



Roman Adrian Cybriwsky

Kyiv, Ukraine

Revised Edition

The City of Domes and Demons
from the Collapse of Socialism
to the Mass Uprising of 2013-2014

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Cover illustration: Evelina Beketova

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Layout: Crius Group, Hulshout

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by the University of Chicago Press.

ISBN 978 94 6298 150 8

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 173 8 (pdf)

DOI 10.5117/9789462981508

NUR 906

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To my parents Dr. Alex Cybriwsky (1914-1996) and Myroslava (Baczynska) Cybriwsky (1914-2014). They were the first to teach me about Ukraine. Also in fond memory of Wilbur Zelinsky (1921-2013), the most cultured of cultural geographers. He taught me about doing fieldwork up close and about social conscience in geography. In honor as well of the heroic Nebesna Sotnya, the “Hundred in Heaven” who paid the ultimate sacrifice for Ukraine in February, 2014, during the Euromaidan protests in Kyiv. Their memory will live forever.



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A Note about Transliteration

The transliteration of the Ukrainian language to the Roman alphabet follows the Ukrainian national system that was codified in 1996. The exceptions are in cases where people's names are spelled differently because that is how they themselves write them. Thus, I write names that had already been transliterated in the manner in which they appeared in my sources, which in some cases originate with the individuals themselves, and transliterated or transcribed names that I encountered only in Ukrainian or Russian according to the official Ukrainian system. With the exception of "Ukraine," which is not normally transliterated as *Ukraina* or *Ukrayina*, I follow the Ukrainian national system for geographical names. Thus, we have *Kyiv* instead of the Russian-based *Kiev*, and *Dnipro* for *Kyiv's* river instead of *Dnieper* or *Dnepr*. To the extent that I am capable, I use the same system as well for transliteration of book titles, etc., in the bibliography, and for transliteration and transcription of direct quotations and Ukrainian words in the text.

For those who might be interested, my own family name is Ukrainian and is spelled *Tsybrivskyi* according to the official system. That is how relatives in Ukraine on my father's side romanize it. However, I use only *Cybrivsky*, the way the name was spelled on documents when my parents were registered as "displaced persons" in the wake of World War II and became immigrants to the United States with me and a sister in tow.





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Preface and Acknowledgements

One of the main themes in this book is the anger of the Ukrainian people at the corrupt political system that they have been forced to endure since the time that their country became unexpectedly independent in 1991. The first edition of *Kyiv, Ukraine* was being put together as the people's anger mounted specifically against the president at the time, Viktor Yanukovych, and his close cronies in government, all members of the Party of Regions. Both the president and most of his inner circle are from Donetsk oblast (province) in eastern Ukraine, a part of the country where the Russian language is more prevalent than Ukrainian and where many citizens identify fondly with Russia and/or long for the old days of the Soviet Union. When on November 21, 2013, Yanukovych announced that he was pulling back on an earlier promise to move Ukraine's future in the direction of the West and the European Union, and would instead seek to ally the country with Russia, a new wave of protests turned against him. This was the beginning of "Maidan" or "Euromaidan," a grassroots protest movement that was centered on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the Independence Square in the center of Kyiv, the national capital.¹ The first protesters were mostly college students, but when riot police descended on Maidan on the night of November 30 and began beating protestors and journalists, the nation's anger quickened, and soon there were thousands of people on the square, and then hundreds of thousands, as well as protests in cities across the country. As the world knows, Euromaidan reached a crescendo on February 18-20, 2014 when riot police attempted to liquidate the tent encampment in the center of Kyiv by setting it ablaze. Even worse, trained snipers fired into the crowds from behind trees on hilltops and from rooftops, killing more than 100 civilians. Those who perished are referred to as the *Nebesna Sotnya*, "Heaven's Hundred." The public's anger ignited still more, and as speakers on the Maidan stage began to urge the protestors, many of whom were now armed for all to see, to rush uphill and storm the presidential office building, Yanukovych abandoned the presidency and fled the country. His termination date is recorded as February 22. He found exile in Russia where he has lived ever since with a scowl on his

¹ As used in Ukraine, the word *maidan* can refer to a public square or to a gathering of protestors. It can refer as well to a protest movement, even without the physical gathering of protestors, as in "a spirit of maidan is sweeping the nation in response to the parliament's actions." When written with a capital M, "Maidan" refers to either the Independence Square, just as "the Mall" in Washington is written with a capital M and does not refer to an indoor shopping center, or is a proper name alternative to the word "Euromaidan." "Euromaidan" refers specifically to the protest movement that responded to Yanukovych's announcement on November 21, 2013.



face. His inner circle fled too, most of them to Russia as well. I wish I could have seen the reactions on the toppled president's face when days later he saw footage of the public examining with amazement, amusement, and anger what he had left at Mezhyhirya, the opulent estate that he shared with his secret girlfriend on the shores of the "Kyiv Sea" north of Kyiv. More on all this later.

Unfortunately for this book, these momentous events took place just after the final manuscript was accepted for publication and the production process got underway. We managed to add a postscript to the original text that included the outlines of Euromaidan and the toppling of Yanukovich, but even that was being written at a time when still more history was being made, and it became instantly outdated. Specifically, neither the snatching of Crimea from Ukraine by Russia right after the Yanukovich downfall (and after the closing ceremonies of the Sochi winter Olympics of February 23), nor the aggression against Ukraine's sovereignty in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in eastern Ukraine soon thereafter, made it into the book; the production process had already moved beyond a point of no return. That is one reason for this second edition of *Kyiv, Ukraine* just two years after the first – to update some of what has transpired. But still, events keep moving forward faster than updates can be inserted, so that this edition, too, will lag behind the news. We take solace in the fact that at least we have a hot topic, even if the typing speed of the author and the publisher's production process cannot keep pace.

Thus, we have both a blessing and a problem as a result of the fast pace of events in Ukraine. The blessing is that there might be wider interest in what I have written because attention about Ukraine has been heightened world-round. Indeed, I have received more invitations to speak about Kyiv than I ever dreamed possible. However, the problem remains that events in Ukraine change faster than I can type, so that no matter what I write or where I leave off, my text is always almost instantly out of date. Therefore, I have decided not to try to fully catch up with changing events as I prepare this paperback edition of the book, and to keep updates to a minimum. The full new story can wait until the outcomes of the turmoil in Ukraine become more apparent. There is, however, a new Chapter 13 that replaces the postscript, and that summarizes the situation in Ukraine almost two years after we left off. The big news, of course, is that the country has a new government, and that it is defending its sovereign territory in a war against Russia-backed separatists and the many Russian troops who fight beside them. Chapter 13 also updates information about Kyiv specifically and the personalities who figure in the first edition. I do this happily, because it has been my pleasure to field questions from readers about how certain issues or conflicts in the city



were resolved, and about specific characters. This edition also corrects the small errors and annoying typing mistakes that slipped into the first edition.

Regardless of what happens in Ukraine down the road and what news events I miss because of the book's production schedule, I think that this book will help the reader understand the attitudes of many Ukrainians today about their country, their government, and their own prospects for a better future. I believe that the book succeeds at explaining why Ukrainians became so angry that they took to the streets against the previous president, and why they will not rest until, at last, they have good government, true independence, and a fair chance at earning a good living. Even though they have elected a presidential successor to Yanukovych, the wealthy businessman in chocolate Petro Poroshenko (Roshen brand chocolates), and a new mayor for Kyiv, the opposition political leader and retired champion heavyweight boxer Vitalyi Klitschko (See Chapter 4), many citizens are not satisfied that either the country or the city is on the right course, or that cronyism and corruption have been brought under control. There are, in fact, responsible voices who agitate for another Maidan, and who say that the Maidan (or Euromaidan) that chased Yanukovych from office should never have ended, because the goals that the public had wanted have not yet been achieved.

The subtitle of this book is "The City of Domes and Demons from the Collapse of Socialism to the Mass Uprising of 2013-14." The word "domes" stands for the long history of Kyiv as symbolized and reflected in the glorious domes of beautiful old churches, while "demons" refers to the city's many current problems, and as well as to the forces (e.g., greed) and individuals (e.g., crooked politicians) that have created and exacerbated those problems. With the addition of Chapter 13, we could add the phrase "and into 2016" to the subtitle, but that would be awkward. This book is based on fieldwork, and whether we end it in 2014 or 2016, there is a similar assessment: the people are angry. I saw why in my many stays in Kyiv and in wide travels across Ukraine: there is way too much poverty in a country that is rich with resources and superb farmland; there is considerable social injustice; there is bad government and way too much corruption; there is a hatred of things Ukrainian (Ukrainian language, national pride, national history) by many supporters of Russian dominion over neighboring countries; and there is anger at Russia that despite all the turns in history, both globally and locally, it still wants to be a colonial power. Furthermore, where there was once at least a semblance of equality under socialism, there is now glaring inequality, as the wealth of the nation has been appropriated by a new class of oligarch billionaires and exported to offshore banks and luxury offshore residences and yachts.



Instead of my own anger, I have strived to convey that of Ukraine with my writing, and if you sense it in this book, then I will have succeeded as a reporter. A great many citizens for whom Kyiv is home shared their pains with me, and many of those who knew that I was working on a book urged me to write swiftly, before it was too late, and to explain what was going on. I was urged to not hold back. “*V Ukraini nemaye porjadku!*” summarizes what people said then, twenty-two years after independence, and still say now: “In Ukraine there is no order;” “Ukraine is in disarray.” The same holds for Kyiv. Some informants even begged with tears for me to tell the city’s story. I strive to be their voice, as I also strive to be fair and balanced, and to back up what I say with data, specific examples, and my own close-up observations. Thus, this book is both reportage and ethnography, at least in many parts, and tells what I saw and heard during fieldwork in the city. If I seem overly strident at times, it is because I convey the stridency of many informants from all levels of society and all walks of life. To a man or woman, without a single exception other than those closely and officially affiliated with Yanukovych’s Party of Regions, Kyiv’s citizens were extraordinarily critical about where they saw Ukraine headed and skeptical about its prospects. Many professed great fondness for Kyiv despite the problems, and saw it as emblematic of the country’s mess. Public opinion polls in the country supported my assessment. I came to understand the cause that many Kyivans shared, which is to save a great city, and became a believer. It is for them that I worked hard to write this book. I hope that I have accurately reflected their concerns, and have written something that is interesting and credible for readers who do not know Kyiv or Ukraine and who do not have a direct stake.

