

Acknowledgements

I have had the good fortune of spending time in stimulating environments while working on this book. It began as a doctoral research project at the University of Cambridge, with additional stays at the universities of Groningen, Stanford, and UC Berkeley. Work on the book itself started at the University of Chicago and University College London and was concluded at Queen Mary University of London. I am grateful to my new colleagues and students at the University of Sheffield for providing a nurturing atmosphere in the final stages of production.

Martin Ruehl has shaped this project from its inception: without his inspiration to pursue aspects of European social and cultural history with Count Kessler's diary as a guide, this book would not have come into existence. The regular discussions I had with Raymond Geuss frequently pushed me to explore unknown avenues as well as alleyways of research. The memory of past conversations with the late Istvan Hont contains a rich, and mostly constructive, catalogue of criticisms, and I wish I could share my latest take on the twentieth-century 'feeble thinkers' with him. Eckart Conze provided me with a connection to German scholarship that I had missed. Chris Clark gave me the inspiration to look for structuralism whilst restructuring the doctoral project. As I followed this trail, John Searle's work on the construction of social reality inspired me to look at processes of imperial deconstruction; he went far beyond hospitality during my visits to UC Berkeley, and his appreciation of some of my work has been key to the progress of the book's central theme. Over the past years, Axel Körner gave me the creative resilience to navigate the book in its postdoctoral condition through the prism of transnational history.

Discussions with colleagues and mentors at all these institutions provided a rich palette of inspiration at different stages of work on the manuscript. For their advice at various stages of the project, I would like to thank Melissa Lane, Hubertus Jahn, George Joffe, Sarah Snyder, Michael Collins, Margot Finn, Keith McClelland, Jérémie Barthas, Richard Bourke, Saul Dubow,

Rüdiger Görner, Gareth Stedman Jones, Georgios Varouxakis, and Daniel Wildmann. Quentin Skinner provided me with a way out of an impasse with the book's title in a decisive moment. Discussions of the proposal and individual chapters have been vital for the completion of this volume, and I thank Tim Blanning, Brendan Simms, Kathy Burk, François Guesnet, Keith McClelland, Ira Katznelson, Richard Westerman, Adnan van Dal, Olga Smith, and Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, who have read parts of the manuscript and provided valuable feedback. I owe particular thanks to Peter Kovalsky, who has helped me to work on a more idiomatic style in English, an undertaking that involved venturing into philosophical terrain. I am yet to absorb the idea that “to remember” in English, unlike in Russian, is a verb that contains no element of speech. Remembering happens entirely internally.’ Or: ‘A preoccupation is a thing that keeps you distracted from your occupation – it’s a problem, not something pleasant.’ The persistent infelicities preoccupy me, but such is life.

Generous funding from the AHRC, Peterhouse, the Kurt Hahn trust, the Marie Curie European doctorate, the DAAD, a Harper-Schmidt fellowship, and a Leverhulme early career fellowship enabled me to travel widely for purposes of archival research and academic exchange. I am particularly grateful to Philip Pattenden, the senior tutor at Peterhouse, and to Andreas Heiner from the Leverhulme Trust, for their support throughout this time.

This book relied heavily on the use of archives scattered across Europe and the United States. For bringing to life the documents, ideas, and images which helped me to imagine imperial decline as a social process, I thank Gabriel Superfin, Laird Easton, Sabine Carbon, Roland Kamzelak, Maria Amélia Teixeira de Vasconcelos, Daniela Stein-Lorentz, Ute Gahlings, Natalya Kolganova, Mieke Ijzermans, Otto Chmelik, Tatiana Chebotareff, Georg Rosentreter, John Palatini, and Marita von Cieminski. Maxim L’vov and Gert von Pistohlkors identified key visual sources from Estonia. I also thank Henrietta Garnett and Ben Anrep for allowing me to reproduce images from their family estates. Markus Lucke, Tanja Fengler-Veit, Sabine Carbon, Marlies Dornig, and Daragh Kenny provided me with visual reproductions from the German Literary Archive, the Austrian National Archive, the Kessler society, and the National Gallery in London.

Conversations about aristocratic memory, autobiographic thought, imperial decline, and elite sociability, which I had over the years with Friederike von Lukowicz, Harald von Keyserlingk, Charlotte Radziwill, Samuil Lur’ie, and Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, have served as vital threads connecting the documentary afterlife of my protagonists to the

living memories and experiences of the present. I especially want to thank Natasha and David Wilson (Lord and Lady Wilson of Tillyorn) for allowing me to interview them at great length about the role of Natasha's legendary grandmother, Baroness Budberg, in shaping the cultural memory of imperial Russia, British imperial decline, and the transformation of systems of honour in modern Britain: these have inspired some core themes in this book. Her recollections of her mother's intuitively warm feelings towards Scotland – 'because the Scots can dream!' – have influenced my analysis of the Baltic borderers.

