

Gazeta Sasha

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change
muutos



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Change / muutos

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Ainejärjestö Sasha ry

Gazeta Sasha saa HYY:n järestölehtitukea.

Eurasia

Dear readers,
As we step into the Spring of 2025, we eagerly anticipate the fresh opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. With this sense of renewal, we are delighted to announce the theme of Change for the first edition of Gazeta in the 2025 cycle.

This theme feels particularly fitting as we prepare to welcome a new Sasha board, the possibility of a new co-editor-in-chief, and the start of an exciting new chapter for Gazeta. First off a warm welcome to the new board of Sasha who will no doubt continue to grow the organization and our shared interest in everything Eurasian studies. Their fresh perspectives and enthusiasm will play a crucial role in shaping the future of our community, and we look forward to the initiatives and collaborations they will bring to life.

Change is rarely straightforward – it pushes us to re-think, rebuild, and sometimes move forward in unknown ways. As we assembled this edition, it became clear that the theme of change is not just an abstract idea but a lived experience for so many across Eurasia and beyond. We are excited to bring you three articles that explore this topic from different perspectives, both in the past and the present:

whether it's Nadiia Svitlychna's personal metamorphosis from Soviet patriot to dissident, Latvia's balancing act between integration and cultural preservation, or the state of Armenia's heritage sites in an increasingly volatile region, these stories collectively speak to the ever changing trends that define Eurasia today. We invite you to reflect on how change has shaped not only this region but also your own communities and lives. What can we learn from these stories about the courage it takes to adapt and move forward?

As we start the first edition of the 2025 cycle, we felt it was only right to balance our serious discussions with a little fun. The three articles we've featured tackle some important, but rather heavy issues, but we also wanted to include something to make you smile and unwind a bit. On the last pages of the magazine, you will find our imaginative horoscope that takes a lighthearted look at the political leaders and notable figures of the region, envisioning what 2025 might have in store for you and them alike. And for those who love a good mental workout, the crossword puzzle at the end offers a fun way to engage not only with the ideas and stories explored in this edition but also with general knowledge about the region itself.

We hope you enjoy this first edition of Gazeta for 2025, and we look forward to continuing our shared journey!

Oliver & Kristína
Editors-in-chief

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Message from the Chair

Dear Gazeta Readers!

The new Sasha board for the year 2025 has officially started its work, and we are all excited and eager to make this year a memorable one for our students in all the Aleksanteri institute programmes. Like last year the board has representation from both the ExpREES and MaREEES programmes.

What I can tell you is that event planning is already in progress for the upcoming year, but we also

encourage you to reach out to us if you have ideas regarding events or collaborations. We want to continue as a community that represents and involves its students as much as possible.

We also want to thank everyone who joined us at our events in 2024 and hope to see many of you again in 2025. I, on behalf of the new Sasha board wish you a great upcoming spring and hope you enjoy this issue of Gazeta Sasha. 🇪🇫

Karoliina Keskitalo



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Sasha ry

PUB NIGHTS

18 March

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every month!

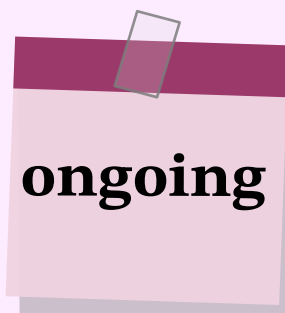
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Events Bulletin

In this edition of Gazeta, we continue our tradition of highlighting significant events and anniversaries that have shaped Central and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Explore this section to stay informed on the latest developments in the region!

Text — Kristína Dohunová and Oliver Reschreiter



Protests in Georgia

Since the contested parliamentary elections of the 26th of October 2024 and the subsequent decision of the ruling Georgian Dream party to postpone plans to join the European Union, Georgia has been engulfed in ongoing protests. Despite the government's attempts to suppress the dissent, demonstrators, including thousands of students, have continued to march nightly, demanding snap elections. The protests have intensified, with people taking to the streets even during the holiday season, but the situation remains in a tense stalemate, with no resolution in sight.



30th Anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum

December 5, 2024, marked three decades since Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan agreed to relinquish their nuclear arsenals in exchange for security assurances from Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. At the time, the agreement was considered a triumph of non-proliferation. Yet, three decades later, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shattered any illusion of the security guarantees being meaningful. As Ukraine continues to fight for its sovereignty, the anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum serves both as a reminder of past missteps but also as a harsh lesson in the vulnerability of nations relying on promises rather than concrete protection.



Protests after Romanian presidential elections

Tens of thousands of Romanians took to the streets of Bucharest to demand the resumption of the presidential election, which had been unexpectedly annulled by the Constitutional Court on December 6, 2024. The court's decision to void the election, held on November 24, 2024, came just days before the scheduled second round, citing allegations of a Russian influence campaign impacting the vote. The controversial move, which halted the election where no candidate had achieved an outright majority, has sparked outrage across the country, with protesters calling for the election to be reinstated and for outgoing president Klaus Iohannis, whose term expired in December, to step down. Romania now faces political uncertainty, with a new election scheduled for May 2025.



2025 Croatian presidential elections

Croatian President Zoran Milanović secured a decisive re-election victory, winning nearly 75% of the vote in the presidential election. His opponent, Dragan Primorac, backed by the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), was soundly defeated, securing only 25% of the vote, marking the party's worst-ever performance in a presidential race. While Milanović's victory was not celebrated by Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, who refused to congratulate him, Milanović has promised to extend a hand to work with the government, despite his frequent criticisms of the HDZ on issues such as corruption and healthcare.



2025 Belarusian presidential election

Belarus will hold yet another round of its 'election,' with dictator Lukashenko aiming for his seventh term. Four 'candidates' are running against him — each one a loyal supporter of his regime and his policies. As Tsikhanouskaya aptly put it back in October: Lukashenko didn't announce an election, but a date of his reelection. Since the August 2020 protests, which saw widespread election fraud and violent repression, Belarus has experienced increasing authoritarianism, with 1,245 political prisoners still detained as of January 16, 2025 (according to Viasna), and the opposition operating in exile.

