives (very widespread in history, archaeology and anthropology, but rare in the other social sciences);
- “shuttle employment”, when scholars combine positions in institutions in different countries on a permanent basis (unusual for the social sciences, but more widespread in the natural sciences).

Different things have happened to different forms of migration during this year, for different reasons and with different consequences.

Conference trips almost came to an halt even earlier, during the Covid period, and not only for Russian scholars but for their foreign colleagues too, and it is not clear whether they will ever return on their previous scale. To tell the truth, the clouds were gathering over us long ago. Academic tourism – the opportunity to travel abroad at one’s employer’s expense – was one of the main corporate privileges of scholars, something that made their occupation akin to that of the upper classes, and bringing their way of life closer to that of the elite. For members of a particular generation and a particular social stratum in Russia at the starting-point of their professional trajectory this seemed to be their only chance of seeing the world. To tell the whole truth, for many, including the author of these lines, this was very nearly the main reason for choosing the academic profession (Sokolov 2009).

However, as means of remote communication have evolved, doubts about the usefulness of such an expense of the funding allotted to the sciences have been expressed more and more often. The question of whether a professor’s reading of a fifteen-minute paper in broken English to half a dozen listeners (and the ensuing opportunity for a drink with a few chance acquaintances) was really worth several thousand dollars occupied the minds of academic administrators more and more often. At the same time, growing concerns about aircraft emissions rendered this sort of enterprise dubious in the eyes of the wider public. On the side of the established practice stood social inertia. But then came the pandemic, and those who had not been in a position to stop the continuing process felt that now they were capable of not letting the stalled mechanism start up again.

Major periodic events have been resurrected (perhaps because halting them would have placed a question mark over the existence of scholarly associations and the purpose of the academic life of their professional functionaries). However, one can hear

complaints from those who have visited them in recent months that such-and-such a conference is not what it used to be in the pre-Covid era. On the whole, it is probable that where conferences are concerned the difference between the position of Russian scholars and their international colleagues is not too big.

The story of education will evidently turn out differently. The academic world is everywhere built as a system of asymmetrical relations, in which those with lower standing use their connections with those higher up as evidence that they belong to the discipline and as a means of constructing a hierarchy between themselves and those standing even lower on whom such glimmers of reflected glory do not fall. Scholars from the periphery, who publish in journals that are not much read, nevertheless feel that they are part of the same enterprise as those whose articles they cite – even if they are never cited by them in return. In their own eyes they are thereby favourably distinguished from those who are completely without any connection to “world science”. An important form of such hierarchies is the system of exchange of graduates (often compared with the system of marital exchanges in traditional societies, in which the hierarchy of families was determined by who received a bride from whom). A Harvard graduate will be gladly received at any American university, but Harvard, so as not to lose its position, can only give jobs to people with degrees from a few universities. (It is interesting that the prohibitions against in-breeding which exclude the employment of one’s own graduates, are weaker at the highest level of such a hierarchy [Burris 2004], reflecting the fact that Harvard can experience a much more acute shortage of suitable candidates than a middle-ranking university.) Those who are lacking a degree from a leading school can make up for it with substitutes: postdoctoral positions or visiting appointments. Such chains of exchange are not limited by national borders: departments in universities in other countries, such as South Korea, may for long periods be full of people with American degrees. This sort of movement, however, is regularly resisted by those whose links to “world science” are less immediate, whose domestic academic pedigrees are not so well regarded, and whose publications in their native language do not count in the calculation of university’s “research performance”.

Both sides in this conflict are competing to establish a more favourable official valuation of their capital, or, translating that into the language of Bourdieu’s sociology of the field of scholarship, for control of the state apparatus of symbolic violence. The practical expression of the success of either side in this respect will be the decisions that determine whether foreign degrees are recognised, and if they are, under what conditions (in the Russian case, is a PhD the equivalent of “candidate of sciences”, “doctor of sciences”, or not recognised at all?), which publications count for a grant application or for the final report afterwards (until 2022 publications in the first quartile of the international database – which in the humanities and social sciences are almost without exception in English – counted double for the Russian Science Foundation), or whether there will be any programmes to send the best students abroad to study for

degrees, or for attracting “leading international scholars” (including those same students) on conditions that those who are not “international” can only dream of.