Being a member of the Society of Fellows in Chicago gave me access to a magical community of intellectuals who were working on their own first book projects – thanks especially to Richard Westerman, Sarah Graff, Leigh Claire La Berge, Nick Gaskell, Dorit Geva, Elizabeth Heath, Markus Hardtmann, Mara Marin, Nima Paidipaty, Emily Steinlight, Neil Verma, and Anita Chari. At UCL and at Queen Mary, I was given a golden opportunity to design courses in modern European history in which I learnt much from students, for which I thank Nicola Miller, Stephen Conway, and Miri Rubin.

I presented ongoing work on this book at conferences and workshops in Cambridge, London, Groningen, Lisbon, Paris, Stanford, Berkeley, Pittsburgh, Brighton, Marburg, Chicago, Fiesole, St. Petersburg, and Moscow. For sharing ideas in these contexts, I thank Beatrice Kobow, Ásta Kristjana Sveinsdóttir, Klaus Strelau, Trevor Wedman, Jennifer Hudin, Gary Herrigel, Jennifer Pitts, Moishe Postone, Tara Zahra, Alexander Etkind, Uta Staiger, Tim Beasley-Murray, Richard Drayton, Tatiana Nekrasova, Ilya Kukulín, Maria Maiofis, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, Mikhail Kaluzhsky, Artemy Magun, Suzanne Marchand, Jan Plamper, Zaur Gasimov, George Giannakopoulos, Tom Hopkins, Damian Valdez, Sam James, and Hugo Drochon. I have also greatly benefited from the novel approach to intellectual life by preparing short lectures for Postnauka.ru, Ivar Maksutov, Anna Kozyrevskaya, and Julia Polevaya, an invigorating project run out of a small office on Arbat.

More thanks are due to people who provided key impulses for this book in a variety of ways. Thus I thank Olga Smith, Roxane Farmanfarmanian, Özlem Biner, Juan Cristóbal Cerrillo, Mara Marin, Alec Rainey, Bhismadev Chakrabarty, and Advaith Siddharta. Tat'iana Berdikova has sustained the link to the Serapion brothers as well as to Ernest Gellner in Russian. Elena Tverdislova has advised me on the sections dealing with Polish intellectual history. Margarita Dement'ieva has given me an education in modern American literature as well as the theme of

exile and revolution among the ‘white’ Russians. I am also grateful to Yascha Mounk, Philip Wood, Josephine von Zitzewitz, Amy Bell, Manuel Arroyo Kalin, Yulia Yamineva, Alessandro Zocchi, Brynn Deprey, Alessandro Giaccone, Thomas Land, Amir Engel, Alexis Papazoglou, as well as to Elvira Amosova and Samuil Lur’e, Alice and Wilhelm Schlink, Flora Goldstein and Igor Golomstock, Nadya Bodansky and Andrei Arkhipov.

My parents, Marina Dmitrieva and Gasan Gusejnov, co-produced this book in many ways. In addition to reading drafts and discussing ideas, their own work has had an influence on me in ways that a footnote would not reflect adequately. My mother’s study of Italian architects from the Renaissance in central Europe, *Italien in Sarmatien* (2008), was a memorable adventure in European cultural geography, which has been as indicative to me as her work on the art of the Russian and central European avant-garde and the periodical communities associated with it. My father’s fieldwork on the language and culture of late Soviet and post-Soviet national identity, first begun in the journal *The Twentieth Century and the World*, which he co-edited with Denis Dragunsky in the years of perestroika, was as important an influence as his *The Map of our Motherland* (2005), a book about imperial phantom pains in the post-Soviet Russian cartographic imaginary. My grandfather, Chingiz Huseinov, helped me to organize my thinking about imperial decline, and provided me with inspiration on transnational and postcolonial imaginaries through his novel on the revolution, *Doktor N* (1998).

My very special thanks go to Andreas Vlachos for having trust in our common itineraries while the counts were taking over.

My grandmother, Nadezhda Dmitrieva, has been assembling an archive of aristocratic memory from our local newspaper, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, in the past years, upon my request. This model of cultural memory in a postsocialist state and other conversations with her have supplied this book with the most important, if less visible, arc to the present. I dedicate this book to her, the real historian in the family.

I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers as well as to the series editors for their constructive comments, and I thank Michael Watson, Amanda George, Maartje Scheltens, Mary Bongiovi, and Louise Bowes of Cambridge University Press, as well as Jeevitha Baskaran, for their encouragement, professionalism, and patience in producing this book.

The remaining faults are mine.