This book was originally written during the administration of President Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovych, the fourth president of independent Ukraine. He assumed office on February 25, 2010 after winning an election that almost certainly had a fair share of vote rigging in his favor. The bulk of my research was done during his administration as well. Therefore, Mr. Yanukovych comes under particular scrutiny in this book, as does his Party of Regions, which dominated the national parliament during his tenure. Because in Ukraine the President has (taken) very great powers, including considerable influence over the administration of the city of Kyiv and, in turn, over city planning and land development even though he himself is not a Kyivan, Mr. Yanukovych figures especially heavily in this book, much more so than would say a President of the United States in a book about an American city, even about Washington. Necessarily, I look at Yanukovych not just with respect to his policies for Kyiv and Ukraine, but also personally. He chose to consume a disproportionate amount of space in the city, even in comparison to his three predecessors, and



implemented questionable personal construction projects that impact the fundamental geography of Kyiv and its iconic urban image. After reflection, I agree with informants that there is much to criticize about Yanukovych's treatment of Kyiv, and I do so in the pages ahead based on what I was told and shown, what I read about in both the free and controlled press, and most specifically, what I saw with my own eyes. Even though the criticisms are harsh and include a separate section that I have called "A Geography of the President," I am convinced that they are accurate and are deserved. Had I written this book earlier during another presidential administration, then I would have been critical of either Mr. Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk, the first president (in office from December 5, 1991 to July 19, 1994), his successor Mr. Leonid Danylovykh Kuchma (July 19, 1994 – January 23, 2005), or the third president, the Orange Revolution's Mr. Viktor Andriyovych Yushchenko (January 23, 2005 – February 25, 2010), all of whom also raised the ire of Ukrainians for how they conducted their responsibilities and for what they allowed to take place in Kyiv. Good government has not been one of Ukraine's strengths. And if I ever write a full new edition of this book, it will take a hard look at the administration of President Petro Oleksiyovych Poroshenko (June 7, 2014 – present) and any presidents who succeed him by the time the writing is completed.

This is not my first book about urban change. I have been around a few years, have grey hair, and have worked in the past in various parts of the world, including on gentrification and related urban transition in Philadelphia and other cities in the United States, in Vancouver in Canada, and then with considerable production in Tokyo, the fascinating and dynamic capital of Japan where I lived for many years. I have worked as well in Southeast Asia in Singapore, Jakarta, and Phnom Penh. This project in Kyiv is a first professional venture for me into Europe and into the worlds of socialist society, Soviet control, and centralized planning, and then the emergence of newly independent countries, turns to capitalism, and the uncertain paths of postsocialist urban restructuring. I apply my earlier experience at studying cities to this project, plus a good knowledge of Ukrainian, which is the language my parents taught me, and Russian, which I studied a long time ago in college and then learned much better more recently, ironically, in Japan from a Russian-speaking Ukrainian resident who now lives in Ukraine again. Her name is Ilona Arkhangel'ska, and she is the first person I acknowledge by name because she has continued to provide me with insights into her country. I had been aware of Ukraine since childhood, since my immigrant parents made it a point to teach me as much as they could, and I had maintained an interest in the country all through my life. I chose not to focus my career on Ukraine because I had sensed as a young man that my Ukrainian-American



ethnic community, as well as my family, would have expectations of me that I did not want to face, so I became a geographer of cities in other parts of the world instead. It is only now after many years of doing other things that I turn to the subjects that my parents always wanted me to write about.

Although I had been to Kyiv several times before and have since been to the city several times more, often staying weeks at a time, the center of this project is the full year that I spent in the city as a Fulbright scholar. That was academic year 2010-11, when I had a sabbatical from my long-time faculty position at Temple University in Philadelphia in order to write this book. During that time I was attached to the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, one of Ukraine's best universities, and taught undergraduates and graduate students in the Department of Sociology. My classes became sounding boards for my ideas. For most of that time, I lived in a comfortable apartment in the very center of the city on a beautiful historic street named Horodetskohe after a famous architect. The street had previously been named *vulytsia* Karla Marksa, Karl Marx Street, after an architect of different sorts. From that vantage point I had easy access to all directions in Kyiv and was at the doorstep of the city center, most notably Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) where there were often concerts, demonstrations, political protests, and other events that helped me understand Ukraine. A building on my block had an exclusive shop on the ground floor that sold diamond jewelry, but above the door there was still a prominent stone relief of a crossed hammers symbol of Communism and the Soviet Union. That combination was a constant reminder that I was studying a society in transition.

Later, on a longer return visit, I stayed for a while with a friend in a typical apartment in the far reaches of Troeshchyna, a huge residential complex on the Left Bank that is famously far from any subway line, and then for a longer time in the very comfortable Art Hotel Baccara (also spelled Bakkara), a floating hotel that is moored on one of the banks of the Dnipro River. From the latter vantage I was able to enjoy Kyiv's famous beaches and other recreation in Hidropark (a large public park), and see Kyivans at play during a prolonged heat wave. I also met Kyivans who lived in the park out of necessity – poor people who had found for themselves a hideaway in the forest or in some old, abandoned facility from the Soviet period, much like the homeless who sleep on street-side benches or in derelict old buildings in the city center. It was during that time, too, that I gained a better appreciation for the natural environment of Kyiv, and for the famous bluffs of the city that stretched on the opposite bank of the river from my hotel room deck for nearly as far upstream and as far downstream as I could see. Several of the city's major landmarks, glorious in the day and beautifully lit at night, were my landscape



neighbors, as were several new buildings on the bluffs that Kyivans refer to as “monsters” because they so poorly punctuate the historical profile of the city.

The methodology is straightforward. I spent as much time in Kyiv as I could, explored the city daily, walked endlessly, and talked to as many people as I could. I also read what I could in English, Ukrainian, and Russian, attended public forums and lectures about the city (and spoke at several myself), attended political events and public protests, visited museums, libraries, and art galleries, went to concerts, opera, and ballet, and sampled some of the ample clean-fun nightlife that Kyiv offers. I suppose that such activity qualifies the research as participant observation. Even more than I did in Tokyo when writing my book about a controversial nightclub district, I avoided all places where I would not want to be with my adult children. Except for reporting from a distance, the famous sex-oriented nightlife of Kyiv did not interest me. My explorations of the city were supplemented by various interviews that I scheduled with key informants; mapping projects of my own such as of buildings in the city center by land use and visible condition, distributions of billboards by content, and the distribution of construction sites in fast-changing Podil; statistical data from the government of the city of Kyiv and other sources; examination of hundreds of historical maps and photos; and views of the city and its neighborhoods as provided via satellite images from above. In short, preparation of this book involved a range of methodologies and a sustained immersion in the city as I think good social geography requires.

After various permutations and numerous drafts, I finally settled on a book with 12 chapters plus this preface. The first edition had a postscript as well in an attempt to catch up with fast changing developments in Ukraine as the book entered the production stage. That postscript is now the added Chapter 13. Each of the original 12 chapters is divided into three to eight sections, with the total number of sections being 71. That means that some sections are quite short – no more than two or three pages in length. I choose to write this way because I personally prefer books that open many topics, even if briefly, and find that such reading is easier because one can opt to read about topics that interest them more and dismiss those that do not. We have short essays also because, in some cases, only so much can be said about a given topic. This is especially so for a city like Kyiv – a recently Soviet city for which the kinds of data about socioeconomic conditions, land use and development, and goings-on in local and national government that exist for urban areas in other parts of the world are simply not available. From among the 71 relatively short essays, I would like to think that this book can be of at least a little interest for everyone. As much as is possible without continually redefining terms, I tried to make individual sections stand on their own so



that they could be read in any order. Nevertheless, there is a broad flow to all 12 chapters too, from topics that are general and provide background to later ones that focus more on particular issues or problems, and from historical and geographical orientation to the city at the start to individual districts, individual construction projects, and individual people later on. I conclude the book with examples of activists who defend Kyiv and some of the remarkable fights that they have taken on. There is no “conclusion,” because Kyiv after socialism is a work actively in progress, and is itself not concluded. Even Chapter 13, the update that was prepared for this edition, is an unfinished work, because so much is changing in Kyiv and is still uncertain. Instead, I offer “reflections.” I imagine that a writer about the reshaping of space and society in postsocialist Kharkiv, Odesa, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Irkutsk, Tbilisi, Baku, or Tashkent, to mention some other examples of former Soviet cities, might also say something similar. Finally, I want to say that I try to be reader-friendly and to avoid the worst academic jargon, pretentious invented words, unnecessary kowtows to writers of dense theory, and other annoying trappings of the academy today. I simply want to tell you about Kyiv.

I now turn to my acknowledgements, which by happy coincidence I am composing on a (US) Thanksgiving Day. In addition to the aforementioned Ilona, many people helped me with this book, enormously so, and I am deeply indebted. I begin with the 27 students I taught in an urban sociology class in spring 2011 at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA). It was my first class at this venerable institution, and an experience that stands out as the most memorable and pleasant teaching experience in my career of more than 40 years. We spoke much about Kyiv during our seminars, and I learned a lot from these intelligent and eager young men and women. I can't name them all here, but note that the group was comprised of two male students (a Eugene and another Roman), and five Katyas, four Marias, and three Yulias among the 25 women. Roman Driamov, Maria Anchyshkina, Yulia Mantrova, Dasha Pankratova, and Lily Chulitska deserve special thanks for going out of their way to be helpful. All 27 of them were wonderful, and I am happy to have my photo with them in this book. They, plus the one student who was absent on the day the photograph was taken, represent the future of Ukraine.

Likewise, I thank NaUKMA for hosting me during my Fulbright Fellowship year in Kyiv, and especially the Sociology Department and its acting chair that year Olena Bogdanova, my faculty colleagues in Sociology Volodymyr Ishchenko and Tamara Martsenyuk, the Vice President for Foreign Cooperation Larysa Chovnyuk, and the very capable president of the university at the time, Dr. Sergiy Kvit. Dr. Kvit is now Ukraine's Minister of Education. I



also benefited from being a frequent guest at the Visual Culture Research Center, where I attended many events and met numerous fascinating students, scholars, authors, and artists, including Olga Bryukhovetska, Oleskiy Radinski, Vasyl Cherepanyn, Nadia Parfan, and Anastasia Ryabchuk. Even though it is no longer affiliated with the university, the VCRC continues to be an exciting center of creative and intellectual activity in Kyiv. I also benefited enormously from regular attendance at various conferences and workshops about Kyiv that were sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Foundation from Germany. For this, I am especially thankful to the foundation's officers in Kyiv, especially Dr. Kyryl Savin and Andriy Makarenko.