In this context, the end of international educational mobility has a twofold significance. On the one hand, by its very nature it deprives the assimilationist faction, which derives its status from belonging to world science, of a significant part of its symbolic resources. On the other, it is a symptom that control over state policy is in the hands of the isolationists, who are interested in devaluing those resources.

Researchers in Russian scholarship are today in the unique position of observers of a natural-historical experiment. What is happening now in Russia is probably the first case in recent decades when the isolationist faction has had such favourable opportunities for reorientating national science policy in their desired direction.⁴¹ The question that we shall soon have to answer is: to what extent is such a reorientation possible, and what will be its consequences?

Generally speaking, it seems that the conflict sketched above is a constant in the history of social sciences, because neither side can definitively overcome the other. On the assimilationists' side there are (a) the pressure of “world culture” (Schofer and Meyer 2005), (b) the possibility of promising international recognition to the bureaucrats, an increase in international “soft power” and the prospect of financing the national education system with the fees paid by international students, and (c) the scholars' own belief that they are doing “real science” – something which by definition is not confined within the limits of one nation-state. On the isolationists' side there are (a) a readiness to concentrate on problems that the political communities of their countries (and especially the officials who speak in the name of those communities) recognise as relevant,⁴² (b) paradoxically, the agenda of “decolonisation” which has been borrowed from the world centres themselves, and (c), which is significant for the Russian case, the promise to escape from ideological viewpoints imported in the form of scientific theories.

The extent to which the change in the political agenda that alters the balance of forces between the isolationists and assimilationists will be capable of giving a new

41 The nearest analogy here is the isolationist turn in Stalin's USSR, but that took place some decades ago in a completely different age of science policy. Since the middle of the twentieth century, it seems, not one country that had invested significant resources in achieving “global recognition” has renounced that goal so swiftly and decisively.

42 One source of conflict between the assimilationists and the isolationists are the differences in what they regard as relevant, characterising the audiences that they must primarily address. Putting it simply, a topic which might find the greatest response from the internal audience need by no means be the same as that which is of the greatest interest to the external audience, and vice versa. The reproduction of English-language research that proves the existence of a “glass ceiling” in Russian scholarship is hardly likely to be of particular interest to the foreign readers, and will quite possibly be rejected by reviewers as secondary and unoriginal. However, for readers in Russia the fact that some such thing has been said about them, has a value in itself that is quite independent of whether someone somewhere has said something similar before.

outline to national disciplines is a question to which no one today knows the answer. It's highly probable, however, that we will soon gain deeper insights into this matter, given the recent turbulent developments in the history of Russian science.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Sergey Sokolovskiy

*Tracks and horizons: on the conceptual stance and perspective
of the anthropological gaze*

*In layers of history, layers of biology, layers of
naturecultures, complexity is the name of our game.*

Donna J. Haraway

I should like to take the conversation beyond the framework of today's "agenda" and the dominant ideologies, both liberal and conservative; and not in defiance of my inner critic, who is all too ready to recognise this as another strategy for distancing, but rather the reverse: I am trying to return to the reality that I am immersed in and which has little in common with the ideological constructs of rival domains, those of scholarship, politics, philosophy, and law. But here is an obstacle: when the editorial board asked questions about borders, their members can hardly have been inviting us to talk about borders in the abstract and in general, and therefore I cannot discuss even that world which, if not entirely intelligible, is still the most comprehensible among all those accessible to me – my own; that is why my comments will be limited to a somewhat more specialised world of the profession and of the discipline.

Where wars and pandemics continue to rage, they do not, with rare exceptions, encourage a flourishing of the sciences. They undermine the fragile creative mood (*Stimmung*) that Heidegger wrote about and that is essential to any researcher, not only a philosopher. Like a virus, affective (i.e. of hatred) or biological (i.e. of influenza), they destroy the brain, or stimulate the brain drain. Yet for the evolution of academic knowledge wars and pandemics remain essentially external factors, and to blame them for the current problems of the progress of knowledge "in one country", let alone in one discipline, is like "blaming the mirror and not your ugly face". Therefore from the topics raised by the editors I shall pick out not the questions connected with the model of externalist determination of the progress of scholarship, but the internalist problem of disciplinary and conceptual borders, the scrutiny of which, I hope, will help us the better to see the stereotypes, ways and peculiarities of view on the subject (in this case) of Russian anthropology in comparison with some other (trans)national traditions.

