

A b s t r a c t s

Images of Aging

Memories of the War, Demography and Old Age Policy

Svetlana Aleksievich
Suffering Is a Daunting Job

Personal life experience is the stuff from which history emerges and the stuff from which a generation's identity evolves. By showing the patterns and textures of individual experiences as well as where they interface, Belarusian author Svetlana Aleksievich makes the abyss of Soviet history legible: the violence, the wars, the catastrophes, and the long afterlife of socialist utopia and totalitarian ideology in the post-Soviet realm.

Images of the War

Irina Shcherbakova
When the Mute Speak to the Deaf
Generational Dialogue and History Policy in Russia

The 65th anniversary of victory in the Second World War in May 2010 will be the last one that a considerable number of veterans will experience. Ten years ago, the living memory of millions of veterans still confronted the myth of glorious victory. Today, the process of passing down of personal memory has practically run dry. Young people in Russia are at the mercy of an ideologised, pseudo-patriotic politics of memory. By itself, family memory would be a source of remembrance. But even that was always fragmented and contradictory. Traumas and censorship kept old people from opening up. The upheaval of the 1990s led to a situation in which the values and experiences of the old no longer applied to the young. A dialogue addressing historical experiences could hardly take place under such conditions.

Andrii Portnov, Tetiana Portnova
The Price of Victory
The War and the Competition of Veterans in Ukraine

Over 2.5 million veterans of the Second World War are still living in Ukraine, among them, however, are only several thousand frontline soldiers. The war remains a central element of society's historical identity. The dissolution of the Soviet Union also led to the dissolution of the monolithic image of the war. In Ukraine, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and its fighters came into view. Today, Soviet veterans and UPA brotherhoods compete for recognition and privileges. What these veterans have in common is that they do not understand themselves as victims and are bound to the propagandistic rhetoric of the war. The fate of the forced labourers, the Holocaust victims, and the prisoners of war is hardly present anymore. Officially, Ukraine presents itself as the victim of two totalitarian regimes.

Astrid Sahm
National Founding Myth
The Second World War in Belarusian Memory Culture

Official commemoration of the Second World War in Belarus is still bound to Soviet traditions. But President Aliaksandr Lukashenka has stylized the struggle against German occupation as a struggle for national independence. The Belarusian contribution to the victory over Hitler's Germany serves him as an argument to justify claims to Russian subsidies and to defend against western calls for democracy. Reference to the civilian population's suffering holds out the possibility of tying into European memory culture. And generational turnover promotes the establishment of a differentiated view of history.

Natan Kellermann
"Every Old Person Has His Story"
Two Kinds of Holocaust Survivors in Israel

The integration of Holocaust survivors into Israeli society was difficult. In the founding years, a national myth was established that stressed strength and ability to fight. The image of persecuted Jewish victims stood in shameful contrast to that. Only after the Yom Kippur War did the attitude to the Holocaust and its victims change. A repressed trauma became a public event. Social recognition for survivors grew.

But one group has hardly profited from it: the Russian-speaking Holocaust survivors who came to Israel only later. Their situation is precarious. They live on the periphery of society, frequently in considerable poverty and isolated. The clinical psychologist Natan Kellermann provides background information.

Sabine Erdmann-Kutnevic
Minimally Provided For, Partially Respected
Nazi Victims in East European Countries

Sixty-five years ago, the Second World War came to an end. Some of the pensioners in Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia were born afterwards. But the overwhelming share of pensioners in these countries personally experienced the war. The state is doing too little to provide older people material, medicinal, and social care. The elderly are unable to contribute their skills, experience, and memories to society. Yet the relationship of society to its old people is an indicator of how civilised and mature it is.

Images of Old Age

Steffen Kröhnert, Stephan Sievert
United in Aging
Demographic Trends in Europe's East

In many countries in Europe's east, the population is clearly declining. The collapse of birth rates after 1990, emigration, and partially declining life expectancy are responsible for this. As the demographic shrinkage continues in many places, the number of older people will increase noticeably. For in the future, people in Eastern Europe will also live longer. At the same time, those born in years with high birth rates are reaching old age.

A. Kruse, S. Pohlmann, E. Schmitt, M. Bolk, J. Hinner
Old Age Policy as Cross-Sectional Task
German and International Perspectives

A modern senior citizen policy must open up to older people the prospect of leading an autonomous and active life within and on behalf of society. It must create the framework for assisting those requiring

care and those who are sick. However, senior citizen policy must also be measured by how it deals with the prospects of younger people and future generations. Senior citizen policy is more than a state task. It requires individual and social engagement as well as international cooperation. For society is growing old around the world. Early on, the United Nations recognised the demographic change and issues of old age and gave these issues essential impetus. But UN member states have neglected to pursue a collective strategy in senior citizen policy.