**SHOULD
LATVIANS
BLAME
UKRAINIANS'
LANGUAGE
*SKILLS?***

European nation-states often see monolingualism as the norm. A single language, often argued to be the very core of their national identity, should be dominant and spoken by everyone.¹

It is the case of Latvia which, since its renewed independence in 1991, has established Latvian as the sole official language of Latvia through its constitution and in a series of language laws, notably regarding education and diverse language requirements for employment.² Latvia is an interesting case when looking at questions of majority and minority languages, as two main languages coexist: Latvian, which is spoken almost exclusively on this territory, and Russian, historically dominant but the knowledge of the language is declining, and one can hardly argue that it is a threatened language.

While the territory of Latvia had always been linguistically diverse, the Latvian language and other minority languages lost of their importance to the profit of Russian as it was incorporated into the

USSR, notably due to war losses, mass deportation and Russian-speaking immigration from other republics of the Soviet Union, followed by efforts to “russify” the country. As a result, Latvia was left with a large Russian-speaking population, a term encompassing a group far from being uniform and made up of different origins, including immigrant groups whose native language was not originally Russian, including Ukrainians. In 1989, 42% of the country’s population spoke Russian as a mother tongue and 37% today.³

From its independence onwards, Latvia was under international scrutiny throughout its democratization process.⁴ Indeed, the question of minorities – especially in the light of its citizenship law rendering 30% of the population stateless⁵ – attracted attention from both Russia and the West. To this day, no ethnic conflict has taken place in Latvia, and while the linguistic domains of Russian have been reduced, a significant part of the population speaks the language as their mother

1 This can be called a language ideology. See [Blommaert\(2006\): Language Ideology](#). and May (2012): *Language and minority rights: Ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of language*.

2 For a detailed account of Latvia’s language policy and sociolinguistic landscape, see [Hogan-Brun et al.\(2008\): Language Politics and Practices in the Baltic States](#).

3 Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, [1991, 2023](#).

4 Galbreath, D. J., & Muižnieks, N(2008). Latvia: managing post-imperial minorities.

5 [Pavlenko, A.\(2008\)](#). Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries.

tongue, especially in the capital, Riga, and the eastern parts of the country, notably Latgale.⁶

In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Latvia provided significant military support and welcomed a large number of refugees. The numbers might seem limited in absolute amount compared to countries like Poland, but I estimate that Ukrainian refugees could represent up to 2.4% of Latvia's population at the moment (based on the latest UNHCR figures).⁷ Owing to Ukraine's (and Latvia's) widespread knowledge of Russian,⁸ Ukrainian refugees in Latvia mostly use Russian to communicate in the country.

This creates a somewhat paradoxical situation: Latvia is a staunch supporter of Ukraine and recent research points towards an overall positive perception of Ukrainian refugees⁹, but the increased use of Russian in the country might undermine three decades of language policy efforts aiming at reducing the place of Russian. In parallel, the attitude towards the Russian language is increasingly negative and associated with authoritarianism, imperialism and war. For my master's thesis, and in an effort

to understand the situation better, I dove into this question and conducted interviews with representatives of a wide variety of stakeholders: NGOs, think tanks, researchers and different Latvian ministries.

I observed a significant discrepancy between discourses about languages and practices. Indeed, Russian is widely used between Latvians and Ukrainians, as confirmed by many representatives of NGOs who report almost exclusively relying on Russian. Regardless, the Latvian state usually avoids mentioning Russian or shows an attempt to reduce its use. As such, there is officially no intent to leverage the knowledge of Russian in providing assistance and helping the integration of Ukrainians. In addition, most people I talked to had a very negative perception of Russian, and emphasized the importance of learning Latvian for Ukrainian refugees.

Ukrainians are perceived radically differently than other refugee groups¹⁰, and their use of Russian is usually widely understood

6 Druviete et al. (2022): Language situation in Latvia 2016–2020.

7 [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. \(2024a, November 18\). Ukraine refugee situation](#) (Nov 2024).

8 Ivanova (2023): Sociolinguistics in Ukraine.

9 Meilija, D. (2024): *Ukrainas bēgļi Latvijā: pieejamie dati, pieredze un sabiedrības attieksme*.

10 See for instance the case of the activist Ieva Raubiško, currently on trial for helping asylum seekers. [Latvian Activist Who Helped Asylum Seekers Waits for Court Verdict Thursday](#) (2024).




as opposed to other Russian-speakers in Latvia.

There is a widely shared sense of empathy for Ukrainians, which risks fading in the upcoming years if Ukrainians are not perceived as making “efforts” to learn the language sufficiently – and are seen as relying on Russian too much, or not showing the “respect” for the nation that some would like to see. I suggest however not to overestimate the impact of Ukrainian refugees on the use of Russian in Latvia, as there is very little interaction between Latvians and Ukrainians.

While the Russian language provided opportunities for social inclusion for many Ukrainians, it increasingly became a symbol of Putin’s aggression – and more widely Russian imperialism. Minority language questions in Latvia are complex, and languages are symbolically charged. It is difficult to resolve the tension between the need to accommodate minorities in a multicultural approach while taking into account the perception of Russian and the threat caused by Russia, as well as the need to historicise the current situation. That being said, the arrival of Ukrainian

refugees has created an increasingly multilingual environment in Latvia.

Policy aiming to accommodate minority languages in Latvia would also benefit Ukrainians and the preservation of their language(s). In addition, Latvia's declining population makes immigration one of the few viable ways to reverse its declining population number, emphasizing the importance of inclusive language policies. That would certainly require moving beyond official monolingualism and embracing more multilingual practices, allowing minority languages to flourish. The question from there is, how do we make languages coexist and allow both Latvian and other languages to prosper? 