The ailments from which anthropological knowledge and the perspective that continues to serve that knowledge suffer, however, have not merely a local, but a pan-

demic, i.e. global character, although any knowledge acquires local frailties that complicate the condition of the “patients” – the local (sub-disciplinary, national, regional) research traditions, paradoxically favouring the transformation of that knowledge into a “local” format. This is the dialectic of the “native” and the “cosmopolitan”, of peripheral vs. metropolitan scholarship. The root of their common malady is the unhealthy specialisation and narrow-mindedness that hinders a sober definition of one’s own place in the post-disciplinary synthesis of knowledge about humans and the world. In turn, specialisation in anthropology, which I have just qualified as “unhealthy” (and which in fairness should have been called obscurantist) is conditioned by the old crisis of *first-wave holism*, which led to the consolidation of specialised knowledge as the ultimate, genuine, accurate knowledge – an ideal which today prevents anthropologists from reconciling themselves to the post-disciplinary character of contemporary knowledge and which, under pressure from this newly constructed comprehension drives “specialists” ever further into a position which is like that of a football defender on the goal line, covering his most valuable assets with his hands in the hope that the ball will fly past.

By *first-wave holism* I mean Franz Boas’s attempts to unite the knowledge of the natural sciences (physics, biology and geology) with that of the social sciences and humanities (linguistics, archaeology and cultural anthropology). This synthesis defined its time – a time when anthropology was dominated by tropes of exoticisation and a scholarly ideology, which is now interpreted as bearing the imprints of racism, colonialism, gender chauvinism and naturalism. It was a time of sharp dualisms of spirit and matter, nature and culture, civilisation and barbarity, mental and physiological, internal and external, of living and inert, animal and human, personality and property, subject and object, and tradition and innovation. All these dichotomies are now questioned and reinterpreted.

Post-disciplinarity, which could otherwise be defined as the second wave of the ideology of holism in the human sciences, has a direct relation to the topic of borders – the borders of disciplines and the limitations of their subjects. Knowledge organised according to these borders, that is, university knowledge rather than academic knowledge,⁴³ finds itself now in a situation that is new in principle, where all the distinctions and oppositions that it has previously generated have simply ceased to operate. Who needs today the classifications and categorisations of hundreds of shades of skin colour and degrees of racial mixing (in Brazil) that once astounded the world and reminded one of Borges’ lists, or the complicated hierarchies of nationalities that cor-

43 Here I have in mind the opposition between the mode of transmitting existing and reliable knowledge in the process of teaching, and the mode of obtaining new knowledge, which is acquired in the process of research and only probes the status of reliability in the course of verification, that is, knowledge that is subject to the procedures of falsification and verification, to put it simply, academic knowledge, which has other structures and patterns of development than pedagogical knowledge, which evolves according to its own laws.

responded to the administrative *matrioshka*⁴⁴ (in the USSR)? All these “animals that belong to the Emperor” or “those that have just broken a flower vase” would seem to have sunk into the waters of Lethe, to be remembered as historical oddities. But far from it! Social institutions possess great inertia, and the institutional organisation of education and science, which continues to reproduce discipline-divided knowledge, is no exception. We encounter here a case of *path dependency* – the dependence on the route already travelled, when seemingly insignificant details of the past determine the trajectory of the present and future. It is analogous to the rut in which even the “progressive” drivers are stuck, who, though they are eager to depart from the road that their predecessors have covered with ruts, are unable by force of circumstances to leave it. They may well be attracted by inter- and transdisciplinarity, and ready to drive off onto the side of the track and forge their way through virgin soil, but offices, ministries, faculties, journals, dissertation committees and the Higher Attestation Commission⁴⁵ return them to the ground and reality, where interdisciplinarity is welcomed, but not encouraged. There are always border guards at the borders.