I also want to acknowledge the U.S. Fulbright Commission for the research and lecturing fellowship that I was awarded, and the Fulbright director in Ukraine at the time, Dr. Myron Stachiw, an expert in architectural history with whom I shared many conversations about Kyiv. Myron's staff in the city, including Natalia Zalutska, Inna Barysh, Oksana Parafeniuk, and Anna Pasenko, was also very kind and helpful. I also thank Temple University for the sabbatical year from my faculty position, the Department of Geography and Urban Studies where I am based, and the department chair at the time, Dr. Sanjoy Chakravorty, who signed on the dotted line when it was needed. Sanjoy has been especially supportive of this book project from the beginning to the end, and is a close professional colleague about cities, book writing, and the politics of university life. Dr. David Ley (University of British Columbia) and Dr. John C. Western (Syracuse University) have also been greatly supportive, especially at times when I felt discouraged. Professor Ihor Stebelsky (University of Windsor) caught several typos while preparing a review of the first edition of this book, including one or two that were embarrassing. I thank him for his careful reading and for publishing an encouraging review (Stebelsky, 2015). Finally, also from the North American side of the Atlantic, I offer special thanks to two Ukraine-expert Americans who were kind enough to offer insightful criticisms and superb suggestions from an earlier version of this book: Dr. Alexander Motyl from Rutgers University in Newark, NJ, and author of the widely-read blog "Ukraine's Orange Blues," and Dr. Blair Ruble, Director of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Program on Global Sustainability and Resilience, and author of books about Kyiv, Leningrad and Yaroslavl. They, along with John Western and Sanjoy Chakravorty, helped me through the process of selecting a publisher. From Amsterdam University Press, I single out Saskia Gieling, my editor Marjolijn Voogel, Magdalena Hernas, Valeria Mecozzi, Atie Vogelenzang de Jong, Daniela Pinnone, and my sharp-eyed copy editor, Jaap Wagenaar, for special thanks. It has been a pleasure to work with such a professional team.



The list of people who helped me in Kyiv is especially long, and includes fellow academics, architects, city planners, and others who work on the problems of the city, civic activists, and numerous life-long and short-term residents of Kyiv of various ages, ethnicities, occupations, and social standing. It is not possible to name them all, but I can start the list with super thanks to super friends Vladislava Osmak, Tamara Martsenyuk, Svitlana Slipchenko, and Natalia Moussienko for their special support, professional advice, and intelligent insights, and then continue in alphabetical order with thanks to Anna Andrievska, Müge Atala, Iryna Bondarenko, Kateryna Botanova, Sasha Burlaka, Olena Dmytryk, Oksana Dutchak, Marta Dyczok, Ilko Gladshstein, Oleksandr Glukhov, Oleksandr Hudyma, Mykola Ilchuk, Rev. Mykola Ilnytskyi, Anna Khvyl, Iryna Koshulap, Vitaly Kovalinsky, Ihor Lutsenko, Andrew Mac, Alla Marchenko, Maria Mayerchuk, Taras Myronyuk, Varvara Podnos, Raphi Rechitsky, Olena Reshetnyak, Yulia Soroka, Inna Sovsun, Catherine Stecyk, Serhiy Tselovalnyk, Lou Urenek, Andrea Wenglowskyj, Viktor Zagreba, Zenon Zawada, and Maxym Zayika. Furthermore, I am indebted to Evelina Beketova for generous permission to use one of her bright and happy paintings of Kyiv for the design of the cover of this book. In addition to that work, I am fortunate to own three other of her urban portraits and recommend that readers who are interested should look her up by name on the Internet. All the other photographs in this book are my own except for Figure 2.1, which is reproduced via the graces of Vitaliy Kovalynskiy, Figure 3.3 for which I am indebted to Alexander J. Motyl, Figures 6.4 and 11.3 (right) which were provided to me by Vladyslava Osmak, and Figure 11.4, which Viktor Kruk kindly allowed me to use. I thank these individuals for their additions to this book.

Four Kyivans merit the most special recognition. Dr. Lyudmyla Males, a sociologist at the Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University, guided me personally through unfamiliar parts of Kyiv, introduced me often to Ukrainian literature and websites about the city, and put me in touch with many individuals who became key informants, new sources of information, and new personal friends. I am deeply indebted to her and am proud to have her as a close professional associate and friend. The same is true for Nadia Parfan. A native of Ivano-Frankivsk, she is a PhD student in Cultural Studies at NaUKMA and was actually the first person in Kyiv with whom I had contact about this project. She too was a local guide and door opener for me, and a great friend. I was especially blessed to have her nearby in Philadelphia when she was a Fulbright scholar in my department during the year that I was writing and revising the original edition of this manuscript. Not only did she help me with Kyiv, she learned all about Philadelphia at lightning speed and inspired me with original insights to my own home city that form a basis for a possible book



project for the future. Third, there is Vladyslava Osmak. She is also affiliated with NaUKMA, is a talented historian of Kyiv and professional tour guide, and a dedicated activist in support of Kyiv causes. She helped me immensely with answers to my questions, access to information, photographs, and reading materials, and unfailing support for this project. Finally, there is my former student at NaUKMA Maria Anchyshkina. Not only was she wonderful as a student, but she has also been a great teacher about her native city, as well my best beach-and-bars buddy. Without such friends, there can be no book.

Lyudmyla, Nadia, Vlada, and Masha are forever within a warm circle of other close friends and family that I want to acknowledge as well: Anna-Maria Yanchak, Olya Yanchak, my brother Zenon Cybriwsky and his wife Olena Saikewicz, my sisters Anna Skubiak and Christina Jermihov, George Baran, Katya Korobova, Elena Rodin, Rickie Sanders, Robert Mason, Anne Shlay, Yulia Mosiakina, Ruslana Havrylyshyn, Rev. Myron Myronyuk, Rachel Wandless, Anastasia Aleksiyayuk, my daughter Mary Cybriwsky, my sons Adrian and Alex Cybriwsky, and my daughter-in-law Natalia Vibla. They have all taken care of this old widower and his health, and despite my ways have been kind, loving, and sensible, and believers in this project. Finally, I thank the people of Kyiv too. Theirs is a great city. I applaud them for standing up to the demons who would destroy it and their country, and pray for their success in building a just and prosperous society.

Figure 0.1 The author and 26 of his 27 students at Kyiv Mohyla Academy, May 2011, plus Peter





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1 Far from Heaven

1.1 A Curious Face

When Kyiv is stripped of its roads, buildings, bridges, and other man-made features and is seen from up high in satellite view, it is said to resemble the face of God in profile. At least that is the central argument of a somewhat wacky but surprisingly interesting 2010 book entitled *Kyiv: Sviashchennyi Prostir* (Kyiv: Sacred Space) by two environmentalists/landscape architects: V.V. Kolin'ko and H.K. Kurovskyi. The photograph at the start of the book is quite striking in this regard: we see very clearly the face of a handsome man faithfully outlined by the combination of the right bank of the Dnipro River where Kyiv was founded, the contours of high bluffs that face the river, the other hills of the city, and its various deep ravines and stream valleys. When we add place-names to the photograph, we see that the district called Pechersk and its ancient monastery, Pecherska Lavra, form the forehead, Stare Misto (Old City) shapes the left eye and eyebrow, while the centuries-old church of St. Sophia, still the central-most historical landmark in Kyiv, is the iris. St. Michael's Church, also a prominent architectural landmark, is between the bridge of the nose and the forehead. We also see that the nose itself is the storied river-flat neighborhood of Podil, that the highlands of Sirets form the contours of the chin, and that the contours of the ear are shaped by the uplifted topography of Sovki and the network of small ponds that are located between Sovki's hills. It's bizarre, and anyone who knows Kyiv should be awed.

On the other hand, we have to remember that stripping a satellite photograph of man-made features means manipulating that photograph so that only selected natural features are shown. Who knows what other enhancements were made in the process? Some strategic selection of orientation with respect to cardinal directions and colors for the photo at the outset, a dash of extra shading here, a deeper ravine there, and an inconvenient highland or stream course subdued or removed from some other place, and we have a human face. With more manipulation, we could perhaps present the city as a *kolach* (traditional Ukrainian braided ring-shaped bread) or as the face of a healthy Ukrainian sunflower. Incredibly, there is no explanation about how the book's key photograph was created. Also, there are no references of any kind whatsoever in the book, so we have to take it on faith from Kolin'ko and Kurovskyi that the face that we see is that of God and not, say, that of Peter the Great, famous czar of Russia, or one of



Ukraine's two world boxing champions, the brothers Vitalyi and Vladimir Klitschko. We also would need to accept the authors' assumption that God is male and has European features.

Why bother mentioning such a book? Because the rest of it is brilliant. Even if we dismiss completely the authors' premise that Kyiv is sacred space because it the face of God on earth, we can agree with them about what follows: it is wrong to wantonly destroy natural environments; urban development and construction based on greed and selfish motives are immoral; and urban planning and modernization efforts should always respect both nature and the historical heritage of a city. Today's Kyiv is badly wanting on all these counts, the authors argue, and needs a gentler, greener, and more sustainable approach for growth, expansion, and redevelopment to avoid environmental and cultural disaster. For example, the poor construction practices that are now underway near the city's center will hasten the erosion of the high bluffs along the river and will eventually cause ancient churches and other landmarks to tumble, while the filling in of streams and ponds for highways, new shopping malls, and upscale condominium towers provides a weak foundation for urban development and invites subsidence and collapse. These are warnings worth heeding, I think, because Kyiv is indeed being recklessly developed. We will see countless examples of the city's construction demons in action in the chapters ahead, as well as examples of the demons of increasing inequality and injustice in contemporary Kyiv society. Whether these offenses are actually against the face of God is another matter.

Whether one considers the mangling of Kyiv to be offenses against the very face of God or not, anyone who has experienced the charms of the city should be angry about what is going on. Put simply, a great city with enormous potential to be one of the greatest capitals of Europe, in a country that is itself rich with potential, is, in many ways, being destroyed. The demons at work are a new, post-Soviet breed of corrupt business interests and politicians that care nothing for the city or Ukraine and who use their positions only to line their pockets. Meanwhile, the great majority of the Ukrainian people struggle with daily life; many are desperately poor. The city's proud history, which goes back to the glorious 10th-13th-century princely state of Kyivan Rus and even earlier, is being taken away as real estate developers hack away at historical architecture and sacred sites, and museums and cultural institutions are evicted from their premises by "raiders" (as they are called) who want their buildings. There is also significant environmental spoilage in a city that has been known for its beauty, and brazen takeover by those with connections of land in parks



and at the riverfront, as well as of buildings, institutions, and workplaces all over the city that had once belonged to the people. Corruption is rampant, even if there have been marginal improvements, and there is still too little rule of law in a city with thugs with open palms in high office. Foreign investment is stifled because opening a business in Ukraine means that you will be asked for bribes. Many of the smartest people have emigrated. Such a mess defines this particular stage of urban transition in Kyiv from “socialist city” to “postsocialist” and is the focus of this book.

