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6 DEFENDING CIVIL SOCIETY, ACADEMIC FREEDOM, AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARLY COOPERATION: LEV SHTERNBERG IN THE 1920s

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The present crisis in the field of Russian Arctic/Siberian studies, precipitated by Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine, poses a very serious challenge to all those of us Western scholars who are engaged in and committed to international scholarly cooperation in this field. We are witnessing a series of developments that drastically undermine this cooperation. Ethnographic and archival research by foreign scholars working in this field has almost entirely been shut down. A number of our Russian colleagues no longer cooperate and/or communicate with us for fear of governmental punishment and/or ostracism at their places of work, while many brave Russian scholars who have publicly expressed their opposition to the war have experienced various forms of harassment. Many of us, on the other hand, have severed ties with those Russian colleagues who have publicly supported this war of aggression against a sovereign neighboring country. Russian scholars find it very difficult if not impossible to visit the West to conduct research or attend international scholarly meetings. It feels like the Iron Curtain is once again separating Russian scholars and their Western colleagues.

Given this atmosphere, it seems worthwhile to remind ourselves how some of our prominent predecessors behaved under similar circumstances. In my case, I am turning in this paper to the life a prominent Russian anthropologist, Lev (Leo) Shternberg (1861–1927), whose biography and scholarly legacy I have explored in a series of publications (Kan 2003, 2008a, 2008b; 2009, 2012a, 2012b, 2016, 2018, 2021, 2023). By examining Lev Shternberg's acts of civic courage, I hope to offer an example of how a scholar, committed to international cooperation and to maintaining their integrity, behaved when facing tough moral choices.

Shternberg's life offers us a series of such acts of courage, from appeals to the government in defense of people unjustly persecuted, to the maintenance of ties with and offering supporting (moral and otherwise) to persecuted colleagues and students, to refusing to cut ties with colleagues who had left the USSR and were consequently viewed by Soviet authorities as being hostile to their regime. I also briefly contrast Shternberg's principled position with that of his friend and colleague, Vladimir Bogoraz (Waldemar Bogoras in Western sources – *eds.*). As a scholar who was prone to alter his political positions and scholarly views, Bogoraz amended and rewrote some of his works so as to conform to the current ideological climate and sometimes

unfairly criticized his Western colleagues and good friends whose views challenged that climate.

Lev Shternberg's Personal and Professional Background

On 27 April 1886, the future ethnologist Lev Yakovlevich Shternberg was arrested in Odessa by the tsarist police for being one of the leaders of the southern branch of the People's Freedom party.[1] He was then incarcerated in a local jail for three years, two of them spent in solitary confinement. Although he was allowed to receive books and spent many hours reading and writing, while also maintaining a rigorous exercise routine, Shternberg suffered a great deal and eventually he developed insomnia and "tic doloreux" (twitching of the face), which stayed with him for the rest of his life. Reminiscing years later, Moisei Krol', Shternberg's closest childhood and adolescence friend and fellow Populist, who at some point ended up in a neighboring cell, described his appearance as being "pale, exhausted, with sunken cheeks, a long beard and feverish eyes" (1944: 81). To Krol' his old friend "looked like a martyr" (ibid.).

Following those three years in prison, Shternberg was finally sentenced to a ten-year exile on the island of Sakhalin, which had been used by the Russian government as a penal colony since 1860. Although as an exile, Shternberg enjoyed a certain amount of freedom of movement, his life on Sakhalin was marked by loneliness and occasional bouts of depression. About one year after his arrival on Sakhalin, he became involved in a confrontation with the local official who was fed up with Shternberg's frequent complaints about the harsh conditions of the exiles' lives. To punish him, local penal authorities sent Shternberg to a remote outpost at Viakhtu, a tiny settlement inhabited mainly by Nivkhi people, located some sixty-five miles north of the island's principal town of Aleksandrovsk, where Shternberg originally had been placed. As a result, Shternberg had an opportunity to observe first-hand the local Indigenous inhabitants' lives and thus began his career as an ethnographer and ethnologist (cultural anthropologist).