Traumatised by the pressure of circumstances, our “drivers”, like anyone with PTSD, are liable to become withdrawn and blame themselves. The direct consequence of their withdrawal is a narrowing of their conceptual horizon. As getting out of the rut (becoming “unfaithful” to one’s specialisation) is not encouraged, you must concentrate on what is – that which is near at hand and familiar. You may be in a rut, but you are going faster (or, as Vladimir Vysotsky sang, “If you want to go forward – be my guest!”). Any driver is of course familiar with the fact that the well-travelled road hardly offers new insights, but this is disguised as modesty, as “working for the common good”, as “another brick in the collective edifice”, all in accordance with a known phase of progress in knowledge – “normal science”, or science without extravagances. This neurotic reaction explains the situation when unresolved problems go unnoticed: they are suppressed, or declared to be pseudo-problems and pseudo-knowledge, they go unnoticed, they become a blind spot for the officially approved, i.e. institutionalised knowledge.

And although now we can much better comprehend the gaps and problems in “our local” knowledge (which has the same chronotopic structure as a novel, or is defined by what, even before Mikhail Bakhtin, Petr Savitsky and Lev Karsavin called “*mestorazvitie*” /*≈topogenesis*/), specialisation and conservative disciplinarity hold back the interdisciplinary transfer of knowledge, and they are global factors, as is dependence upon the route travelled many times by researchers themselves, and by their predecessors. An academic school, and not only it (this comparison has already been used in respect of both knowledge and technology) in this respect may well be compared to a *pharmacon* – at once a medicine and a poison. Specialisation allows

44 A Russian nested doll.

45 VAK is the Russian state agency that approves the decisions of academic councils and endorses the award of higher degrees (Candidate of Sciences, Doctor of Sciences).

one to go deeper into detail, but the myopia of its gaze prevents one from seeing the wood for the trees, that is the transformed post-disciplinary context, in which all anthropological knowledge is now situated, the fact that is ignored by certain “local” traditions, the practitioners of which continue to patrol the disciplinary boundaries.

What is this context, and at the expense of what, how and why do the mechanisms of its exclusion operate? What is it that allows the reproduction of the old disciplinary approach with its distinctions, oppositions and dichotomies, despite the transformed situation? It seems to me that the list of established practices and institutions that support and preserve the disciplinary boundaries against the flow of ideas and concepts that not only exist across these borders, but abolish them as an archaic (or, more accurately, “modern”) structure of scientific knowledge, is quite obvious, so I shall not waste the reader’s time by enumerating the components of the machine that ensures this separation. Instead I shall indicate some particular circumstances not so much of a social as of a conceptual character, which hinder communication between the science of obsolescent modernity (and this, alas, is the case of Russian anthropology, despite all the changes for the better that have taken place within it over the last twenty years or so) and posthumanist knowledge.

Above all, it is an attitude to the concepts and conceptions themselves that from the previous point of view are intended to *reflect* and *explain* the world, but from the position of post- and trans-humanist, or neo-materialist knowledge, should rather transcribe this reality while being an *inseparable part* of it. The second barrier, which is no less substantial, is an altered understanding of reality itself: a human being is no longer that which we are accustomed to understand by that term (for anthropology this declaration has the most serious consequences); a thing or an artefact has ceased to answer to the description that we have assimilated; animals and plants have acquired rights. In this new world the usual stereotypes that we have inherited from two centuries of disciplinary debates begin to look like mere reflexes, so predictable have they become. We are not used to seeing agency in artefacts, although we witness it every day. As anthropologists we are inclined to put *anthropos* at the centre of the universe, although we know that even our galaxy is on its outer periphery. We do not take into consideration, for example, that weight and length are relative to the passage of time and are units of its measurement, though we routinely estimate the age of certain living beings or inanimate objects at a glance by this very means: the *weight* of a book used to tell us how much time it would take us to digest it. In the new reality even these correspondences fall apart: the library contained by any e-reader, were it on paper, would weigh more than a very full bookcase. Things are stuffed with affordances. Each of the objects is like a compressed package of yet unrealised futures, ready to interact with us and with other things. Latour wrote about the delegation of functions, but he could have written about the solidarity of things and people in the flow of becoming – of the growth of human skill in dealing with an object, which willy-nilly changes the human body and brain, and of the increasing possibility of merg-

ing non-human entities with the body. The formerly dominant mode of rivalry with nature and control of it is being replaced with a mode of collaboration and co-evolution.