1.2 Graffito

We turn to a graffito. Like other cities, much of Kyiv is littered with wall writings (Parfan, 2010). Most of it is trash, but there are also occasional gems of skilled artistry, sharp social or political commentary, and unexpected canvases. An example of the latter is found near where I lived in the center of the city, deep below the surface under Independence Square, on the vertical risers of steps on Section 27 of one of the longest escalators in the world, one connecting the subway platforms of Khreshchatyk Station with the world outdoors. The message is on an up escalator, and the words are distributed neatly top to bottom on three adjacent risers: “UKRAINE IS FAR FROM HEAVEN” (Figure 1.1). Provided that no passengers are standing just there to block the message, riders who board the escalator below Section 27 can read and ponder these words for the full 2 minutes and 26 seconds that they and the graffito jointly ascend heavenward. The words are in English. I asked my students at the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, one of Ukraine’s most prestigious universities, why they think that the writer chose English. Instantly, there was a consensus reply: “To tell the world. Ukrainians already know what a mess the country is.” As we spoke further, we agreed that Kyiv is a mess as well, both on its own account and as a mirror of the country that it capitals.

1.3 A New American

Ukraine is a mess and its future is emigrating. Its citizens go abroad for short-term labor opportunities and as permanent migrants, and the nation’s population is dropping. It had peaked at just over 52 million soon after Ukraine’s independence in 1991, and then in combination with the impact of low birth rates, has been declining unswervingly year by year since 1994



Figure 1.1 “Ukraine Is Far from Heaven” graffito



to a total now of less than 46 million – a net loss of 12 percent in less than two decades. Remittances from abroad prop up not just individual families or villages in poor regions, but the economy as a whole, as at least 7 percent of the nation’s workforce is employed beyond Ukraine. Neighboring Russia and Poland rank first and second in this regard, but Ukrainian workers are also very prominent in the Czech Republic, Portugal, Italy, and Spain, as well as in other EU countries, in North America, and in parts of Africa and the Middle East, notably Libya (medical personnel), Nigeria (oil and construction engineering), and Dubai (tourism economy). I met immigrants from Ukraine during my years living and working in Japan. As a whole, the emigration is both a brain drain and a labor drain, involving many of the best and brightest of the country, as well as many of the hardest-working individuals. The result is not only smaller population totals for Ukraine (peak in 1993 at 52.2 million; 2012 population at 45.6 million), but also a country that is poorer and more vulnerable to the demons who feed off what is left. In fact, there is so much emigration that black humor speaks of the need to turn off the lights at Kyiv’s Boryspil Airport when the last Ukrainian departs.

My young friend “Nina” thinks that Ukraine is far from heaven, too. She was 17 when I met her in a Kyiv café where she worked and is now

20. Despite her youth, or perhaps precisely because of it, she was able to drive home for me precisely where the problems lie. She could be one of Ukraine's bratty spoiled rich kids, as her stepfather is a *narodnyi deputat*, one of 450 "national deputies" or members of Ukraine's notoriously inept and punch-happy parliament (see Chapter 3), and has all sorts of lucrative connections for a privileged life. I saw this to be true when I met Nina's mother and visited their spacious apartment on a high floor in Kyiv's tallest residential building. But Nina worked as a waitress when I met her; she did not want her stepfather's money and had a personal goal to break away. "My step-dad steals for a living," she explained to me, and then in the language of an angry teenager added this: "Sorry to say this, but he is a total piece of shit." She is completely disenchanted with the man her mother married and is looking to move abroad. She would like to study in the United States and then stay. And indeed, less than four months after that conversation, not long after she turned of age, I found Nina to be living and working in the geographic shadow of New York City. We have resumed our conversations. She is amazingly resourceful for a person her age, and managed to find a way to enter the country legally, expressed no desire to return home, and is exploring options for how to stay. I have no doubts that she will succeed in every endeavor. A collection of photographs on her Facebook site under the title "New Life" shows her as a new American. She no longer wants to speak to me in Ukrainian. Her English is excellent and that is what she uses. Her Russian remains strong because that was her first language and is the language of ties to her family, but Ukrainian, which she learned in school in her postindependence country, is being forgotten.

1.4 Domes and Demons

This is a book about Kyiv (formerly Kiev), the capital of Ukraine, the largest country that is wholly within the boundaries of Europe. According to official data, the city's population is 2,797,533 (2010), up about 8 percent from the year of independence (1991) total of 2,593,400, while that of the metropolitan area is about 3,648,000. However, everyone knows that counts based on residency permits and officially recorded addresses are way off, and that Kyiv is chock full of unregistered new migrants, circular migrants, temporary workers, sublet renters, and other newcomers who have arrived under the radar of the government's people counters, much like in a typical capital city in a developing country. Therefore, we have unofficial estimates that the true total is several hundred thousands more and that Kyiv may



have as many 3.5 million inhabitants and the metropolitan area well over 4 million. Even at the lower total of 2.8 million, Kyiv is Europe's seventh-largest city (after Istanbul, Moscow, London, St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Madrid), larger than Rome and Paris (numbers 8 and 9, respectively), and would rank fifth at the higher estimate of 3.5 million. It would certainly be the city to name if asked which European city, whether it is a national capital or not, is the largest city about which least is written and about which least is known. That makes Kyiv Europe's biggest urban secret.

This book is not a history text, although that is also needed about Kyiv, but is rooted in an understanding of the past in order to take stock of what is going on in the city currently: an aggressive remaking of urban space for Ukraine's new elites at the expense of Kyiv's ordinary people and rich cultural and historic fabric. There is grossly inequitable appropriation of both private and public spaces such as parks for construction for the rich, the destruction of cultural and environmental heritage, and the debasement of normal urban life by an emerging layer of post-Soviet society that is self-obsessed, automobile-oriented, sexist, classist, and racist. Although trappings of success and urban progress are also prominent in the landscape and many citizens have, in fact, succeeded upwards, the reality for far too many others is that gaps between rich and poor in Kyiv have widened into chasms, and that most people struggle to make a living. Uncertainty looms large, and old ladies resort to selling radishes and flowers on the street to supplement their income. Kyiv, once a proud and beautiful city known for its ancient golden church domes and rich intellectual and cultural life, is now a city being devoured by the hard edge of capitalism and greed.

The subtitle "City of Domes and Demons" captures the essence of what is taking place, i.e., that in Kyiv we have (1) a beautiful city with a rich and proud history that can be symbolized by iconic golden church domes; and (2) a city that once again is being devoured by demons. This time, however, instead of armies of Mongols or Tatars on horseback, invading Nazis, or the murderous Joseph Stalin, all of whom had brought their distinctive combinations of death and destruction to the city, we now have demons of destructive urban development and "monster construction," demons of social injustice, and demons of sexism and sex tourism, among others. As opposed to invasions or colonialism from abroad, there are now domestic demons aplenty, some of whom are in the highest positions of government. That includes President Viktor Yanukovich and his *banda* (gang) of Party of Regions associates, as they are called by their many critics. We will meet some of these people in power personally in later chapters, as well as those who oppose them. The new destroyers have been running rampant since



the fall of the communist state (and even earlier), and continue to mangle a great city and the lives of its people. It was even worse in the old Soviet Union and, indeed, most citizens do not miss that regime in the slightest as there are so many new freedoms – the freedom to pray, to choose among political parties, to speak out, and to emigrate, among others. However, the inexcusable inequalities of life after socialism, the disorder and corruption of today's Ukraine, the chaotic free-for-all that now mars urban growth and development in Ukraine's beautiful and historic capital city, as well as concomitant erosions of some of the new freedoms, are all aspects of a deep, post-Soviet downside that need to be explicated.

What we have, then, is a case study of unhappy urbanism in a struggling country after the fall of the Soviet Union. A similar social geography is evolving simultaneously in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Odesa (formerly Odessa), Dnipropetrovsk, and other cities in Russia and Ukraine, as well as in Minsk, Riga, Tbilisi, Baku, and Tashkent in other post-Soviet countries. The only variable is the degree of blatant social inequality and heritage destruction in these cities. The Kyiv story also stands in, at least in part, for Sofia, Bucharest, Budapest, and the east of Berlin, all cities of the former Soviet bloc countries in the heart of Europe. Wherever we go in this part of the world where the Communist Party once reigned, we see that now “money sings.” This is a term taken from the title of a book about the Russian city of Yaroslavl by Blair Ruble, which in turn is a translation of the expression *den'gi poiut* that an informant that Ruble described as a “shady New Russian” used to describe the brash culture of post-Soviet times. “That explains it all,” he added. Informed by Ruble that in America the expression is “money talks,” the informant responded “Well, we Russians have always been more extravagant” (Ruble, 1995, p. 1). In our treatment of contemporary Kyiv, we add that “money stings” as well.

1.5 A Changing City

“It was not all that long ago that you could always find a seat on the Metro,” a Kyiv-resident friend recently told me, referring to the crowds of commuters that are now routinely jammed on the city's three color-coded subway lines (Red Line, Blue Line, Green Line) during busy parts of the day and evening. It was her way to make a point about Kyiv's recent boom in population growth, especially beginning in 2003 as she remembers it, and the changes to city life that have come as a result. In a country that has been losing population to 45.6 million, Kyiv has been gaining, and it



is ever more the nation's main metropolis as well as capital city. The jump in population is all the more remarkable because Kyiv, like Ukraine as a whole, is a city of low birth rates, rising death rates, and high rates of emigration abroad.

And so, Kyiv has a half a million or so additional residents since 1991 and the subway is much more crowded indeed. Many of the extra passengers are newcomers to the city, and with them come changes in how people dress, how they conduct themselves during the ride, and where they are going and what they will do when they get there. During Soviet times, cities had their familiar rhythms as determined by the working hours of a centralized economy, a population with internal passports and residence permits, and times and places for recreation, shopping, and other activities that were generally set by centralized authority. But without Soviet government, a new order – or perhaps more precisely, a disorder – has set in and we have new people, new activities, and new rhythms of time and place that give Kyiv and other postsocialist cities a perceptibly different feel. The changes are felt as well on the city's enormous and growing fleet of minibuses (*marshrutkas*) that are indispensable for carrying people where subways do not go; in the numbers of private automobiles that now often barely inch along city streets, intersections, and approaches to bridges across the river; the invasion of open space everywhere for parking those vehicles; and in the profusion of billboards and other advertising that has taken over the landscape seemingly everywhere in numbers much, much larger than Soviet communist propaganda signs ever reached in the past.