What this and other confrontations between this exiled radical and those employed by the Russian penal system demonstrated was his great sensitivity to the suffering of others and commitment to defending them by standing up for them. These qualities as well as his staunch loyalty to the political and moral ideals of his youth remained central to Shternberg's character and public conduct for the rest of his life. Thus, while the People's Freedom and other *Narodnik* (Populist) parties and groups disappeared by the end of the 1880s, many of their members formed the core of a new political

1 This paper is based in part on an earlier one (Kan 2012 a), which in turn was based on a Presentation delivered at the Kunstkamera in St. Petersburg in 2011 at a conference marking the 150 th anniversary of Shternberg's birth. I would like to thank Igor Krupnik for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

party, called the Socialist Revolutionary party (Rus. *Partiia Sotsialistov-revolutsionerov* or PSR), which was established in the early 1900s. Yet whenever Shternberg had to fill out a personal form or a biographic statement, he would state "a former member of the People's Freedom, currently without any party affiliation" in response to a question about his party membership.

The story of Shternberg's career as an ethnologist and analysis of his scholarly works are presented elsewhere (Kan 2009, 2012b, 2016, 2018; Shternberg and Grant 1999). In this paper, I focus on Shternberg's courageous behavior as a citizen and a public intellectual during the Soviet period of his life. Even though Shternberg died before the onset of Stalinism and its ruthless persecution of millions of citizens, his defense of the people persecuted by Soviet authorities between 1917 and 1927 did require a good deal of courage.

While Shternberg curtailed much of his radical political engagement after returning from exile and becoming a curator at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) in St. Petersburg, he knew many of the "neo-Populists" of the PSR and sympathized with their political goals.[2] At the same time, he disagreed with the use of political terror (campaign of assassinations of government officials) as a major form of revolutionary struggle advocated by many of the SRs. Gradually he gravitated towards the right wing of the PSR which advocated greater reliance on political propaganda and agitation as the main tools of fighting tsarism. In the wake of the February 1917 revolution that wing threw its unconditional support to the Provisional Government and came to view the danger of a left-wing coup by the Bolsheviks as being equally dangerous to monarchist and other right-wing activities. Following the overthrow of the tsar, Shternberg resumed his political involvement by becoming a major contributor to *Volia Naroda*, the newspaper of the right-wing SRs. In his editorials he attacked the Leninist radicals, characterizing them as the enemies of the revolution and democracy. He continued this attack on them even after the Bolshevik coup, when such writing posed a real danger to him (Kan 2009: 237–258).

Eventually all of the opposition newspapers, including *Volia Naroda*, were closed down by the new regime. Feeling that his prime duty was to protect his beloved museum, the *de facto* head of which he became in 1918, Shternberg abandoned his anti-Bolshevik journalism and involvement in the PSR. Nonetheless, he remained loyal to the ideals of that movement and to his party fellows.

Like many other members of the Russian *intelligentsia* Shternberg eventually chose to work with the Soviet regime rather than fight against it. As a matter of fact, the new government grudgingly came to support ethnographic research, seen as a useful source of information on the country's ethnic minorities in an era of nation-building among them (Hirsch 2005). Thanks to this government support and funding, Shtern-

2 Between the late 1890s and 1917, Shternberg was heavily involved in the work of a liberal Jewish organization which fought for equality and the civil rights of the country's Jewish population (Kan 2009, 2016).

berg became the dean of the Ethnography Division of a newly created Geography Institute and managed to establish there a unique program of training professional ethnographers, referred to as the "Leningrad ethnographic school" (Kan 2009: 277–282, 347–382).