The concepts that transcribe this new world also diverge from the previous ones terminologically, inasmuch as they emphasise merging, *interaction*, *interpenetration* and the *fuzziness* of any oppositions or borders. There are many examples: *nature-culture*, a term proposed almost twenty years ago by Donna Haraway, which has become popular not only in STS, social philosophy and cultural criticism, but also among geographers, sociologists and anthropologists (as an example I will give only two of the best-known of the last – Anna Tsing and Tobias Rees); the term *cyborg*, which appeared a little earlier, illustrates the concept of *natureculture* very perspicuously (Haraway did not invent it, but she was responsible for popularising it) and has become the subject of a voluminous interdisciplinary literature; the similar transdisciplinary and border-cancelling concepts *technosymbiont* and *technomorph*, which for the moment are only beginning to gather weight and influence. Archaeologists and ethnologists have the term *naturofact*, which means a natural object used within a culture. Its content reflects the former opposition between nature and culture and at the same time does away with it, since *naturofacts* belong to both those categories of the “modern” worldview. So-called *multispecies anthropology* also makes its contribution towards transdisciplinarity, by studying the relationships between humans and animals (*humanimal relations*). The ontological turn, which has extended over many disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, offers views and a conceptual toolkit that establish an interdisciplinary integration, allowing the new transdisciplinary synthesis to operate on an equal footing with another, more traditional basis for interdisciplinary knowledge – mathematics.

There are, however, more familiar concepts with a long history that fit effectively into post- and transdisciplinary knowledge: *structure*, *function*, *force*, *body*, *practice*, *influence (affect)*, *trace*, *atmosphere*. Some of them easily cross disciplinary boundaries because of their abstract character, others due to their innate polysemy, and yet others are successful because they have caught the attention of their respective audiences, since they are already being formed under the influence of the new synthesis that reflects the growing propinquity of previously specialised disciplines.

Anthropologists, and representatives of other “specialities” thus have firm ground from which to leap into transdisciplinarity, this still frightening world of the beyond, over the borders of the comfortable world created by a series of predecessors, who stormed their own boundaries. There remains the question of whether Russian anthropologists, many of whom are clearly stuck in an identity formed by their discipline in the century before last, will launch themselves on this journey.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

Dmitry Verkhovtsev

[1, 2] My experience will probably not be very illustrative, since I rarely took advantage of opportunities for cross-border mobility even before. But my relationships with my colleagues have indeed changed greatly, for many of them, particularly young researchers, are at present on the other side of borders that have acquired a new force. This has had no effect on scholarly or friendly communication, since the pandemic years allowed us to make technical preparations for such a turn of events: seminars and meetings are taking place on line just as regularly, and one cannot always guess which country the participants are in. But people themselves are changing, and so are their views on their own previous research and their discipline as a whole – not only because they have left, but also because of the political events of 2022. Unfortunately it is not unusual for researchers' departure to reinforce their determination temporarily or permanently to leave scholarship for other spheres, and this definitely makes our discipline poorer and less diverse.

[3] The work of Sokolov and Titaev has undoubtedly created very striking images for the description of Russian scholarship, which have illuminated its problems and shortcomings, but I would not literally reproduce a ten-year-old model for evaluating the situation today. Since that article was published much has changed in Russia, there has been a massive stimulation of publishing activity in international journals, experiments in creating centres for popularising “metropolitan” scholarship (Tyumen) and largely successful attacks on the institutions that support “native” scholarship by the “Dissernet” community. Of course, this has not changed the picture essentially, but it has disturbed it considerably.

The wave of departures of native scholars and foreign scholars working in the Russian Federation that began after 24 February, and the anti-Western rhetoric of politicians, must first of all give rise to the thought that there is a gathering trend towards an even greater “nativisation” of scholarship, with a fall in the prestige of “provincial” institutions and the anathemas directed at reference to “metropolitan” scholarship. We shall probably see the process of the transition from “provincial” to “native”, provoked by administrative decisions, at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science of St. Petersburg State University, presuming that it survives at all after these transformations. Attacks on other institutions that could be categorised as “provincial scholarship”, their leadership and their members, are a clear indication that the situation is going to get worse.