Furthermore, there is a rising skyline of glass-skinned office buildings and upscale condominium towers, and a landscape of busy shopping malls, new restaurants and nightclubs with bright neon lights, and, along busy highways, the golden arches of McDonald's on poles reaching to the sky. In the center of the city there are beautiful people in beautiful fashions. But we also see that there are poor people, too, plenty of them, as well as anxious migrants who have come in search of work. Some are buskers on the subway where they sing or play music from car to car for tips or sell inexpensive novelty products on commission for a boss who hires them, while others work the streets and sidewalks of the city as vendors or buskers, or walk back and forth as human sandwich boards that advertise pawn shops, English-language classes, or marriage agencies that help foreign men take home Ukrainian brides. Others gather early in the morning at Vokzal, the city's central train station, in hopes that labor agents might select them for a job in either construction or old-building destruction in the changing city. Unfortunately, there are also many long-term Kyivans who are poor,



newly so in the newly competitive economy, including old people who could otherwise be enjoying a well-earned retirement. These people also struggle in the informal economy to make a living, and they are plainly evident in the harsh cultural landscape that is Kyiv today.

The iconography of the city has changed, too. Instead of the flags of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR, we have hanging atop government buildings and in the center of the city at Independence Square, the blue and yellow flag of an independent nation. The colors are also on the license plates of motor vehicles, on public service billboards that remind people to love Ukraine, and on various advertising designed to appeal to feelings of patriotism. In Soviet times, as well as earlier during the czarist and Polish rule of different parts of Ukraine, that flag and those colors were forbidden. Likewise, there are now monuments to heroes of Ukraine, as opposed to Soviet heroes, and even to Ukrainians who had openly and bravely opposed Soviet rule such as the dissident Viacheslav Chornovil (1937-1999). There are monuments as well to the victims of Soviet crimes, most notably the artificial famine of 1932-1933 that took millions of lives. The city even has a small museum called the Museum of Soviet Occupation. Furthermore, we see and hear the Ukrainian language more. In the time of the USSR, Russian dominated the city, especially in the media, on street signage, on the names of buildings and stores, and so on in the landscape. Ukrainian was even banned for a time, as it was earlier during times of Imperial Russian rule. Now, *ridna mova* (the native language of the country) is the official language of government and is common.

A small example from the prestigious street in the center of Kyiv where I was lucky enough to live encapsulates the changes. There is a shop down the block that is in a building that was once one of the many branch offices of the communist government. It is in a grand, historic structure from very early in the 20th century that was rehabilitated, at least in terms of the façade, from the devastation of battle in World War II. Above the door, the Soviets had installed a handsome plaster relief of two crossed hammers. That emblem is still there even though the government ministry that it represents is gone, and the door now opens not to an office for bureaucrats, but to an exclusive store selling expensive jewelry. The shoppers are new elites in Ukraine, and the tone is very upscale. The sign out front reads “Royal Diamonds” in English. To round out the scene with a bit more detail, I add that, as on many older buildings in Kyiv, a strong wire-mesh net stretches across the façade above the emblem in order to protect pedestrians from falling mortar and plaster. At night, there are old lady flower sellers who walk up and down the street hoping to entice customers from among the

many young couples who are out on dates, as well as a bevy of leggy young women in short skirts and the highest of spike heels who are clearing looking to entice dates. In the small square across the street, near a popular sushi restaurant and a fancy confectionary, the benches around the well water pump are packed at night in good weather with amorous couples, groups of friends enjoying cheap beer, and an assortment of the poor, the homeless, and the hopelessly inebriated.

That is what this book is about: the new social geography of Kyiv after the Soviet period ended. It is a case study of what is taking place simultaneously in many other cities of the once-Soviet realm as well – places like Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan in the Russian Federation; Kharkiv, Odesa, L'viv, and Dnipropetrovsk in other parts of Ukraine;² Minsk, Riga, Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Tashkent in other countries of the former Soviet realm, and in Sofia, Bucharest, Budapest, and the east of Berlin in the formerly Soviet bloc countries in the heart of Europe. The change was “unexpected” as in the title of a book about Ukraine by Andrew Wilson (2000), and was, therefore, not planned for. Consequently, the emerging social geography of Kyiv is one of excessive chaos in place of a strict order, and one of an emerging new order that does not yet have a name other than “postsocialist city” or “post-Soviet city,” overlapping terms that we use interchangeably because both apply in this region. What comes next is not yet fully shaped, as Kyiv after socialism is a work in progress, as is new Moscow, new Odesa, new St. Petersburg, and new Baku. What is certain is that “money sings” in all of these new landscapes (Ruble, 1995), and that raw capitalism deepens the divide between those who score in the new society and the much larger number of others who find themselves far behind.

1.6 Angry Citizens

I was on a little walking and photography excursion one spring Saturday morning near the Pechersk subway station, knowing that there would be the weekly farmers’ market to explore as well as one or two other places in the neighborhood that I had been looking for the opportunity to photograph in good light. I was taking the most innocent of photographs – that of a tall statue of the famous Ukrainian poet and social activist Lesya Ukrainka (1871-1913) – when a stranger who later gave his name as Oleksandr

2 Formerly Kharkov, Odessa, L'vov, and Dnepropetrovsk as they are transliterated from the Russian language.



Borysovych approached from seemingly nowhere and began to shout from some distance that I need to send those photographs to the president of Ukraine and to the members of Verkhovna Rada (the parliament). “Why?” I asked as he came near, thinking of possible answers from what I knew about the biography of Ukraine’s most famous woman writer. He pointed to the surroundings, including the nonfunctioning fountains at Lesya’s feet and the litter and graffiti where there were once pools of water, and expounded with great agitation about what a disgrace it was to have such a fine monument in such a miserable setting. I agreed, but thought that it was bit strange to make such a deal about what was, quite frankly, not unusual for Kyiv: neglect of public spaces. I told him so, adding that I had seen far worse landscapes around Kyiv. He was pleased that I was on board about the physical condition of the city, and asked about my photography and accent. I told him about this book and he figuratively leaped at the chance to make sure that I was aware of all the demons in Kyiv that he believed needed to be exposed.

He asked me where in the United States I live, expressed recognition about Philadelphia when I replied, and then pointed down the block at the Bentley and Lamborghini automobile dealership, which ironically was the one thing that I most wanted to photograph on that particular excursion, and asked how often I see a Bentley on the streets of Philadelphia. “I don’t know, maybe once a year,” I estimated with an uncertain shrug of the shoulders. He then compared the relative wealth of the United States and Ukraine, and asked rhetorically where I see more such automobiles. I pleased him again when I mentioned the short street in central Kyiv on which I was living and told him that, at minimum, there are often four Bentleys parked there every day. “We have a government of thieves. Not one of them is honest. Not one of these cars was earned via honest work,” he gushed, and then swept his right arm against the backdrop panorama of rapid redevelopment along Lesya Ukrainka Boulevard and added: “and this is where they live, our *narodnyi deputaty*, in these new buildings, in their enormous, marble apartments.” He pointed to the windows of a 17-room residence (his count) of someone whose name I did not recognize, mentioned the numbers of millions of dollars that this apartment and that one cost, and railed on and on about corruption and inequities until I finally excused myself. He shouted back as I left to make sure that I put it all in the book.

Next, we meet four Ukrainian women. Perhaps the whole world now knows of FEMEN, the Kyiv-based protest group comprised of attractive young Ukrainian women who call attention to social and political problems by baring their breasts at public rallies. They always attract a crowd and



observant media coverage, and photos of photographers' favorites of the protesters are all over the Internet. I had my first personal encounter with the group when they gathered once in Independence Square in the center of Kyiv for a racy (but not topless) and creative (believe me) protest against, of all things, the anti-feminist president of neighboring Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko. Trust me: I introduce this topic not to capitalize on FEMEN, but to tell what happened next. As the slinging of tomatoes and eggs at a large hand-drawn portrait of Lukashenko from erotic FEMEN-leg slingshots wound down, and a FEMEN spokesperson finished her interview session in front of a crowd of eager news microphones, a Kyivan woman in her 50s, very obviously blue-collar and not FEMEN-like in appearance, took advantage of the media presence and spoke her piece. Some of the news photographers and mike handlers turned away, others laughed, but many heard her out. For people such as herself, she said in so many words, Ukraine is a mess: prices are rising; there are new taxes to pay and stupid bureaucratic forms to fill out; pensioners are struggling; young people are emigrating; and the oligarchs are stealing everything that is still left. This litany of complaints one hears daily; what struck me on this particular day was the boldness of "Valentina Ivanova" to steal mike time from FEMEN and her desperation to be heard. "We are losing our freedoms," she said with punctuation, "and if we don't speak up now, we won't be able to speak later." I liked that FEMEN members stood beside her, like feminists should, perhaps assuring as a result that a good number of cameras and microphones would stay in place until their not-so-glamorous fellow citizen had finished.

There is also Olena Zhelesko, an older woman born the year the Great Patriotic War ended (making her exactly my age) who broadcasts her messages about Ukraine's mess not by microphone but by megaphone (Figure 1.2). I met her at Independence Square, too, but months earlier, when I first heard her reciting verse to passersby near stairs for the subway. She spoke in unusually rapid-fire Russian, so I had trouble understanding, although I knew it was about politics and could tell it was witty. When she took a break I asked her if the verse was her own, and what she was all about. In response to my Ukrainian, which she recognized correctly as "Diaspora Ukrainian," she switched to Ukrainian, her own first language, and explained with impromptu verse: bards have long told the story of Ukraine's people, and that is exactly what she was doing, not with song and a *bandura*, the national stringed instrument, but with her own poetry and a megaphone. She continued with verse to explain that she was speaking about the sorry state of life in Ukraine and that people need to stand up and not be afraid. "Is this how you make a living? Is this for tips?" were my crude questions.



Figure 1.2 Olena Zhelesko with megaphone

She followed with more impromptu rhymes: the duties of citizenship center on support for fellow citizens and free flow of information. “Today’s Ukraine is not free,” she versed, and “people need to speak up before they are driven down even more.” I told her that a headline in that morning’s Ukrainian newspaper, *Moloda Ukraina* (Young Ukraine), an article about a former political prisoner, was this: “God’s Eleventh Commandment: Do Not Be Afraid.” She liked that and a good conversation ensued.