A scholar's courage

While the new regime formally showed respect to the old *Narodnik*, the Soviet secret police was aware of his earlier anti-Bolshevik views and activities. Thus, in March of 1921, when the sailors of the nearby Kronstadt naval base staged an uprising, which, while inspired by leftist ideas, called for the end of one-party rule by the Bolsheviks, Shternberg along with a number of other old *Narodniks* and SRs was arrested and spent a week in detention. He was released thanks to the intercession by Maxim Gorky and the administration of the Petrograd University where he also taught (Kan 2009: 291–292).

Following this last major uprising against the Soviet government (at least in a major city), the authorities began a campaign against various leftist parties that once opposed them. Thus, in the summer of 1922 they organized the first show trial aimed at the so-called "right-wing SRs." Shternberg knew a number of the accused persons, who had been members of the *Narodnik* movement. The SRs on trial were accused of horrendous anti-Soviet crimes (most of them imagined) and faced very long prison sentence and even death. Only an outcry by foreign socialist leaders forced the government to change the death sentences to long periods of incarceration.[3] Before the accused were sentenced Shternberg joined a group of old *Narodniks* and drafted one of several letters addressed to the government, which asked it to spare the lives of those on trial. While these appeals did not dare to disclose that the signatories identified with the goals of the SR party[4] or assert that the accused (most of whom had been employed by the new regime at the time of their arrest) were innocent, this act nonetheless required a good deal of bravery, especially from someone like Shternberg, who had served time in a Soviet prison the previous year. The petition signed and probably composed by Shternberg stated that it was the signatories' "revolutionary and moral duty" to raise their voices against the death penalty to which several of the accused had been sentenced, arguing that such punishment contradicted the 'spirit of socialism' and was morally unacceptable and politically unwise. The cosigners also invoked their own and their Populist fellows' experience of having been placed in soli-

3 Eventually most of the subjects of the 1922 SR trial were rearrested and executed.

4 The people who signed these appeals identified themselves as "the old members of the People's Will party and the revolutionary movement." They included several prominent *Narodniks*, such as Mikhail Ashenbrenner, Osip Aptekman, Aleksandr Pribyliov, Anna Pribyliova-Korba, Moisei Bramson, and Ivan Mainov.

tary confinement or the death row by the tsarist regime (Krasil'nikov 2002: 258–259; SPF ARAN. F 282, op. 1, d. 102, l. 15–16).

In the wake of this show trial, a prominent member of the PSR who had been close to Shternberg, Nadezhda Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya (1886–1937), was sentenced to three years of exile in Central Asia (see Kan 2009: 300–301; Kan 2008). Trained in Classics in Russia and abroad, she used anthropological ideas to analyze the mythology and religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Upon her return to St. Petersburg Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya attended Shternberg's ethnographic circle, which he had organized at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (MAE), and eventually met him at one of the gatherings of Jewish activists.[5] In the early 1920s she worked for a while at the MAE and taught at the Geography Institute. Within the PSR Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya was a respected expert on ethnic and national issues, advocating significant autonomy for the country's ethnic groups and minorities. Remembering all too well how important it was for a prisoner to maintain sanity and keep busy, Shternberg sent her books and wrote letters to her in prison, in which he discussed her research. As Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya reminisced a few years later, Shternberg and his wife were the only (!) ones who came to the railroad station from which she was to depart for the city of Ashkhabad in Central Asia, her place of exile. Once Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya had settled in Turkmenistan, Shternberg continued sending her books and, mindful of the positive role of ethnographic research in maintaining his own sanity on Sakhalin, encouraged her to undertake ethnographic research. She followed his advice, conducting research among several Central Asian peoples. In an account of her relationship with Shternberg, which she composed in 1927 upon the request of Shternberg's widow, Bryullova-Shakol'slaya referred to him as "her main and most beloved teacher in science and in life"; she also wrote that Shternberg "had always been that real thread that linked me to the Academy of Sciences and science in general" (SPF ARAN. F. 282, op. 1, d. 110, l. 34). She also eventually composed an obituary of her mentor for a German sociological journal (Brüllow-Schaskolsky 1930). After many further ordeals, Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya was arrested once again and was executed on 9 October 1937, in Tashkent (Kan 2008).[6]

Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya was not the only student or colleague of Shternberg persecuted by the Soviet regime. Several of his students at the Geography Institute were expelled because of their "bourgeois origin" and/or "anti-Soviet views" during the infamous purge of 1924, which affected all government-controlled institutions of

5 Not being Jewish herself, Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya nonetheless identified strongly with the plight of the Jewish people and after marrying Peter Shaskol'sky, an assimilated Jew, became actively involved in the Jewish liberation movement, in which Shternberg also participated.

6 Following her Central Asian exile, Bryullova-Shaskol'skaya returned to Leningrad in 1929. However, in 1933 she was arrested again and sentenced to another three-year term of exile, this time to Tashkent. There she was able to teach at the Central Asian Financial-economic Institute.

higher learning in Leningrad. This happened to the two daughters of Shternberg's friend Moisei Krol',[7] who decided to return to Soviet Union and enroll in the Petrograd University. The reason for the expulsion was their "lack of proletarian ideology." Shternberg, who looked after the two young women, was outraged and gave the university administration an ultimatum: either reinstate the two students , or he would quit all of his administrative positions and retire. His threat worked and the two were reinstated.[8]

Shternberg also supported several of his students, who had been expelled from the Geography Institute and the Leningrad University and were exiled to Siberia and the Russian North. One of them, Georgy Shtrom, a young man from the ranks of the nobility, was exiled to the Tobolsk region. He wrote to his mentor that even though he was no longer a student of Shternberg, he continued to consider him his dean. The latter wrote letters to Shtrom and encouraged him to use the exile as an opportunity to carry out ethnographic research (SPF ARAN. F. 282, op. 2, d. 342, l. 6–6a).

Another manifestation of Shternberg's principled and courageous public conduct was his refusal to cut ties with former colleagues and friends who chose to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Thus, during his 1924 trip to Western Europe, he met with several of them including a prominent Russian lawyer Henrich Sliozberg (1863–1937), a member of the Jewish People's Group, a political organization that fought for Jewish equality and civil rights in Russia, in which Shternberg was also involved. After the Bolshevik coup, Sliozberg, who was a Freemason and was close to the liberal Cadet (Constitutional-Democratic) party, which opposed the new regime, was briefly arrested. Having been released, he eventually left the country and settled in Paris. According to Sliozberg, Shternberg was reluctant to speak to him in 1924 about any negative aspects of Soviet life. However, in Sliozberg's view this was not due to his colleague's fear but his "old idealism and optimism." As Sliozberg wrote in his memoirs,

> Shternberg had not been broken and had not abandoned his old values and principles. He was full of the same idealism, the same belief in the power of the human spirit and […] progress […]. When I spoke to Shternberg in Paris, it was clear to me that as an anthropologist and ethnographer he viewed the events of the present as only a passing moment in the endless movement and progress [of humankind]. His science served as a solid foundation for his idealism – humanity's long history allowed him to look toward the future with a firm belief that neither Bolshevism not a temporary rule by the ChK (with its crimes and cruelty) would be able to stop the progressive process of evolution. (Sliozberg 1934: 126)

There was, however, one émigré colleague and friend of Shternberg, with whom he was much more open. This was the great historian of Russian Jewry, Simon Dub-

7 While living in Paris, Krol' continued his involvement with the PSR and frequently criticized the Soviet regime in his newspaper articles (Krol' 2008: 606–641).