The fruits of “nativisation” are not yet visible; the academic knowledge production cycle is a lengthy one, and one would like to hope that by the time they ripen, the trends will be changing again. For the moment, a clear indication of the future decline of Russia as a centre of scholarship on the world map is the departure of scholars, quite a mass exit, as far as I can see from my colleagues and acquaintances. Many of

them, though not all, find places in foreign academic institutions, which means that even less scholarly content in Russian will be produced. Some of them, as I have said, abandon scholarship, which means that there will be less scholarly content in principle. For foreign scholars and for Russians working abroad participation in joint projects financed by state funding bodies has become unacceptable, and many projects, including the one that I am participating in, sought to replace departed members and leaders as a matter of urgency last spring.

On the other hand, academic centres abroad, particularly in the post-Soviet countries of the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, will be enriched. Thanks to the émigrés there will be stronger ties between those institutions that have welcomed Russians and those scholars who have remained in Russia. One would like to hope that this new wave of emigration will bring not only evil (the diminishing of Russian institutions) but also some good – a cross-border academic community that will help to renew scholarship when ... when it becomes possible again.

[4] At various periods in the history of Russia/the USSR, ethnographers have indeed participated in the nationalities policy of the country, but the significance of their role varied at different times. The peak of the influence of ethnography in this field came in the early Soviet period, to be precise, in the 1920s, when ethnographers were actively involved as experts in delimiting ethnic autonomies and prepared the census of 1926. However, the situation changed over the following decades, ethnography as a discipline was subjected to repressions, and the agency of the surviving ethnographers in carrying out their expert functions was severely reduced. In the 1930s many of the most important decisions regarding questions of ethnicity, such as the “fixing” of ethnicity in the personal documents of Soviet citizens or repressions inflicted on the basis of ethnicity, were taken as part of the “hard-line” policy at the hands of the leadership and the OGPU-NKVD, and ethnographers were only allowed near tasks being carried out as part of the “soft-line” policy (Martin 2001: 22–24). As Hirsch describes the situation, “They took pains to explain even the most political decisions in scientific terms – often deluding themselves in the process” (Hirsch 2005: 308).

The events of the first decades of Soviet rule seem to have had a great effect on all the subsequent history of Soviet ethnography, and perhaps even post-Soviet ethnography. Although there was no systematic repression or attack on ethnography after the 1940s, and after Stalin’s death there was also less ideological pressure, for quite a long time ethnographers tried to avoid mentioning the nationalities question, and the nationalities question itself was, as it were, frozen in the form of the established system of national autonomies within the USSR. The theory of the *ethnos* developed in the 1970s by Yulian Bromley absolved the institutional task of the autonomisation of the discipline from ideological discourse, but added nothing to the toolkit of the country’s nationalities policy. At the ideological level nationalities questions continued to be discussed using a different terminology, in the paradigm of the Marxist-

Leninist theory of the nation. Moreover, whereas ethnographers did raise the problem of the nationalities question, albeit insignificantly, within the framework of the theory of the ethnos, the social experts of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism considered it unacceptable even to put the question in this manner, since according to the Third Programme of the CPSU the nationalities question in the USSR had been solved (Alymov 2021: 77).

In this way, Soviet ethnography approached the explosion of ethnic conflicts in the second half of the 1980s without any experience of solving such problems and with a theory which had been created for completely different purposes. This may be the reason for the remarkable growth in popularity of the “passionary” theory of ethnogenesis promoted by Lev Gumilev and his disciples as an alternative to the official theory of the ethnos. Gumilev gave striking explanations for various events in the history of peoples and states that looked scientific, and, above all, having the reputation of a persecuted and disadvantaged scholar, he bore no symbolic responsibility for the tragedies that took place among the peoples on the edges of the USSR (Verkhovtsev and Petriashin 2021: 90). Bromley’s reports on relationships between nationalities written at the end of the 1980s showed that he had not changed his theoretical views on ethnicity and continued to consider it in its primordial form, although in his views on national organisation he had evolved from the proposition to return to the maximal *korenizatsiia* of the 1920s to the freezing of the existing system of the ethnic-territorial division of the USSR with its prospect of the “depoliticisation of ethnicity” (Alymov 2021: 82).