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a dirt road curves through a field of dry, brownish vegetation. To the right, a stone tower or structure is visible. The middle ground shows a mix of green and brown fields, with a small pond or water body. In the background, there are rolling hills and a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds.

STRANDED

CLOSED

Armenia's H



BEYOND

BORDERS

Heritage Sites

Armenian monastery Khor Virap.

It was late November, and my friend and I sat on a bench at the Khor Virap Monastery in Armenia, gazing at the silhouette of Mount Ararat. Long a symbol of Armenia's cultural identity, the mountain now stands in quiet exile across the closed Turkish Armenian border. The scene carried a strange irony—this was the end of our two-week journey through the Caucasus, yet we found ourselves looking back, quite literally, at where it all began.

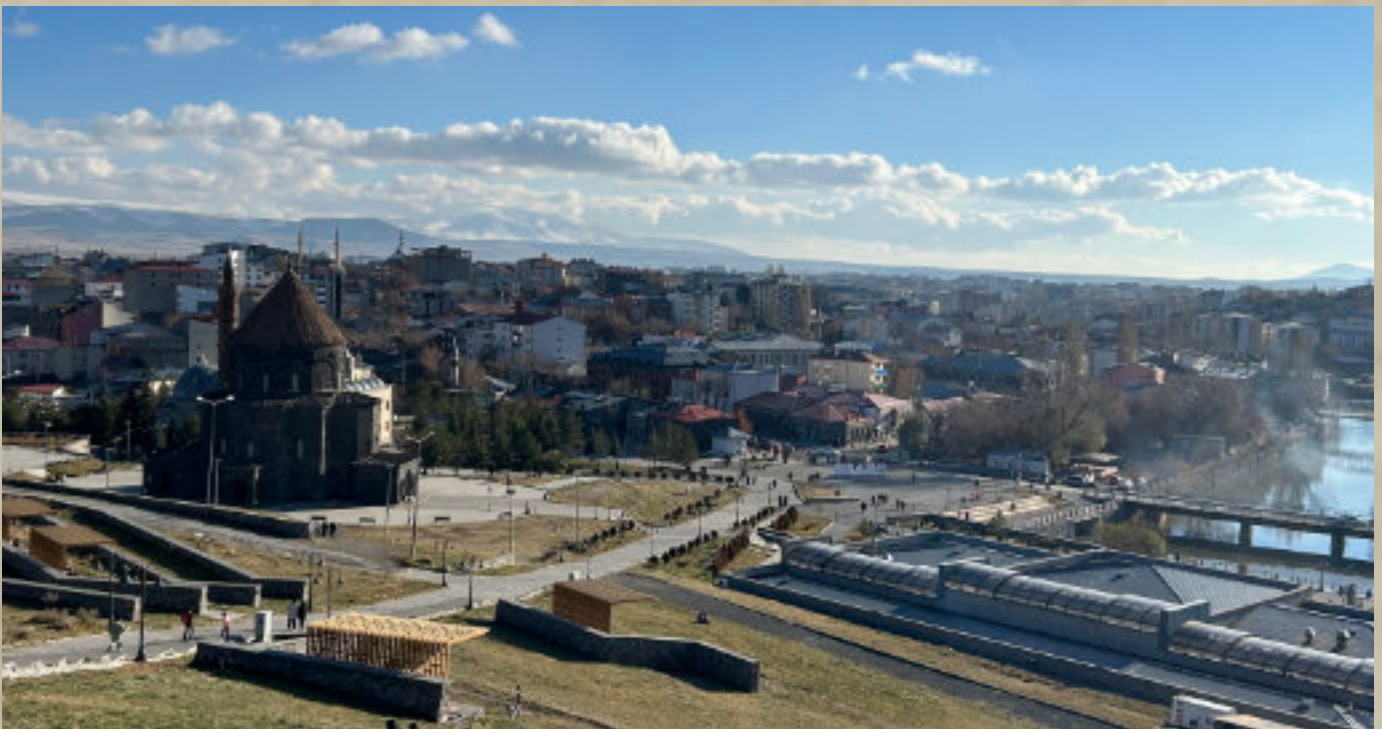
Our trip had started in Ankara, Turkey, with the goal of reaching Armenia overland. What could have been a straight-forward crossing turned into a necessary detour through Georgia, thanks to the ever-present realities of geo-

politics. The closed border between Armenia and Turkey made any direct route impossible.

Ten days before our visit to Khor Virap, 140 kilometres to the north, we stood among the ruins of Ani, the ancient capital of Bagratid Armenia, now located in Turkey's Kars province. Overlooking the ravine separating Turkey from Armenia, we were once again confronted by a closed border. Like the Turkish Armenian border at Khor Virap, the site was quiet, with little sign of military presence beyond a fence and a lone guard post on the Armenian side.

While it's not uncommon for borders to shift or for cultural heritage to be stranded beyond

Even the ruins that survived faced neglect, vandalism, or deliberate efforts to erase their Armenian identity.



View on the Turkish city of Kars.

modern boundaries, Armenia's case is particularly poignant. Once a sprawling empire stretching from the Caucasus to the Medi-terranean, Armenia's territories were gradually divided and absorbed by competing powers, including the Ottoman, Russian, and Persian Empires. Despite these changes, Armenian communities remained vibrant and integral to society, particularly within the Ottoman Empire, where they made significant cultural, economic, and political contributions.

This role came to a devastating end in 1915 with the onset of the Armenian Genocide. Over 1.5 million Armenians were systematically killed, and countless others were forced into exile, forming the modern Armenian diaspora.