8 Soon thereafter, however, they left the USSR and returned to Paris.

nov (1860–1941), who was strongly opposed to the Bolshevik rule and left the USSR in 1922, first for Lithuania and then Berlin. Although he and Shternberg disagreed about the ways of improving the lot of Russia's Jews, they did cooperate on several projects, including the publication of *Everiskaia Starina* [Jewish Antiquity], Russia's main journal that dealt with Jewish history and ethnography. According to Dubnov's memoir, Shternberg visited him in Berlin in 1924 and shared sad stories with him about the fate of the *intelligentsia* in the Soviet Union. Here is an entry from Dubnov's diary dated 5 August 1924:

> I was visited by A. I. Braudo[9] and L. Ya. Shternberg. Yesterday Shternberg spent a long time at my home and told me about the life of Piter's *intelligentsia*. Professors and students are being thrown out of schools [i.e., institutes and universities], while others are forced to lie and kowtow to the authorities. Seventy-five-year-old Kareev[10] has been fired from the university and is forced to survive on a pension of 50 rubles. A recent 'purge' of 'non-proletarian elements' at the institutions of higher learning resulted in tens of thousands of students being thrown out, including thousands of Jewish ones. The *intelligentsia* is having a very hard time and we will have to organize some form of assistance for them. (Dubnov 1998: 506–507)

Following Dubnov's departure from the Soviet Union, Shternberg stepped in as the chief editor of *Evreiskaia Starina*. In that capacity he continued to correspond with Dubnov and invited him to contribute articles to the journal despite his new status. It was this correspondence that was one of the accusations against the journal, which was shut down in 1929. Shternberg had died two years prior.

Shternberg versus Bogoraz

Shternberg's principled and brave public conduct may be compared with that of Vladimir Bogoraz, his colleague and friend of many years. Unlike Shternberg, Bogoraz was willing to alter his scholarly views as well as his behavior as a public intellectual depending on the current political situation. One of his first radical departures from previously held views was his presentation at a meeting of scholars held in New York in September 1928 in connection with the 23rd International Congress of Americanists meeting. The subject matter of the meeting was international cooperation in the field of ethnographic research in the Arctic, including Eastern Siberia. While in the past Bogoraz was a major supporter of international ethnographic expeditions and

9 Aleksandr Braudo (1864–1924) was a prominent activist of the Jewish liberation movement in the 1900s–1910s as well as a senior librarian at the St. Petersburg Public Library.

10 Nikolai Ivanovich Kareev (1850–1931) was a prominent Russian historian and a member of the K-D party. Following the Bolshevik coup, he was still able to teach at the Petrograd University and the Geography Institute. However, eventually he was expelled from both, having been accused of presenting ideologically harmful ideas in his lectures.

did not hesitate to ask his Western colleagues for help in finding funds for such ventures, at that meeting he chose to articulate the current Soviet government's negative view of such undertakings, arguing that Soviet ethnographers had enough money and workforce to go it alone (Bogoraz 1929).

In the late 1920s-early 1930s, when the ideological screws began to be tightened in ethnology and the other social sciences, (i.e., researchers were increasingly pressured to demonstrate their adherence to Marxist historical evolutionism as the only universal law of humankind's development), Bogoraz began to modify his previous interpretations of the Indigenous Siberians' culture. As Mikhailova (2004: 124) points out, his first attempt to do so was in his 1928 book *Rasprostranenie kul'tury na zemle. Osnovy etnogeografii* [The Spread of Culture Around the Globe. Foundations of Ethnogeography], which was based on a course he taught in the Ethnography division of the Geography Faculty of the Leningrad University in 1926/1927. That widely read book became one of the foci of an acrimonious debate about the methodological foundation of Soviet ethnology (Solovei 2001: 111).