Hildegard Theobald

Precarious Care

East European Female Migrants in Home Care for the Elderly

In Europe, more and more people are reaching old age and are in need of care in their last years of life. At the same time, more and more women are joining the workforce. The need for care has risen, and the potential for care from within the family has declined. In Italy, Austria, and Germany, the gap has been filled in recent years by female migrant workers from Eastern Europe in particular. Their working conditions are precarious, frequently even illegal. Several countries are showing that, with a different approach to care policy and a less restrictive migration policy, there are alternatives: The expansion of formal care services facilitates access to the regular job market for female migrants.

Aleksandr Sidorenko

Between Facts and Norms

Aging and Senior Citizen Policy in the Post-Soviet Realm

The demographic situation in the various post-Soviet states differ fundamentally from one another. The Baltic countries are among the oldest in the world, the Central Asian among the youngest. In Russia and Ukraine, the population is in sharp decline; in Tadzhikistan and Turkmenistan, it is increasing. Nonetheless, even if all 15 states are at different stages of demographic transformation, they are all experiencing the global trend of aging. The answers to this challenge are completely different. Nowhere can it be said that they are satisfactory. The implementation of the "International Plan on Aging" leaves much to be desired. Aging is hardly seen as an issue of overall social significance.

Klaus Städtke
Life Cycles
Russian Realism and Its Heroes

The content and form of literary works are inseparably linked to one another. The heroes in the novels of the flourishing era of classical Russian realism during the 19th century are young men. As a rule, they are rebelling against society, but then grow into it after all. Older persons appear mostly as supporting figures. Socialist realism takes over the idealistic pathos of its predecessor. The heroes are again young men who now, however, cast off the old and heroically move into the new world. This romanticizing representation came into an indissoluble conflict with Soviet everyday life. In the late-Soviet village prose, old women are the protagonists. The closeness of their death heralds a dual ending: that of the Soviet Union and that of Russian realism.

Aleksei Levinson
Whistling Like Socrates
“New Old” and the Old Reality in Russia

In the cultural memory of society, archaic and modern ideas of old age and death are superimposed on each other. With the demographic shifts now taking place, the image of old age is also changing. Old age is not an objective biological fact but a social one. In some parts of the world, old age is no longer seen as a phase of life without sense or purpose, but, analogous to youth, as a time of learning and experience. But in Russia, there is no place for the view that old age can be a good time. The upheavals that have shaken the country since Perestroika have led to a situation in which the older generations have lost their entire social reserves. These reserves could have been material, but also the professional, intellectual or routine capital that had guaranteed authority, respect, and self-confidence.

Liudmila Presniakova
Being Old in Russia
The Welfare Situation and Social Climate

Old age does not have a good reputation in Russian public opinion. The population sees in it a difficult phase of life that is marked by health problems, emotional burdens, and material concerns. The material losses that come with retirement are considerably greater than in the

west. Social and cultural isolation increases. Among Russia's pensioners, authoritarian dispositions and paternalistic orientations are especially pronounced. This is expressed in election behaviour and expectations of the state. But when it comes to defending the social system, Russia's older citizens are more active than the younger ones.

Ol'ga Krasnova
Paradoxes of Old Age
Gerontology and Social Reality in Russia

Russian society is growing old. The late phase of life was taken care of primarily by the medical profession. The image of old age was negative. Only since the 1990s has that image been in flux. That is to the credit of a social-psychological oriented gerontology. Socio-economic upheaval exacerbated social problems, but also opened up new ways for overcoming them. Today in Russia, there are social services, but their quality suffers from an inadequate legal basis, the insufficient training of personnel, and the absence of institutions needed for a civil society.

Images of the Welfare State

Liliia Ovcharova
Catch-Up Evolution
The Social Coverage of Old People in Russia

Russia's pensioners are considered the big losers of the past 20 years. Pensions did in fact largely collapse during the 1990s and failed to keep up with the wage increase of the past ten years. Nonetheless, the poverty for pensioners is on average less than for the overall population. Not only do many pensioners continue to work. The welfare system is also tailored to old people. They receive compensation payments for the privileges that were abolished in 2005, and the pensions were significantly raised in 2008. However, there are grave shortcomings in the old age care and health systems. Female pensioners – especially those in the countryside – together with single mothers and their children, run the greatest danger of not receiving adequate medical care.

Georgii Satarov
Slippery Slope for Young and Old
Corruption in Russia's Health System

Corruption in Russia is widespread. The corrupt practices in the health system affect older people especially, because they need medical assistance more frequently than younger people. For financial reasons, they are often not in a situation to "grease palms." They are then forced to do without medical services. Corruption destroys the professional ethos of doctors. Criminal practices such as unjustifiable operations after arbitrary diagnoses recall the unjustifiable launching of criminal proceedings by the police and justice officials, proceedings that can be suspended by bribe.