Cities historically populated by Armenians—such as Kars, Van, and Erzincan—were emptied of their Armenian inhabitants and subsequently Turkified, erasing centuries of cultural and demographic history. Thousands of Armenian churches, monasteries, and monuments were destroyed, their stones repurposed or left to decay, and the cultural landscape of the region was

irrevocably altered. Even the ruins that survived faced neglect, vandalism, or deliberate efforts to erase their Armenian identity. Decades later, the genocide remains a point of contention, with its recognition still

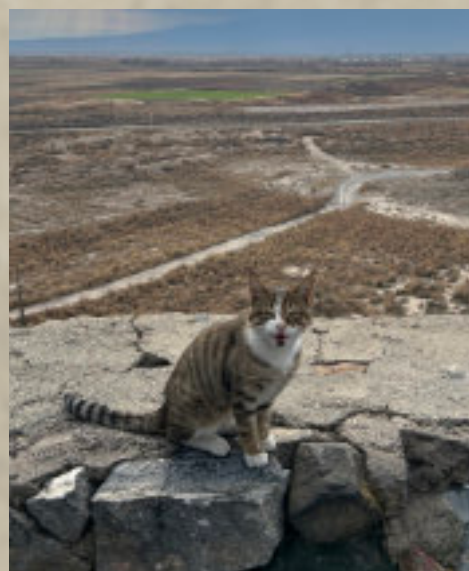
Over 1.5 million Armenians were systematically killed, countless others forced into exile.

controversial in many parts of the world, particularly in Turkey. This denialism is chillingly encapsulated in Adolf Hitler's infamous remark a week before Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

The closed border between Armenia and Turkey is not merely a geopolitical reality but a symbolic rift in history and identity. Following Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, hopes of easing border restrictions were quickly dashed. In 1993, Turkey sealed its border and severed diplomatic ties in response to Armenia's support for

Nagorno-Karabakh during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. Since then, the land border has remained closed, with sporadic and largely symbolic attempts at normalization.


In 2021, special envoys were appointed to reignite dialogue. Progress seemed promising in 2022, with limited agreements to resume flights between Istanbul and Yerevan. A rare moment of cooperation came in February 2023, when Armenian trucks carrying humanitarian aid crossed the closed border to assist Turkish earthquake victims. Yet this goodwill was short-lived. By late 2023, domestic political pressures and Turkey's unwavering alliance with Azerbaijan stalled further efforts at reconciliation.



Armenian-Turkish border Khor Birap.

And what of the heritage sites stranded beyond these closed borders? The answer is layered and complex. Take the ruins of Ani, for instance—a city once hailed as the "City of 1,001 Churches" and a vibrant center of Armenian civilization. After decades of neglect, during which the ruins were left to deteriorate in a restricted military zone, preservation efforts have finally begun. However, these efforts often come with little acknowledgment of Ani's Armenian heritage, instead framing it as part of a broader, non-specific "Anatolian" legacy.

The Cathedral of Kars, built in the 10th century during the Bagratid Armenian Kingdom, was left abandoned for decades, intermittently used as a petrol depot, and was eventually repurposed into a mosque with the blessing of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Mount Ararat, visible across Yerevan on a cloudless day, stands physically out of reach, save for those who are willing to go via Georgia and obtain the necessary permits to climb the mountain from the Turkish side.

Overall, it represents a particularly poignant symbol of the Armenian experience—a land and history claimed, reshaped, and often rendered inaccessible by the forces of geo-politics and historical erasure. These cultural heritage sites being more than physical structures but repositories of memory, identity, and resilience. In terms of what the future holds for these sites, the outlook is as complex as the histories they represent. The future of Armenia's stranded heritage hinges on several factors, including regional geopolitics, international advocacy, and the evolving narratives around identity and historical justice, many of which lie beyond Armenia's direct control. 

Ruins of Ani in Eastern Turkey (left) and the Armenian-Turkish Border (right).

The future of Armenia's stranded heritage hinges on several factors, many of which lie beyond Armenia's direct control.



FROM SOVIET PATRIOTISM TO NONCONFORMIST INTELLECTUAL AND DISSIDENT:



N A D I I A SVITLYCHNA AND THE *SHISTDESIATNYTSTVO*

Text — Sierra Salazar

The period following Joseph Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, marked significant shifts within Soviet society towards de-Stalinization and was referred to more broadly as the "Thaw." Policies loosening repression and censorship, including the draining of the Gulag system, at first paved the way for a new cultural generation who grasped on to the rhetoric of liberation sparked following Nikita Khrushchev's so-called "secret speech" at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). There, during a closed session in the Twentieth Congress's final day, Khrushchev

denounced Stalin and his crimes, and split Stalin far from the ideals of Vladimir Lenin—including "gross violations of Leninist principles of nationality policy."¹ These seemingly massive steps towards the liberalization of Soviet society were met with a creeping re-Stalinization, traces of Stalinist speech still present even in the latter Fourth Congress of the Writers of Ukraine (SPU) in 1959, as the need for honesty in Soviet literature was heavily emphasized yet met with warning from then chairman of the SPU, Mykola Bazhan, as not to take advantage of the denunciation of the Stalinist cult of personality.²

On cover page: Nadiia Svitlychna (left) and Alla Horska (right). Mariupol, 1967.

In the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), artists from mostly rural backgrounds born between the 1920s to 1930s took this opportunity into their hands in the following years, amalgamating in clubs of creative youth across Ukraine, such as the "Suchasnyk" Club of Creative Youth (KTM) and the "Prolisok" Club of Creative Youth. The non-conformist intellectuals primarily from the Ukrainian countryside, deriving from a variety of artistic and educational backgrounds, gathered around the development and defense of self expression, subjectivity, personal realization through art, and freedom of expression.³ Rejecting homogenization and promoting open debate and discussion primarily through literary and artistic formats, this intellectual and cultural movement would become known as the *shistdesiatnytstvo* ("Sixtiers" movement). Notable among them are individuals such as Ivan Dziuba, Alla Horska, Ivan Svitlychny, Viacheslav Chornovil, and Lina Kostenko. The unrealized promise of Khrushchev's liberalization policies and later crackdowns on intellectuals in the mid- to late 1960s pushed many of the *shistdesiatnyky* towards full-blown dissent, furthermore after the 1971-1972 wave of arrests. This movement was certainly not destined to move towards dissent, as they almost always argued against the actions of the Soviet authorities within the framework of Marxism-Leninism and Soviet legality, as individuals raised entirely within the Soviet education and many being (at first) firm believ-

ers of communism. The *shistdesiatnyky*'s hope and belief that the Soviet authorities might defend them continued for many until they were forced to a path of dissent or, oftentimes, recantation.⁴ After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, ending the Prague Spring, most of these hopes were utterly squashed.