I told her about this book that I was writing and she told me what she thought was important for me to know. It was her choice to focus on the specific topic of Ukrainian people in Kyiv; I did not steer her in that direction. The capital was never a Ukrainian city until recently, she explained; it was always Russian, Jewish, and Polish, and Ukrainians never formed more than a tiny minority. Now there are many Ukrainians in the city, but the city is still not fully theirs. They are disproportionately at the bottom of

society. To see Ukrainians, she urged, I should go to the open-air markets where Ukrainians work for bosses as low-paid vendors, or where they make meager livings selling farm products from the nearby villages that they come from. Go, too, to the central rail station in the morning when the passenger trains come in and see Ukrainians arriving from around the countryside to begin looking for work and a place to live. Also, see those who would exploit them waiting for them at the station, and watch the action. To see Kyiv's Ukrainians, I should talk to the beggars, the small-scale flower sellers, and other vendors who are found everywhere in the center of the city and at every pedestrian underpass. Speak to them in Ukrainian. They will be happy to tell you about their lives and their difficulties. Fully 50 percent of the people in this city are struggling, truly struggling, and I should get to know them, she urged. I told her that I was doing just that – that I have been at the rail station many times already and have photographed the amazing early morning scene of modern-day peasants encountering the big city. I told her that I talk to people all the time, and that that was why I was speaking with her. She liked that and told me that my book is much needed.

I never did tell Olena that I do not fully agree with her presentation of inequality in Ukrainian society or Kyiv social history. I chose not to challenge her viewpoints and debate, but to be a listener only. However, I know that in Kyiv, and indeed throughout Ukraine, there are a great many Ukrainians who are successful economically and in positions of power, and that increasingly they make up the country's middle and privileged classes. She knows that, too, I am sure, but for my benefit kept emphasizing the truth that historically Ukrainians have had it hard in the territory that is now their country because of foreign rule, and that there are still strong vestiges of discrimination and belittlement against Ukrainians. I assume that she is aware as well that in Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine there are many ethnic Russians living in poverty, although she never said anything about that. In the largely Russian, gritty industrial zones of Donetsk, for instance, one sees as much poverty and poor living conditions as anywhere in Ukraine. It is from this region that Ukraine's president, Viktor Yanukovich, hails. In Donetsk, Kyiv, and elsewhere in the country, poverty is primarily a class issue, and maybe partly ethnic, but nationalistic ethnic Ukrainians like Olena do not always make that distinction.

I have seen Olena Zhelesko several times since that first meeting, always at protest rallies about one or another aspect of the country's mess. She typically finds a perch for herself and her megaphone somewhere near the center of the action, and before the main speakers start, entertains the arriving crowds with fresh verse about the specific subjects of the protest. She



speaks mainly in Ukrainian, and I never did understand why it was Russian that she was speaking when I first heard her. She seems to be widely known and generally appreciated by the activist-citizens who turn out again and again when political and environmentalist websites announce a time, place, and specific issue for the next *aktsia* (action), although there are those who refer to her as “that crazy nationalist woman with the megaphone.” Most people, however, regardless of where they stand on Ukrainian nationalism, seem to especially enjoy her lampooning of the country’s incompetent, corrupt, larcenous and not-for-Ukraine government political leaders, such as those in the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) where Nina’s stepfather is 1/450th part, who are said to be responsible for the mess in the country.

Let me introduce you as well to a third woman, 17-year-old Daria Stepanenko, a freshman student at Kyiv Mohyla Academy who publicly took on Ukraine’s controversial Minister of Education and Science, Dmytro Volodymyrovych Tabachnyk. The context is this: Tabachnyk is a prominent member of the ruling Party of Regions, and was twice deputy prime minister when his sponsor, today’s president, Viktor Yanukovich, was prime minister and the head of presidential administration. In his present post, the Education Minister has supported pushes to establish Russian once again as Ukraine’s official language (this time along with Ukrainian as opposed to in place of Ukrainian) with the goal of changing not only how government conducts its business, but also the fundamental character of schooling in Ukraine. The result of such a change would mean that Russian-speaking children would be much less likely to ever learn Ukrainian well enough to function in that language, and therefore assure over the long haul that Russian remains in the forefront of Ukrainian life. Thus, had Tabachnyk had his way when Nina was in school, she never would have learned Ukrainian in the first place.

Tabachnyk is controversial not just because of such beliefs, but also because he often advocates his positions with venom and in pit bull fashion. Also, his past is clouded with accusations of influence-peddling, falsification of personal credentials, and other sins. He was appointed to his current post on March 11, 2010, over the vocal objections of Ukrainian-oriented Ukrainians in the country, and there have been calls ever since to remove him from office. For example, within a week of his start as education and science minister, the administration of the highly respected Ukrainian Catholic University in the western city of L’viv went public with this opinion: “Tabachnyk has been openly and publicly humiliating the Ukrainian intelligentsia, as well as Ukrainian language and culture, kindling hostility among the various regions of Ukraine, vindicating the human-hating Stalinist regime” (Ukrainian Catholic University, 2010).



Enter Daria Stepanenko. On September 22, 2011, she earned 15 minutes of nationwide fame (and fame in Russia, too) when, dressed nicely in an unassuming black dress and matching grey jacket, she walked into the hall in the center of Kyiv where Minister Tabachnyk was participating along with delegates from the European Union in an international conference about education and approached him at the head table with a long bouquet of flowers. She extended the bouquet and smiled, he came closer, and then she used the flowers to slap him in the face. Immediately, she was led away, quietly without resistance, most audience members pretended to not notice, and the proceedings of the conference apparently went on as if nothing happened. This is all on YouTube. She was charged with petty hooliganism and quickly released because of her age. Afterwards she held a press conference, also seen on YouTube, in which she explained her motivations. Tabachnyk, she said in the purest of Ukrainian language, deserved to be slapped because of his many anti-Ukrainian actions and because “he is a person who, quite simply, hates Ukraine and everything that is associated with the country.” She urged Ukrainians to clamor for his dismissal. Her particular protest may have been inappropriate and is unlikely to hasten Tabachnyk’s departure. Her actions may also have brought her some trouble at her university atop the trouble she faces with the law. The university was quick to publicly distance itself from her action, so much so that some fellow students have suggested that she may have been a paid provocateur hired by unspecified russophilic forces in order to discredit her unequivocally pro-Ukraine university. But for us, even if we are to regard her as just a misguided teenager, Daria Stepanenko is emphatically a “Ukrainian voice” who reflects the palpable anger of a great many Ukrainian people about the mess that is their country.

Finally, meet a fourth Ukrainian woman, Lyudmyla Savchenko, a famous voice in Ukraine as reader of weather forecasts on public radio. I don’t know her personally, but read in the press and heard on tape what transpired on her live broadcast just three days before this writing. I introduce her so that you know that I am not making these people up; everything I write about her is verifiable in the media. The context is perfect May weather this year for day after day, not just in Kyiv, but all over Ukraine. There were no storm fronts to report and no cold snaps, only bright, beautiful, sunny spring days. As translated and reported by the *Kyiv Post* on May 18, 2011, Savchenko unexpectedly stepped out of line and volunteered the following after forecasting a continuation of perfect weather:

One cannot remain indifferent to this beauty which shows in the tender scent of lilac and lily of the valley and the melodious trilling of the birds.



... At times it seems that such miraculous days are a gift from nature to compensate us for the chaos, lawlessness and injustice which reigns in our country. It is simply incomprehensible that anyone can dislike this paradise on earth, this country, [and] the Ukrainian people so much that they [the current Party of Regions government and its associates] treat it so badly. (Kyiv Post, May 18, 2011)

That may have been Ukraine's last live weather report. As reported by Kyiv's Associated Press office on May 20, Savchenko was quickly taken off the air. Opposition politicians expressed protest, but the office of President Yanukovych has remained silent.

1.7 Linking to the Literature

There is a strong undercurrent of “before and after” in this book, as we are concerned with how Kyiv has been changing from the characteristic urban form that was very imposed by Soviet urban planning. While the city may not have been the quintessential Soviet city, as in the case of Magnitogorsk (Kotkin, 1992, 1995) or Minsk (Belarus) as it was rebuilt after World War II, the Soviet impact on Kyiv was enormous nonetheless for at least three reasons: (1) like Minsk, which was greatly destroyed in the war, the Soviets needed to rebuild much of Kyiv, too, and did so according to their template; (2) the city was strategic in terms of industry, the military, and scientific research, well as the capital of a major republic, so construction according to Soviet form was appropriate; and (3) the city grew rapidly during the decades after World War II, so many new districts needed to be added, which was done in the Soviet way. Instead of a discreet section about Soviet Kyiv, which could easily be a book in itself, this book recalls characteristics of the Soviet city throughout as it discusses what is new. The authoritative text about what the Soviet city was like in general is the now classic book by Bater (1980). It makes many references to Kyiv throughout. Other key works include the collection of essays about socialist cities edited by French and Hamilton (1979), and reflections about the Soviet urban heritage by French (1984; 1995) with Moscow as a prime example, and Grava (1993), who has studied primarily Riga.

Now, as a complement to these and other studies about Soviet urbanism, a considerable literature is emerging about the postsocialist city as a generic urban type. The new studies are mostly articles in academic journals and chapters in edited books on the subject. With the exception



of the aforementioned *Money Sings* about Yaroslavl, Russia, which was published in the early post-Soviet year 1995, this book about Kyiv is the lone book-length case study of a postsocialist city. It is also worth noting that Kyiv has been especially understudied. There are some fine histories of the city, both in English and in local languages (e.g., Bakanov, 2011; Boychenko et al., 1968; Byelomyesyatsev et al., 2012; Hamm, 1986, 1993; Kudrytsky, ed., 1982; Malakov, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013; Meir, 2010; Nasyrova, Nevzorov, and Kruchynin, eds., 2008; Shulkevych and Dmytrenko, 1982), but there is virtually nothing in English about the city today except for the occasional piece of journalism, some of which seems to focus disproportionately on the antics of the topless women's protest group FEMEN, or short travel articles. There is not much either in Ukrainian or Russian, and certainly no book such as this. However, the local literature is growing rapidly. Key sources that relate to the subjects covered here are a topical issue of the Ukrainian sociological journal *Spilne: Zhurnal Sotsialnoi Krytyky* (Commons: A Journal of Social Criticism), volume 2 (2010); a collection of papers about city planning in Kyiv edited by Ksenia Dmytrenko (2011); a collection of essays about social and landscape change in Kyiv edited by Makarenko et al. (2012); a detailed study about Troyeshchyna, a blue-collar residential neighborhood at the margins of Kyiv, by Blair Ruble (2003); and various other papers, including at least two by Natalia Moussienko about historical preservation in the city and citizens' struggles against irresponsible construction projects (2009a and b).