Piotr Błędowski
Exclusion or Participation
Old People in Poland

The Polish population is shrinking. At the same time, the number of old people is growing. Poland shares this demographic development with most of the other countries in Europe. The consequences are also the same. Among old people, the share of women is very high. They often live alone. State pensions are low, old-age poverty is widespread. The number of very old people over 80 is also growing. Welfare and old-age policies face enormous challenges.

Barbara Szatur-Jaworska
The Torn Generation
Profil of Old Age in Poland

In Poland, there are more and more old people. Above all in the cities, the share of the elderly has increased in recent years. Although many old people in Poland had to leave their homeland in the course of their life, the family plays the biggest role in providing for old people. Financially, the senior citizens are comparably well off. With increasing life expectancy, the number of those needing care will increase. The social engagement of the elderly is slight. Their social status depends on their origins, education, and the generation to which they belong: that of the interwar era, the wartime and postwar era, or the most recent one, which could still become the winners of the transformation.

Raisa Sinel'nikova
In Need of Reform
Looking After the War Generation in Belarus

Since the Brezhnev era, veterans have played an important role in the patriotic Soviet representation of the war. They also enjoyed social privileges and benefits. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the heroic remembrance of the war and the official appreciation of the veterans remained in Belarus. The number of living contemporary witnesses of the Second World War is sinking. Officially, they are well provided for like all elderly people. In fact, the situation is more difficult: The state welfare programmes are underfinanced. There is a lack of resources on site as well. Bureaucratic hurdles and overworked personnel encumber work. And all of 80 of the 60,000 registered social organisations in Belarus care for veterans and the elderly.

Evelyn Scheer
Between Isolation and Breakthrough
Older People in Belarus

In Belarus as well, a clear decline of the population is to be expected. The aging of the population is already a burden on the welfare system and presents great challenges to society. But the government is clinging to the model of the "Soviet welfare state" and encumbering the activity of civil society in the field of welfare. Nonetheless, there are initiatives that are making an effort to improve the position of older people in society. The organisation "Social Projects" in Homel' shows how cooperation between civil society and the state can function in caring for the old.

Vira Chaikovs'ka
Geriatrically Underprovided
A Clinical Report from Ukraine

In Ukraine, there is no coordinated network of geriatric care. Old people are given medical care and welfare assistance within the general facilities of the health system. But in terms of organisation and personnel, they are inadequately set up to work with patients needing geriatric care. Especially in rural areas, older people suffer from a lack of care. It is necessary to strengthen the health of the older population through better care and rehabilitation so that they could live longer in dignity, autonomy, and social security.

Semen Gluzman
Welfare State, My Foot!
On the Situation of Older People in Ukraine

In contrast to official pronouncements, the situation for older people in Ukraine is precarious. Social organisations that look after the elderly are state-run and function poorly. Non-governmental organisations are most rare in this field. Assistance programmes practically ignore the needs of the population in the countryside. The Ukrainian state is not prepared to solve the demographic problems facing the country. There is no senior citizen and welfare policy worthy of the name.

Images of Projects

Marina Bachilo
Talking with One Another, Learning, Remembering
A Minsk Contemporary Witness Project

At the “History Workshop,” former ghetto inhabitants, concentration camp inmates, and forced labourers speak with pupils, students, and historians about their fate. Both sides profit from these encounters. For the contemporary witnesses, the conversations provide recognition and often a first opportunity to tell of their experiences. The old offer the young an example of optimism, wisdom, and strength – despite all physical afflictions. Misery and persecution under National Socialism and Stalinism have not made most of them betray their values and integrity. That makes the survivors all the more credible.

Marina Kočevalova
The Visit with the Old Lady
Volunteers for “Joy in Old Age” in Pskov and Moscow

Often little is needed to please old people: singing, dancing, something to nibble on: Volunteers from the organisation “Joy in Old Age” do all this during their visits to retirement and nursing homes in and around Moscow and the Pskov Oblast. Often, the volunteers are the only contact with the outside world for the lonely old people, sometimes even salvation when they reveal grim hygienic conditions.

Galina Poliakova
Helping Others Help Themselves
Turbota pro litnich in Ukraine

The notions of volunteer work and helping others help themselves are hardly widespread in the post-Soviet realm. The Ukrainian non-governmental organisation Turbota pro litnich has taken it upon itself to change this. It has built up a network of 2,000 older volunteers. They look after needy elderly people and conduct lobbying efforts. These activities give the volunteers themselves more faith in their skills and open up the prospect of making an impact on society.