Such among these non-comfortist intellectuals who turned towards dissent was Nadiia Svitlychna, born in the countryside of the Luhansk Oblast, Ukrainian SSR, in 1936. She became one of the most crucial figures of the dissident movement—and yet, arguably one of the most undervalued in contemporary literature. Although her name is not typically at the center of the historiography of the *shistdesiatnytstvo* and the later dissident movement, it is always 'behind the scenes' that her name appears: in the editing and publishing of other dissidents' memoirs and works, in the collection of various materials of human rights abuses to create a museum for the repressed, and the dissemination of other critical literary pieces among her many selfless contributions.⁵

During her interview after leaving the Soviet Union for Italy on her way for the USA, Svitlychna stated she was once a prideful Soviet citizen, saying she believed "everything that was Soviet was the best, the Soviet freedom was the greatest freedom in the world [...] one should believe every letter in the Soviet Constitution."⁶ She has frequently stated in interviews she was once an active, adamant mem-

ber of the Komsomol, the Soviet youth organization.⁷ At Kharkiv University until 1958, she studied Ukrainian language and literature, becoming a philologist by training—which she would later cite as being another core reason for her persecution by the Soviet authorities, given her profession's allegedly inherent ideological nature.⁸ Shortly after arriving in Kyiv in 1964 and establishing a job on an editorial board for a technical college, she connected with other intellectuals through her brother, Ivan Svitlychny, and the KTM. Among them was Alla Hor-

She became one of the most crucial figures of the dissident movement—and yet, arguably one of the most undervalued in contemporary literature.

ska, who became one of her closest friends and whom she would later teach Ukrainian to.⁹

As repression from the Soviet authorities increased, so did the organization of the shistdesiatnyky in order to abide by their principles of truthfulness and open discussion, often with many disseminating theirs and others' works through networks of uncensored material (samvydav). As the gradual re-Stalinization took hold—culminating in the closure of the KTM in 1964 and the initial arrests of 1965-66—the social networks and friendships formed among the shistdesiatnyky evolved into what shistdesiatnytstvo scholar Simone Attilio Bellezza describes as "solidarity networks" and uses the concept of kompaniia to describe such, introduced by Liudmila Alexeyeva and furthered by Juliane Fürst as "an experimental space that reorganized the relationship between the public and private spheres."¹⁰ These networks enabled the intellectuals to continue their discussions in various apartments and provided mutual support to the repressed and their families to resist and recover from the increasingly severe repressions. This also provided other forms of support, such as through attending each others' trials and recording the unofficial minutes there.¹¹ As aforementioned, their resistance—Svitlychna included—entailed working through Soviet legality and Marxism-Leninism in order to express the authority's violation of the former and deviation from the latter, particularly in the case of Lenin's



A photo taken by a KGB officer in a file dated 1 December 1976. One of the few remaining files on Alla Horska. In the photo, according to the KGB file, Nadiia Svitlychna organized the memorial to place viburnum on her grave. Together with the attendees, they sang carols and songs from the choir "Homin"—a choir founded in 1969 and forcibly disbanded in 1971.

nationality policy and when addressing Russian chauvinism.

The arrests marked a significant turning point for Svitlychna: her brother had been arrested in 1965. In her first interview after leaving the USSR, she repeatedly emphasized the repression of her family and friends pushing her towards the path of dissent, as well as her own subsequent repression merely for her family ties. She stated, "It [being sacked from jobs] happened many times, especially when my brother was imprisoned, it was not

because of my activity for there was no activity as such, not because of my involvement in the human-rights movement for there was none, but because of my family-name. Because I dared to have the same family-name as my brother. And that was an unannounced reason for the persecution."¹² Despite the harsh repressions of herself and her family, she managed to continue partaking in the cultural movement and supporting others arrested through their solidarity networks built over the years prior.¹³



Nadiia Svitlychna's headshot, taken by the KGB, during her arrest in 1972.

In 1970, the brutal murder of her close friend Alla Horská sharply intensified Svitlychna's opposition to the Soviet authorities. While she had already been involved in the human rights movement since 1965, this tragedy seems to have been the decisive moment that pushed her fully into dissent. Not only was she among those who found Horská's body, she also cleaned her friend's wounds and prepared her for burial.¹⁴ Svitlychna did not at first attribute the murder to the KGB as

the rumor had spread of such, yet with time, recalled gradually came closer to this conclusion.

"At first, the rumor that the KGB was involved in her murder was very popular. But at that time, I was positively against the very possibility of such involvement. I said that the KGB was allegedly guilty of all sins. People want to ascribe even this tragedy to the KGB. Though after some time, I noticed some circumstances, details of the investigation and concluded that it could really

*have happened with the KGB involvement."*¹⁵

According to Svitlychna, the KGB even considered visits to her deceased friend's grave as "gatherings" and "activity."¹⁶ In the remaining few KGB files on Alla Horska at the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU)'s archive, a letter dated November 29, 1971, from the KGB to Petro Shelest, First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party refers to the commemoration of Alla Horska's passing by her friends as "the intention of na-

tionalists to celebrate the anniversary of the death of [Horska]" and states the heightened surveillance to prevent "unwanted actions" from Ivan Svitlychny, Ivan Dziuba, Oksana Franko, Yevhen Svetsiuk, Vadym Smohytel, and Halyna Sevruc.¹⁷ Svitlychna was arrested among the next wave of arrests between 1971-1972, charged under Article 62-1 "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda," and sent to a women's labor camp in Barashevo, Mordovia SSR, until 1976. As a result, her two-year-old son, Yarema, was placed in an

Photo taken prior to Svitlychna's departure to the USA. From left to right: Oksana Meshko, Vira Lisova, Mykhailna Kotsiubynska, Nadiia Svitlychna, Darka Husyak, Mykhailo Horyn, Atena Pashko, Valentina Chornovil.