A recent article by Sýkora and Bouzarovski (2012) outlines a conceptual framework for analysis of the socialist to postsocialist urban transition and offers a helpful bibliography. Because the subject is compelling, and because the socialist world in Eurasia covered a huge territory and many countries and cultures, the literature ranges widely geographically. Examples run from the former Soviet satellite states of Balkan Europe (e.g., Hirt, 2006, 2007, 2010, Nae and Turnock, 2011; Pojani, 2009 and 2010; Staddon and Mollov, 2000) and Poland (e.g., Michlic, 2009; Musekamp, 2009; Thum, 2009; Tölle, 2008), into the heart of Russia (e.g., Argenbright, 1999; Kalfus, 1996; Makhrova and Molodikova, 2007; Medvedkov and Medvedkov, 2007; Molodikova and Makhrova, 2007; Pagonis and Thornley, 2000), to the distant "blue cities" of Russia (Engel, 2007) and the far reaches of Buryat Siberia (e.g., Baldayeva, 2007; Humphrey, 2007; Hürelbaatar, 2007; and Manzanova, 2007), and perhaps beyond.

At least with respect to the issues that are emphasized in this book, the central contribution to the literature is the edited book *Cities after the Fall of Communism* (Czaplicka, Gelazis, and Ruble, eds., 2009). Like in our own approach to Kyiv, each of the book's 11 case studies "focuses on a



postcommunist city with a particularly interesting story to tell" (p. 2). There are 4 cases from Ukraine: Odesa ("Odessa" in the text), Sevastopol, Kharkiv, and L'viv; as well as chapters about cities in countries nearby: Vilnius in Lithuania, Novgorod and Kaliningrad in Russia, Tallinn in Estonia; and Wrocław, Łódź, and Szczecin in Poland. A "deceptively simple" initial question runs through the case studies: "What time is this place?" This question was first posed in 1961 by Anselm Strauss in his analysis of the changing American urban landscape, and it is one that the editors of this book see correctly as "central for those reimagining and remaking the cities of the former Soviet Union and postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe" (p. 1). As each city moves forward into the new era, it also reflects on its past and reworks history in ways that the communists did not allow. Often, there is wholesale renaming of streets and city districts in order to substitute one set of memories for another, replacements of old monuments and hero statues with those that are new and different, and a return of historical foundation for cities to past times of urban glory and national strength. In Ukraine, the city of L'viv especially has broken with its Soviet past, as this was always a rabidly anti-communist and anti-Russian city, and has reinvigorated its Ukrainianism in the landscape, as well as erected monuments to both honor and acknowledge its Polish and Jewish pasts (Hentosh and Tschertes, 2009, pp. 255-280).

A second important collection of essays is the book edited by Alexander, Buchli, and Humphrey (2007). It focuses on urban life in post-Soviet Central Asia and includes among other essays those cited above for Buryat Siberia. It describes a distant and different world from that of Kyiv, but a world nonetheless that the Soviets had transformed with the same mold that had reshaped Kyiv and other cities in the Slavic heartland. A third collection of essays, edited by Kiril Stanilov and also published in the same year (Stanilov, 2007a), focuses more on European Russia (e.g., the Russia chapters cited above), as well as on the Baltic countries and key capital cities in the former Eastern Bloc such as Prague, Sofia, Budapest, and Bucharest. Chapters about the changing geography of office development and other commercial uses in a mix of East European cities by Stanilov (2007b) and about the emerging geography of commercial real estate in postsocialist Moscow by Makhrova and Molodikova (2007) link especially well with my own observations in Kyiv, as does a superbly detailed chapter by Yuri Medvedkov and Olga Medvedkov about the changing geography of elite residential areas in Moscow and its surroundings (2007). A fourth edited book, *The Post-Socialist City*, looks at the impact of social-political change in East Europe and the former USSR on the form of public squares, monuments, and other elements

of urban form as seen in Bucharest, Prague, Warsaw, and Prishtina, among other cities (Kliems and Dmitrieva, eds., 2010). One chapter, by Wilfried Jilge, discusses the form of Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), a subject that we will take up in Chapter 6 (Jilge, 2003; 2010). Finally, a fifth edited volume is by anthropologists and looks at changes to everyday life since the end of socialism in various countries in East Europe, in Armenia, and in Russia. Its wide-ranging chapters cover the rebuilding of synagogues in East Europe, rock music in Budapest, and gay tourism to Prague, among other topics (Berdahl, Bunzl, and Lampland, eds., 2000).

There has been significant in-depth research about one city in particular, Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia (Van Assche, Salukvadze, and Shavishvili, eds., 2009; Van Assche and Salukvadze, 2012). This ancient city that itself had contributed to the shaping of earliest Kyiv, had been reworked considerably by Soviet planners and city-builders during the 70 years (1921-1991) that it was part of the USSR, but has since experienced what is perhaps a leading edge of post-Soviet reconstruction. The new era is one of a return to both national themes and religiosity in the landscape, and of redevelopment in all parts of the metropolis by a profit-minded real estate industry. These "new actors" on the urban scene in Tbilisi area atuned to Western architectural forms and development practices, and are, in a sense, "reinventing" the city, as the author's title for their article suggests (Van Assche and Salukvadze, 2012). Tbilisi is an especially pertinent case study to consider alongside Kyiv because the city is also deeply historic and rich in religious architecture. And, like Kyiv, the city suffered the destruction of old churches and wreck-age of history during the Stalinist years. A little more solidly than Kyiv and Ukraine, Tbilisi and Georgia have embraced democracy, perhaps providing a model for democracy advocates in Ukraine; and much more than Kyiv, but certainly akin to the nationalistic feelings that dominate L'viv and other parts of the west of Ukraine, Tbilisi and Georgia have said no to Russia and aspire to a future with the West.

Moscow is another key city for comparison with Kyiv. For a long period, it was the Soviet "big brother" of the Ukrainian capital, and is now a city that perhaps more than any other is being remade by rich capitalists and the "New Russian" consumer class. Among the many sources to read about this city are the following: Adams (2008); Badina and Golubchikov (2005); Kolossov, Vendina, and O'Loughlin (2002); Kolossov and O'Loughlin (2004); Pagonis and Thornley (2000); and three articles in a recent issue of the journal *Slavic Review* (Stella, 2013; Griffiths, 2013; and Rossman, 2013). The publications of R. Anthony French are key, too, although they are a bit older and predate some of Moscow's most dramatic transformations (French,



1984; 1995). The most central case study is probably the ethnography of everyday life in the years following the demise of Soviet order by Williams College sociologist Olga Shevchenko (2009). The book is recent and richly detailed, and it focuses on ordinary people as opposed to the smaller group of nouveaux riches who have gotten disproportionate attention in other literature. The first chapter is entitled “Living on a Volcano.” This is a metaphor that Shevchenko said she heard often in her interviews as Moscow’s rank-and-file continually faces social and political instability, and lives with uncertainty about what the next day might bring (Shevchenko, 2009, p. 8). We read that people have had to come up with home-grown ways to protect themselves from the hazards of everyday life in postsocialist Moscow’s perpetual “state of emergency.” One example, set in the context of rising crime rates, concerns the proliferation of super-strong steel doors for apartments and metal garages in residential areas, even if there was very little of value in the apartment or the garage to protect. One informant, Andrei, laughingly told Shevchenko, “I believe that our apartment door is our most expensive possession,” while another, Sergei Mikhailovich, explained that alternative forms of protection such as vigilant neighbors or alert police were no longer available in his post-Soviet neighborhood, and added that “although police are needed, one is afraid of the police these days” (Shevchenko, 2009, p. 113.) These comments, too, ring familiar for the Kyiv I have observed, and they could just as easily have been framed by Shevchenko via my metaphor of urban demons (her city also happens to have spectacular church domes) as by her chosen one of tectonic volatility.

The distinguished Cambridge University anthropologist Caroline Humphrey has also addressed changes in society after socialism, and has written about various aspects of Moscow and other locations in the former USSR and Mongolia in her descriptively titled collection of ten of her own essays: *The Unmaking of Soviet Life* (2002). She, too, gives more attention to ordinary people than the rich, including those living in far-off rural and small-town Siberia, but one chapter in particular is about the rich in Moscow and other cities and relates to topics that we will discuss for Kyiv. This is Chapter 9, the “Villas of the ‘New Russians,’” which describes the geography and architecture of the lavish homes that are being built by suddenly moneyed citizens of emerging post-Soviet society. These new homes represent the first boom in construction of large, individually owned houses for single families since the Revolution of 1917 (p. 175). She interprets the new landscapes as emblems of a rising culture of consumption and new symbols of status and individual independence. In comparison to the traditional dacha, “the villa has a quite different appearance,” Humphrey writes,



for the owners do not see themselves as engaged in creating domesticity in the face of state-dictated homogeneity. ... The purchaser of a villa is a master who signals the social position of an independent operator. His walls and gates connote withdrawal from the mass of the people, and his turrets evoke an “I’ll look after myself” defiance. (p. 188)

In the chapters ahead in this book, we will see many examples of opulent construction for personal use by the “New Russians” of Kyiv (yes, the term is used in the Ukrainian capital), as that is indeed one of the principal dimensions of the city’s current remaking, and will recall Humphrey’s highlighting of consumption culture and self-centeredness as factors in their construction.

A case study of a different sort, more directly focused on the impact on urban space of a city’s structural economic transformation after socialism, is the more quantitative analysis of Russia’s second city, St. Petersburg, by Axenov, Brade, and Bondarchuk (2006). The findings of this study also parallel what I have observed, at least in bits and pieces, in Kyiv. The authors have compiled considerable data about changing economic enterprise in post-Soviet St. Petersburg, and they have documented both the extremely rapid increases over a short period in numbers and variety of business in the city and the spatial distributions of new businesses. Apropos to the example above about strongly locked doors, I note the example of private security companies: their numbers in St. Petersburg increased from 1 in 1988 to 80 in 1996, to 390 in 2002. Other data concern the changing numbers and geographic distributions of food stores, automobile service enterprises, tourism agencies, and hypermarkets, and the distributions of various kinds of business such as very small kiosks around busy Metro stations, and along particular streets, and in specific squares.