The first attack on Bogoraz's book was undertaken by Valerian B. Aptekar' (1899–1937), who disparaged it in his presentation entitled "Marxism and ethnogeography" at the First All-Union Conference of Marxist Historians, which took place in late December 1928-early January 1929. Aptekar' rejected Bogoraz's notion advocated in his *Rasprostranenie* … that ethnology had to combine the social and the natural sciences. The young Marxist, who lacked any specialized training in ethnology, argued that this idea had been borrowed by Bogoraz from such Western scholars as Ritter, Bastian, Frobenius and Spengler. He also mocked Bogoraz's attempts to discuss the so-called "social geometry" of culture circles and so forth. Aptekar's final verdict was his claim that instead of drawing on dialectical materialism of human social evolution Bogoraz was promoting an "eclectic mix of idealistic and vulgar materialist views" (quoted in Arzyutov et al. 2014: 33). Aptekar's attack on Bogoraz was seconded by ethnologist Nikolai Matorin, future director of the MAE-Kunstkamera museum. He criticized his former mentor for his "eclectism" and "vulgarization of Marxism" and encouraged him to "embrace the Marxist method" (Mikhailova 2004: 124–125). Notably, both Aptekar' and Matorin were later arrested and executed for their 'counter-revolutionary activities' in 1937 and 1936, respectively.

It should be mentioned that theory was never Bogoraz's strength. As Arzyutov et al. (2014: 45) point out, his 1928 book on ethnogeography represented a typical example of his style of theorizing, in which "an enormous erudition and a deep knowledge of primitive (*pervobytnye*) cultures was combined with an eclectic methodology and a mythopoetic thinking, which allowed him to combine phenomena from very different geographical areas, eras, and scholarly disciplines."

In response to this criticism Bogoraz made a serious attempt to demonstrate that he was "becoming a Komsomol member," which was the way he often referred to his turn to Marxism in conversations with colleagues (Mikhailova 2004: 125). The occa-

sion for a presentation he delivered on 7 January 1930, under the title "On Applying the Marxist Method to the Study of Ethnographic Phenomena" was a debate that was taking place at the Communist Academy (*Komakademiia*) in Moscow. Prior to this presentation, the old ethnographer gave several similar presentations in Leningrad and also published an article in 1930 under a very similar title (Bogoraz 1930). The main idea presented in these works was an attempt to correlate or to find a cause-and-effect relationship between the various forms of economy, social organization and culture, referred to as "ideological superstructures" (*nadstroiki*). Despite his use of Marxist terminology and his efforts to construct a model that appeared to be Marxist, his presentation and article were viewed very critically by his colleagues. Thus, S. P. Tolstov characterized Bogoraz's approach as vulgar materialism and economic materialism rather than Marxism and accused him of not understanding what Marx's socioeconomic formation was all about (Arzyutov et al. 2024: 65–66).

A year later in a published paper entitled "Class Division Among the Reindeer-herding Chukchi" , he made another attempt to rethink his earlier characterization of Chukchi social organization by applying the Marxist method (Bogoraz 1931). According to Mikhailova (2004:125), while this attempt whas somewhat more successful, Vladimir Germanovich, who in the 1930s published several more papers on primitive social organization, never succeeded in clarifying what his new view of the Chukchi and Eskimo social organization was really about.[11]

In the early 1930s Bogoraz was clearly worried about his future within Soviet ethnology and was entertaining several very different scenarios of protecting himself from attacks by younger and more dogmatic Soviet ethnologists. Thus, in two of his letters, sent to Boas in September 1930, he hinted at two totally different solutions. In the letter dated September 5, he mentioned considering joining the Communist party, while in the one sent only eleven days later, he hinted at a possibility of leaving the USSR (Bogoraz to Boas. 9/5/1930; Bogoraz to Boas. 9/16/1930. APS). Another strategy used by Bogoraz in the early 1930s to protect himself from criticism was to curtail somewhat his involvement in teaching and administering the Ethnography Department of Leningrad State University's Geography Faculty and concentrate instead on the work at the Museum of Religion and Atheism, which he established in 1932.