*The path to
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orphanage.¹⁸ To resist the degrading treatment by authorities within the camp and to maintain activities "[...] for their own souls and for other people," Svitlychna and fellow Ukrainian women inmates turned to their artistry and intellect: Nina Strokata, a microbiologist, worked on a dictionary of microbiological terms; Iryna Kalynets and Orysia Senyk both composed poetry, the latter embroidered. Where she could, Svitlychna aided them in editing and cooperating on their works. However, they were not allowed to take the works out of the camp and oftentimes had them taken away while there, leading to hunger strikes by the women for their return.¹⁹ After her release, Svitlychna was harassed by the KGB, constantly under surveillance, and struggled to find a place to live with her child— forbidden to return to her previous apartment. Svitlychna renounced her Soviet

citizenship in a letter to the CC CPSU, stating,

"I am now free—'as free as a dog on a leash'—perhaps less so, for at least a collar is not a noose. And as a free person, as the mother of her child, today, on Human Rights Day, I declare with full responsibility that after all these experiences, I consider it beneath human dignity to be a citizen of the world's largest, most powerful, most perfect concentration camp."²⁰

After Svitlychna renounced her citizenship in 1976 and left the USSR in 1978, she worked for Radio Liberty from 1983 to 1994 and founded the External Representation for the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, where she regularly published the Herald of Repression from 1980-1985 documenting human rights violations in Soviet Ukraine from abroad.²¹ Yet her work did not stop there, as she actively collected material (photographing, saving prison uniforms of friends returning from the prison camps) to establish the Sixtiers Museum in Kyiv, Ukraine, was an editor for the women's magazine Vera, and published numerous editions and collections on fellow dissidents.²²

The path to dissent was not so inevitable for those who later partook in it: this small excerpt on Nadiia Svitlychna shows just that, even in her own words. The human rights movement organized most promin-

ently in the form of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group (UHG) in 1976, which contained individuals from various movements, ideological backgrounds, and streams of Ukrainian nationalism. For the cultural movement that was the *shistdesiatnytstvo*, dissidence was certainly not the only path that its members embarked upon. In fact, it was largely over by the time that a more organized dissident movement grew. As Bellezza argues, whilst several *shistdesiatnyky* became leading dissidents and politicians, the cultural

movement itself lacked the necessary leadership and ideological consensus to evolve into a political movement. However, the UHG and human rights activists learned from the *shistdesiatnyky*, such as the strategy of utilizing the Soviet constitution and legality to argue their rights. Even more, they learned from their intellect and artistic works, which illuminated Ukrainian society and literature with their values of individualism, honesty, openness, and the emotional and spiritual dimensions of human existence.


У світі пощесті і змору,
Німотності і глухоти,
Де мудрі муштрою мінти
лічують душі без розбору.
Там пісня, витвір висоти,
Свободи й пружного простору
Шугнула вільним птахом вгору
У вир! У небо! У світи!

Іван Світличний,

уринок з вірша «Лебедина
пісня», присвяченого Надії
Світличній.

*In a world of plague and weariness,
Of muteness and deafness,
Where the "wise" with their drill
Count souls without discernment.
There, a song, a creation of heights,
Of freedom and elastic space,
Soared up, a free bird,
Into the maelstrom! Into the sky! Into
the worlds!*

Ivan Svitlychnyi,

An excerpt from the poem "Swan
Song" dedicated to Nadiia
Svitlychna.²³ 

For full list of references, bibliography and photo credits, follow this link.

<https://tinyurl.com/gazetasasha>

*The cover of the KGB
investigation file on
Nadiia Svitlychna.*

Слідчий відділ КДБ при РМ УРСР

(наименование органа КГБ)

АРХИВ

РОЗСЕКРЕЧЕНО

№ 04 от 20/11р. № 24/35/4-313

10-го отдела КГБ при СМ УССР

УГОЛОВНЫЙ ФОНД

УГОЛОВНОЕ ДЕЛО №

53

по обвинению *Світличної Надії Олексіївни*
за ст. 62 ч. 1 РК УРСР.

Начато *10 березня* 1972 г.

Окончено *лютого* 1973 г.