Were ethnographers to blame for the conflicts that broke out in the national republics of the Soviet Union and as a consequence of its collapse? Many researchers have noted that it was precisely the national and national-territorial organisation of the USSR that allowed the tension between various actors to turn into confrontation along national lines. Hirsch has pointed out that the category of “nationality” created by ethnographers in the first decades of Soviet rule “became the most important category of identity for Soviet citizens”, and in conditions of political and economic collapse the “principle of nationality” became a rallying point in the national republics and oblasts’ (Hirsch 2005: 324). At the same time, it was half a century since “the empire of nations” had been created with the direct participation of ethnographers, during which time ethnographers had not had sufficient agency either to correct their mistakes or to carry out scientific observation of the relationships between nationalities in the USSR, results of which might have come to the ears of the public.

Of course, the collapse of the Soviet system changed a great deal both in the relationships between nationalities and in ethnography within the country, which immediately turned into ethnology, and is now gradually metamorphosing into anthropology. There began to be scholars who were politically active, hoping to change the country for the better (Galina Starovoitova), and experts who directed their knowledge towards reducing xenophobia in society (Nikolai Girenko). It is

not ethnography's/anthropology's fault that these heroes' path through life ended in tragedy. Academician Valery Tishkov, Bromley's successor as director of the Institute of Ethnography, managed to be minister of inter-nationality relations, organised a "Network of Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflicts" and for three post-Soviet decades tried to push forward a project for radical change in nationalities policy through a transition to a concept of "the civil Russian nation". However, to a large extent the changes took place unevenly.

As it turned out, the three decades after the end of the Soviet period did little to change those aspects that helped the conflicts at the end of the USSR to take on a national appearance: Russia retained Soviet ethno-federalism (administrative division and self-government on ethnic lines), its structure of ethnic statistics, including in the censuses, and a language and educational policy that "attached" language to ethnic identity (Sokolovskiy 2009: 102). Although the largest anthropological institutions of Moscow and St. Petersburg had basically parted company with Bromley's theory of the *ethnos* and had rejected Gumilev's passionary theory, for the broad masses of researchers and publicists these two authors' works are still an important source for the theory of ethnicity, which allows Gumilev and Bromley to remain the most cited domestic scholars in the realm of ethnography/anthropology to this day (Verkhovtsev 2022: 85) and to be mentioned with respect by the foremost personalities of the state. It is possible to name two basic reasons for this situation: the changes in the state were not as profound as they seemed thirty years ago, and the inertia of the domestic scholarly community overcame the expectations that had been voiced at that time.

Although in the first three post-Soviet decades ethnography/anthropology retained its expert authority in the sphere of relationships between nationalities in the eyes of state bureaucrats, the academic community to a large extent dissociated itself from that function, partly in the Soviet tradition of avoiding politically coloured topics, and partly following the model of the Western system of disciplines, in which the subject of the nation and ethnicity occupies only a small part of the subject field of anthropology. Anthropologists concentrated on expertise in policy regarding small indigenous peoples, as a less politicised subject and a more traditional one for ethnography/anthropology. As a result, as far as I can judge, over recent decades the anthropological community has had practically no influence on state decisions in the sphere or relations between nationalities in the Russian Federation. Moreover, by now the state too seems to have lost its enthusiasm for consulting academics about anything outside the subject of the small indigenous peoples of the North.

Anthropologists might perhaps have been able to interact directly with society and change citizens' ideas about ethnicity, relationships between nationalities and nation-building by means of popular articles and books, public lectures and internet interventions. All this did undoubtedly take place, but on a small scale. At any rate, S.V. Drobyshevskiy, working by himself (but with massive support from the Nauchpop [popular science] media platform) had much more success in popularising the

problems of physical anthropology, although, it would seem, our fellow-citizens ought to find these much less vital than nationality, nation, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. My own experience of presenting a Telegram channel on anthropology shows that the knowledge listed here is indeed in demand by society, and moreover by representatives of the most various political views and traditions.

As a result we have been seeing for several years how the idea of nationalities as the chief categories of identity in the Russian Federation is being legalised once more, as are the ideas that nationalities interact within a hierarchical framework and have different rights, and, finally, that global foreign policy decisions are taken with reference to a primordialist understanding of nationality. Is it too late, or can anthropologists do anything right now? Obviously, the same as before: study changes in society and in the state, and by every available means report the results of their work to society and try to preserve the institutions and the discipline from destruction in the impending turbulence. Not having had any success in the revolutionary dissemination of anthropological knowledge hitherto, I think that we may at least count on a cumulative effect.

Translated from Russian by Ralph Cleminson

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