Still another pertinent case study is the research about Kazan by Liliya Nigmatullina (2010). The city is the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, an oil-rich district within the Russian Federation located on the Volga River to the southeast of Moscow, and is sometimes referred to as “Russia’s Third Capital.” Both Kazan and the small-town and rural areas of Tatarstan have changed tremendously since the loosening of Moscow’s hegemonic rule after Soviet times, as the republic has been able to exchange its vast oil resources for additional autonomy within the Russian Federation. That autonomy has taken on strong cultural expression and is reflected in an emphatic post-Soviet revival of ethnic Tatar and religious Islamic life. Nigmatullina’s work, which was written as a master’s thesis signed by yours truly, documented with considerable original data the return of her native Kazan to ethnic and religious roots that had been suppressed since the Russian conquest of the



city by Ivan Grozny (Ivan the Terrible) in 1552. The most symbolic event was the reconstruction in 2005 of the spectacularly beautiful Qolşärif mosque in the Kazan Kremlin (I was there and saw it with my own eyes), a sacred and historic structure that was demolished during Ivan's murderous siege of the city. It is now the largest mosque in Russia and the largest in Europe outside Istanbul. At the same time, dozens of other mosques have been constructed, reconstructed, or converted back to religious use from secular uses during Soviet (or even czarist) times in Kazan and its surroundings. There are also many new Islamic schools, renewed instruction of and in the Tatar language, and new retailing of halal food, Tatar and Islamic religious reading material, and Tatar and Islamic clothing, both for ceremonial and everyday use. All of this was either banned or suppressed during the many years of Russian and Soviet rule. Nigmatullina also documented the revival of ethnic Tatar vernacular architecture in and near Kazan as seen in single homes, the fences that bound property lines, and ethnic-oriented businesses and cultural centers, among other examples.

Such expressions of ethnic and linguistic identity, national past, and religiosity are seen commonly in historically non-Russian areas of the former Soviet Union because much of this was taken away during Soviet communism (or even earlier in the cases of territories such as Tatarstan that had been annexed by the Russian Empire). In addition to Kazan and L'viv (annexed after World War II), which I singled out above, there are other examples from Ukraine (e.g., Gubar and Herlihy, 2009; Kravchenko, 2009; Richardson, 2008), as well as those for the capital cities of the three newly independent countries of the Caucasus (e.g., Tbilisi as presented in the recent volume edited by Van Assche, Salukvadze, and Shavishvili, 2009; and in Bouzarovski, Salukvadze, and Gentile, 2011), and the capitals and other cities in the three Baltic Republics that are equally happy to no longer be Russia's (e.g., the chapters about Estonia's Tallinn by Jörg Hackmann and Lithuania's Vilnius by Irena Vaisvilaite in *Cities after the Fall of Communism*; and the article by Aleksandravičius about both Vilnius and Kaunas). There is also an emerging literature about post-Soviet urban Central Asia, e.g., the essay about Tashkent by Marfua Tokhtakhodzhaeva in the book *Urban Life in Post-Soviet Asia* edited by Alexander, Buchli, and Humphrey (2007). This study traces this ancient city from the 19th century when it was the capital of Turkestan, through those years of the 20th century when it was the administrative center of Soviet Uzbekistan, to its substantial transformation in the present century into its postsocialist form as a thriving capital city of an independent Uzbekistan (pp. 102-124). The same text also has case studies about Astana and Almaty in Kazakhstan. All of these cases bear in one way or another on Kyiv, because, as we will see, this city, too, has



undergone a post-Soviet burst of national (i.e., Ukrainian) ethnic and linguistic expression (even as the Russian language continues to be widely used), as well as a revival of religions and places of worship, including various flavors of Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, and evangelical Christianity.

In our presentation of Ukraine's capital, we will consider not only the sequence of historical periods that make up the landscape of the city, but more importantly the choices that confront the metropolis about precisely what to preserve from the past and how, what to memorialize with new construction and how, and which paths of urban development should be followed for the future. These choices are often complicated for cities like Kyiv because of the dark histories of the communist past, particularly during the terror of Joseph Stalin, and the equally hard years of Nazi occupation and murder, and the extraordinarily painful memories that they engender. While citizens may rejoice with the fall of the Soviet Union and its repressions and the coming of independence, they know also that they will need to confront the bloody secrets of the Soviet apparatus and bring uncomfortable truths from government archives and people's memories to light. In Ukraine, the most critical such history is that of the Holodomor, the Stalin-induced famine in 1932-1933 that took several million lives. It was a forbidden topic under the Soviet regime, but after independence it became a responsibility to uncover the truth and to memorialize and teach it. A recent case study of a post-Soviet city that bears on such issues is that by the historian Cathy A. Frierson about the northern Russian city of Vologda and the torments that citizens faced on account of detailed revelations after the Soviet period that their city had been a key part of the apparatus of the Gulag and the repeated site of gruesome, government-committed mass murders (Frierson, 2010). Likewise, we have an excellent case study from Minsk, Belarus, the nearest national capital to Kyiv, that discusses conflicts in that city about (1) construction of the "Nemiga 99" monument to 53 young people who were killed in 1999 in a tragic stampede at a rock music concert; and (2) the Stalinist character of the city's Oktiabrsky Square as a reflection of the anachronistic ideology of the present government of Belarus (Barykina, 2008).

1.8 Postsocialist Urbanism

We now turn to a short summary of the changes that are taking place as "postsocialist" and "post-Soviet" urban transitions (Table 1.1). The changes are wide-ranging and include not just fundamental shifts in political and economic systems occasioned by the fall of communism and the Soviet Union,



but also major transformations in culture and society, as well as in urban form. Writing specifically about Russia, but I think also having equal application to the cities of Ukraine, Graybill and Dixon have observed that “the built environment has changed so dramatically since 1991 that many cities are nearly unrecognizable to those accustomed to quiet, somber Soviet landscapes” (2012, p. 239). Generalizations can be risky because, as we have seen, the former Soviet/socialist realm of Eurasia is an enormous region with a full range of indigenous cultural and geographic variety, and various countries have taken different roads in the postcommunist world. Nevertheless, we do collect our thoughts on the matter because they will be a basis for the examination of Kyiv that follows and for understanding the city’s new dimensions of urban process and conflict. We see one of many possible snapshots of Soviet/socialist to postsocialist transition in Kyiv in Figure 1.3. Taken from a viewpoint atop a bluff on the right bank, the photo looks across the Dnipro River at Hidropark, a large Soviet-era park in the center of the city, and its wonderful beaches, and then beyond at left-bank Kyiv where the Soviets had built many of their expansive housing estates. We also see post-Soviet geography: e.g., incursions to the park by private businesses (a floating restaurant and floating hotel, from left to right); the dome of a small chapel peeking from among trees in the park; a large new church on the far bank (the Patriarchal Ukrainian Catholic

Figure 1.3 A view of Kyiv across the Dnipro River



Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ); a business-oriented convention and exposition center nearby; new, taller apartment and condominium towers for the new middle class rising above Soviet constructions; and a wide road with cars and new shopping malls along the right edge.

The key points are organized below in a “before” and “after” format, the break being the end of the USSR and birth of post-Soviet independent nations. The characteristics that I list for postsocialist cities are gleaned from the literature that we have just reviewed (colored, I am sure, by my own experiences in the postsocialist landscape), while the parallel list of “before” characteristics during socialism comes from (1) that same literature; and (2) from what are widely considered to be the definitive studies about Soviet and socialist cities specifically (e.g., Bater, 1980). Many of the boxes below include interrelated, overlapping information; hence, it was not possible to group them into neat categories. However, the flow of the table tends to run from “economic transformations” near the top, through “urban physical change” near the middle, and “social and cultural change” toward the end.

Table 1.1 Socialist and Postsocialist Cities Compared

BEFORE: Key Characteristics of Soviet/Socialist Cities	AFTER: Parallel Characteristics of Postsocialist Cities
The economy is centralized and controlled by government. Government is essentially everyone’s employer and there is officially no unemployment. There is limited private enterprise.	Much of the economy is decentralized and privatized. Private enterprise expands, sometimes with little control. Some enterprises fail and there is unemployment.
The government owns the land and what is built on it.	Land ownership is privatized. The number of landowners is large.
Government buildings dominate the urban center.	Office buildings, international hotels, and upscale shopping are appearing fast.
The architecture of government authority marks the skylines of cities.	The skyline is increasing postmodern and commercial.
Central public squares are for rallies to support government and/or for the government’s monuments.	Increasingly, public squares are sites for new business (e.g., kiosks) and in some cases support divergent political discourse.
Within the USSR, nationalism is subdued except for the Soviet state as a whole.	National identity emerges as an important element of landscape. Independence monuments are found in all post-Soviet countries but Russia.
The practice of religion is forbidden or restricted; churches and other places of worship are few and under close watch; many places of worship have been either destroyed or converted to new uses.	Energetic rebuilding of important places of worship that were destroyed under communism; energetic construction of new places of worship; religious holidays become part of the national calendar.

BEFORE: Key Characteristics of Soviet/Socialist Cities

AFTER: Parallel Characteristics of Postsocialist Cities

Most people live in fairly homogenous and crowded developments of government-built apartment blocks with few amenities within buildings.

There is private ownership of apartments and more personalization of spaces behind an apartment unit's closed doors. Often, public spaces in residential areas are neglected because mechanisms for maintenance and social control have weakened.

Better housing for privileged people such as party members is found in the center, but with little fanfare.

Exclusive neighborhoods for the wealthy are developed in various parts of the city. Wealth is conspicuously displayed.

Although there is social inequality, most citizens are more or less on the same footing. People in major urban centers live better than in isolated countryside locations.

The urban-rural divide is exacerbated. Within cities, there is much greater social-economic inequality, with huge gaps in income between the few who are extraordinarily rich and most other citizens. Happily, a middle class emerges, albeit perhaps too slowly.

Many cities have large industrial districts, many industrial workers, and pollution problems that come with heavy industry. Large parks serve as the lungs for cities and as places of day-off getaway for city residents.

Some industries are no longer competitive and close.

There is a reliance on mass transit.

Parts of popular parks are appropriated by government or well-connected private enterprises for nonpark use. Other options for leisure compete with parks. There is more usage of private automobiles, and there are more traffic jams and shortages of parking.

Shopping is done in a central department store, and in government stores for food, bread, meat, etc. Sometimes there are shortages of goods. There are small-scale vendors, too.

Supermarkets appear, as do chain stores from abroad, fashion boutiques, and shopping malls. There are larger numbers of small-scale vendors along sidewalks and at other public spaces.

Personal wealth is not displayed openly.

Many people chase money openly and aggressively, and make a point of showing their wealth by how they dress, the cars they drive, and how they spend it.

With the exception of university students from developing countries, there are comparatively few foreigners. Those who are there have restrictions on their activities.

There are many more foreigners and many opportunities for foreigners.

Foreign travel is restricted and is available mainly to those who are well-connected.

The borders are open for trips abroad and even emigration. Many people leave.

Social controls are tight, although alcoholism is common.

Disorder replaces social control. Alcoholism, crime, prostitution, etc. all increase. There is said to be a decline in moral standards.





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