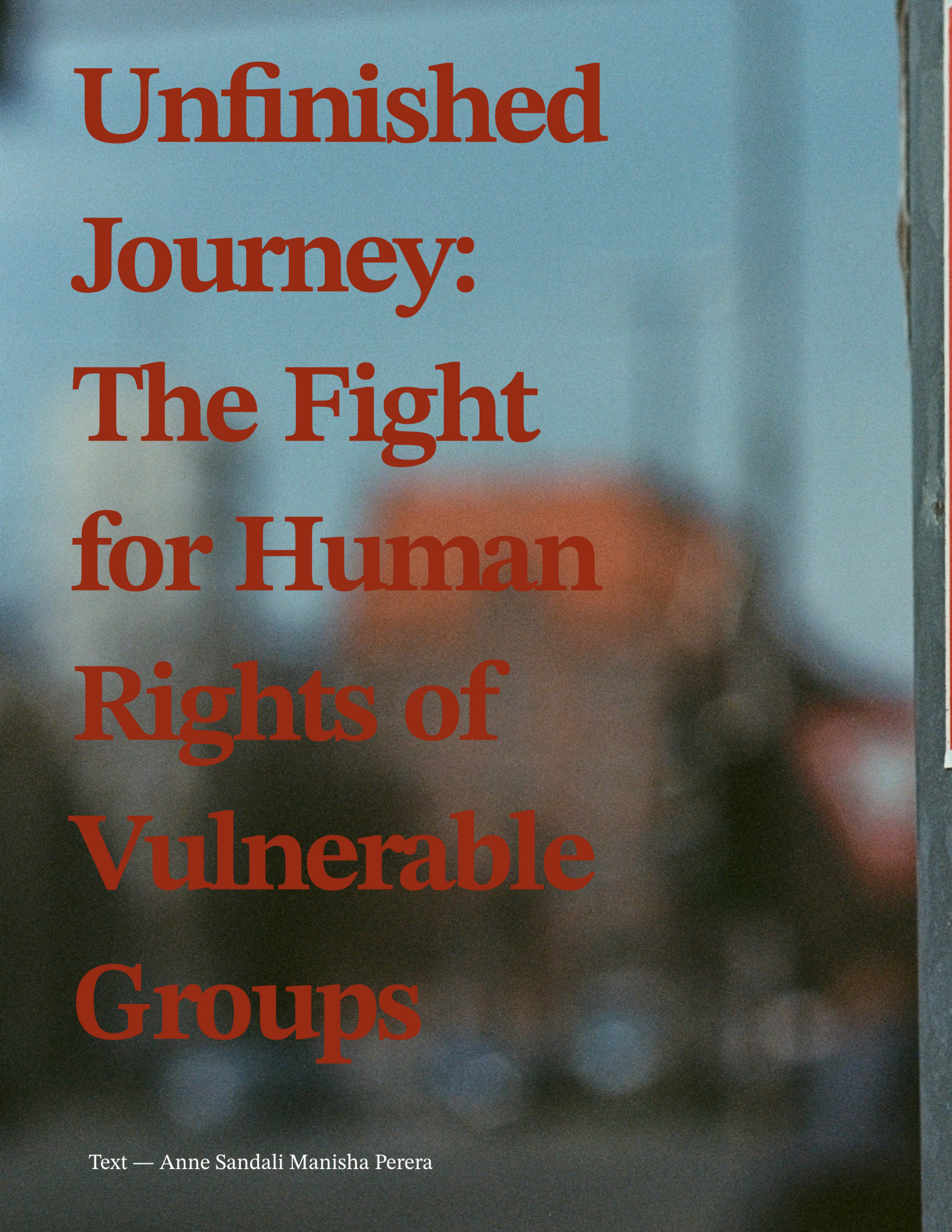
В **15** томах

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Сдано в архив **70958 фп**



Unfinished Journey: The Fight for Human Rights of Vulnerable Groups

Text — Anne Sandali Manisha Perera

E V E R Y

HUMAN

H A S

RIGHTS

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world..."

Preamble of The Declaration of Human Rights

Human rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible, meaning that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms regardless of race, color, religion, language, or political opinion. Given this, it is crucial to ensure that the rights of all individuals are protected. However, the failure to uphold these rights for vulnerable groups reflects a significant gap in safeguarding fundamental freedoms. The vulnerable groups are usually termed at-risk or disadvantaged populations, and include children, women, pregnant women, the elderly, refugees, prisoners, persons with disabilities, and those who are affected by addictions among others. These are groups that have special care and attention owing to their vulnerability and frequent denial of rights. As a result, human rights advocates emphasize the need for focused efforts to address the specific challenges faced by these groups and ensure their rights

are fully recognized and protected.

Women are one of the most vulnerable groups and have always been the most vulnerable since time immemorial, owing to historical and contemporary gender inequalities. This was denying the women their equal opportunity, an event that led to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1981. This historical convention took the central position of granting women equal opportunities with men in matters regarding education, employment, politics, and civil issues. Although much has been achieved, the struggle for women's rights remains an ongoing battle in many regions of the world, and CEDAW provides a foundation for advancing gender equality.

Children also need special protection because they are weak and developing. The Convention on the Rights of the

Child was adopted in 1989 to meet the specific needs of children by setting global standards for their protection and well-being. This convention recognizes the rights of children to education, health, and protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The convention also respects the right of children to be involved in any matter that may affect them with due regard to their evolving capacities.

The other vulnerable group is persons with disabilities. They need special protection and support because they face severe challenges in fully participating in society. They need special care and accommodations to enhance their potential. Therefore, in 1975, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted. The declaration provides a framework in order to ensure the rights of such persons, and this declaration mentions rights like access to medical and functional treatment, suitable education, vocational training, economic and social security, etc. It also calls for protection against exploitation, abuse, and discrimination, underlining the importance of creating inclusive societies where persons with disabilities can live with dignity and equality.

International law has come a long way in protecting the rights of vulnerable groups through these conventions: CEDAW, the CRC, and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, more needs to be done to effectively implement and respect these rights

in all parts of the world so that no one is left behind in their pursuit of equality, dignity, and justice.

The conventions the CEDAW, the CRC, and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among others have been successful enough in raising people's awareness to provide a legal framework for protection of vulnerable groups. International accords have helped facilitate legal reforms, policy, and programming towards equality, children, and persons with disabilities. For instance, improvements in child welfare in many countries, such as greater access to education and health services, can be attributed to the CRC.

But the harsh truth is that it has not been easy implementing the conventions in their entirety. In reality, the situation still presents gender inequalities, women still experience violence, discrimination, and less access to opportunities in certain areas. Similarly, while many countries have made strides in children's rights, millions of children still suffer from poverty, exploitation, and lack of education, especially in conflict zones or underdeveloped nations. People with disabilities, despite legal protections, often face social stigma, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to employment and healthcare.