Bogoraz's tendency to modify and compromise his earlier views to suit the current ideological and political climate was also demonstrated by his comments on Boas's paper "The Aims of Anthropological Method," published in Russian in *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* in 1933. In these comments, Bogoraz accused his old friend and colleague of being excessively skeptical about theorizing and "finding himself in the dead end of contradictions" (Bogoraz 1933:193; Kan 2006). Bogoraz obviously knew that such comments would disappoint or even offend Boas, but it appears that he was willing to offer them for the sake of continuing his scholarly relationship with Boas and famil-

11 See, for example, Bogoraz (1936).

iarizing Soviet ethnologists with his friend's current ideas. A year later Bogoraz reiterated his criticism of Boas's empiricism in the introduction to the Russian translation of his Chukchi book (Kan 2006; 2021). There he admitted the errors of his interpretation of Chukchi culture and social organization and attributed them to being wedded to Boas's ideas and methods (see Mikhailova 2004: 127).

Of course, before one condemns Bogoraz as an opportunist, we should keep in mind the very difficult times in which he lived. One could even say that Shternberg was "lucky" to have died in 1927, i.e., before the "Stalinization" of Soviet life and scholarly work. Nonetheless, it is difficult for me to imagine Shternberg modifying his views in the way that his good friend and a fellow *Narodnik* Bogoraz did. One of Shternberg's students, H. H. Poppe (1982: 68), who left the Soviet Union during World War II, supported my view of this scholar in the following eloquent comment, "Shternberg was a revolutionary of the old school, which placed freedom above everything else and for that reason he suffered spiritually under the Soviet rule. He died in 1927. Had he lived longer, he most likely would have been arrested and thrown into the Gulag to die" (cf. Kan 2009: 445).

Conclusion: What could we learn from Shternberg's conduct?

I believe that Shternberg's courageous and principled public conduct provides an example to all of us scholars in the field of Northern research. Of course, I am fully aware of the dangers the more courageous and principled of our Russian colleagues are facing today. Nonetheless, I feel strongly that Shternberg's story and the broader experience of other Soviet anthropologists (and scholars in related disciplines) in the 1920s-mid-1980s may serve as a warning to those who are willing to modify their scholarly views and public conduct to conform to the current political directives.[12]

As Igor Krupnik (personal communication, 2023) recently pointed out to me, in the 1930s-mid-1980s, Soviet ethnology, history and related fields lost their intellectual independence from the regime and its ideology, and as a result dramatically fell behind their Western counterparts. If the voices of nationalist and statist anthropologists, historians and other social scientitsts come to dominate these disciplines in today's Russia, the quality of scholarship will be suffering for years to come. Similarly, German ethnology, history, and related social science disciplines suffered greatly,

12 A good example of such conformism is a recently opened permanent (!) exhibit at the Kunstkamera entitled "The Imperial Hall: The Multinational Russia" [*Impersky Zal: Mnogonarodnaia Rossiia*]. This project of the MAE's director is a very clear endorsement of the "politically correct" current ideology of the Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet empires being a harmonious chorus of equal brotherly peoples directed by a benign Russia (rather than a Russia-dominated colonial regime), developed by the Putin government with the help of such "theoretically minded" ethnologists as Valery Tishkov (2010; cf. Golovnev 2015; 2022).

when so many of its scholars chose to cooperate with the Nazi regime; it took decades to revive and rejuvenate it (see Schafft 2004).

I believe it is our duty to assist those brave Russian colleagues who have opted to leave Russia and to support those who remain there but refuse to join the chorus of their colleagues who are now "wearing the letter Z." We should also raise our voices every time another Russian colleague is being harassed or persecuted for expressing their views. Finally, we should make sure that our Russian colleagues have access to Western publications and an opportunity to publish their work if they so desire. In other words, we ought to follow the examples of both Lev Shternberg and Franz Boas; the latter continued cooperating with his Soviet colleagues even in the dark decade of the 1930s, while the former was more vocal and less hesitant to criticize the Russian regime than the "father of American anthropology" ever was (Kan 2021).

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