In Central Asia, several countries including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan are not very considerate of protecting the


rights of humans against violations concerning vulnerable groups of the population, despite such international frameworks as CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of the most prominent examples is the status of women in Central Asia. Women in much of the region are exposed to widespread gender-based violence, lack of access to education and healthcare, and employment and political discrimination. In Uzbekistan, women are underrepresented in leadership positions, and despite existing laws, domestic violence is widespread. The non-application of the law leaves women vulnerable to discrimination and abuse at the hands of society. Similarly, child labor remains a serious problem in Central Asia, and thousands of children are still made to work during the annual cotton harvest in Uzbekistan. While the government committed itself to ending child labor, unfortunately, children continue to work in hazardous conditions instead of going to school. There is also a great deal of neglect concerning persons with disabilities. In Turkmenistan, many persons with disabilities face serious obstacles in their access to education, healthcare,

and employment. The physical and social infrastructure remains inadequate, and persons with disabilities often experience discrimination, hindering their integration into society.

Without sustained effort, the journey toward universal human rights and equality for all remains incomplete.

These are ongoing issues that point to the gap between international human rights agreements and their implementation on the ground. This example shows how far the practice is from the standards of international human rights and testifies to the need for systemic change. In as much as there are laws and conventions, turning them into meaningful changes requires political will, stronger enforcement, and changes in culture to deal with gender inequality, child labor, and discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Meanwhile, international instruments such as CEDAW, the CRC, and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have made a great mark in raising awareness and building a legal framework, yet their implementation remains inconsistent and generally inadequate across much of the region, including Central Asia. However, women remain vic-

tims of serious systemic discrimination, gender-based violence, and are denied opportunities in life. Children are still highly vulnerable to exploitation through labor. People with disabilities face many barriers to full participation in society and are often neglected and discriminated against. These issues underpin the gap between international human rights standards and real-world practices. Stronger political will, effective enforcement of laws, and cultural shifts are all required to make a difference. The challenges related to vulnerable groups need a systematic approach that not only ensures legal protection but also fosters societal inclusion and respect for dignity. Without sustained effort, the journey toward universal human rights and equality for all remains incomplete. 

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HOROSCOPE

Welcome to the 2025 horoscope.
Here, you will find your fate...

Aries

March 21 – April 19

This year is all about the competition, and you're going to love it! After all, you want to be the number 1 forever and in everything. You've got that athlete element in you, just like Maria Sharapova, a Russian tennis player and a former world's no.1, does. So, there is a lot of success for you this year. You're going to bathe in it. But be careful. The imposter syndrome might catch up with you once you start overthinking and analysing your actions. In those situations, think about what the logic says. Logic is what matters. Look up at Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Azerbaijani chess grandmaster and the sixth-highest-rated player in chess history. A moment of unbelievable luck is ahead of you, the only issue is it's in Sweden. So, you might want to consider going to the Ice Hockey World Championships in Stockholm in May. And you might see the Elvis Presley of ice hockey - Elvis Merzļikins, Latvian ice hockey player. But hey, no promises.

1. Maria Sharapova, April 19, 1987
2. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, 12 April 1985
3. Elvis Merzļikins 13 April 1994

Gemini

May 21 – June 20

It's your time to be a leader, not to be a loser. You can do anything! Take an example from your Gemini friends Viktor Orbán, prime minister of Hungary, and Maia Sandu, president of Moldova. As you climb the ladder of success, the faith will throw you a challenge. Yet, you will persevere and show your adaptability while charming your friends and fans?! along the way. Just like Iga Świątek, Polish tennis player & no 2 in the world, does. Oh and last but def not least, add wine to your diet.

Taurus

April 20 – May 20

This year, similarly to Mr Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, a chapter of your life will close, and you will need to embark on a new journey. You will also say goodbye to the harrowing mistakes of the past, and try to rebuild your life just like Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazakhstan's president since 2019, is doing it now in Kazakhstan. Thankfully, as you share Taurus sign with Belarusian tennis player Aryna Sabalenka, currently the world's no.1, you will experience a lot of cheerful moments and victories in life. Just be careful, you don't want to get a nasty injury...

Your Taurus friends:

1. Andrzej Duda May 16, 1972
2. Aryna Sabalenka, May 5, 1998
3. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, May 17, 1953

Your Gemini friends:

1. Iga Świątek, May 31, 2001
2. Viktor Orbán, May 31, 1963
3. Maia Sandu, May 24, 1972

Cancer

June 21 – July 22

2025 is all about finding new passions. Because nothing can compare to your drive when you're passionate about something. You could do sports, e.g. judo like Diyora Keldiyorova, an Uzbek judoka and golden medallist in 2024 Olympics. If you're more of an intellectual, perhaps a position as a head of state is more appealing. If you need inspiration, just look at Nursultan Nazarbayev, the former president of Kazakhstan, who was the head of state for 30 years. Not bad, huh. Yet, being so passionate must be exhausting, especially as you're going to have communications struggles this year. Perhaps, expressing your feelings through film or literature is an option for you, then. You could be another Nana Ekvimishvili, a Georgian director and writer.

Your Cancer friends:

1. Diyora Keldiyorova, July 13, 1998
2. Nursultan Nazarbayev, July 6, 1940
3. Nana Ekvimishvili, 9 July, 1978

Virgo

August 23 – September 22

The state of 2025 has been rough for you so far. Still, you have more challenges to face, exactly like Aleksandr Lukashenko, the president of Belarus. But don't worry, just like Sasha in Minsk, you will win and succeed no matter the dubious circumstances. After this expected tumultuous start of the year, you might want to consider some time away and solitude. If you need inspiration, look at Serdar Berdimuhamedow, president of Turkmenistan, and how isolated from strangers his country is. Alternatively, the birthplace of one of the greatest midfielders (in football) of all time - Luka Modrić - might bring you the deserved peace and quiet.

Your Virgo friends:

1. Aleksandr Lukashenko, August 30, 1954
2. Serdar Berdimuhamedow, 22 September 1981
3. Luka Modrić, September 9, 1985

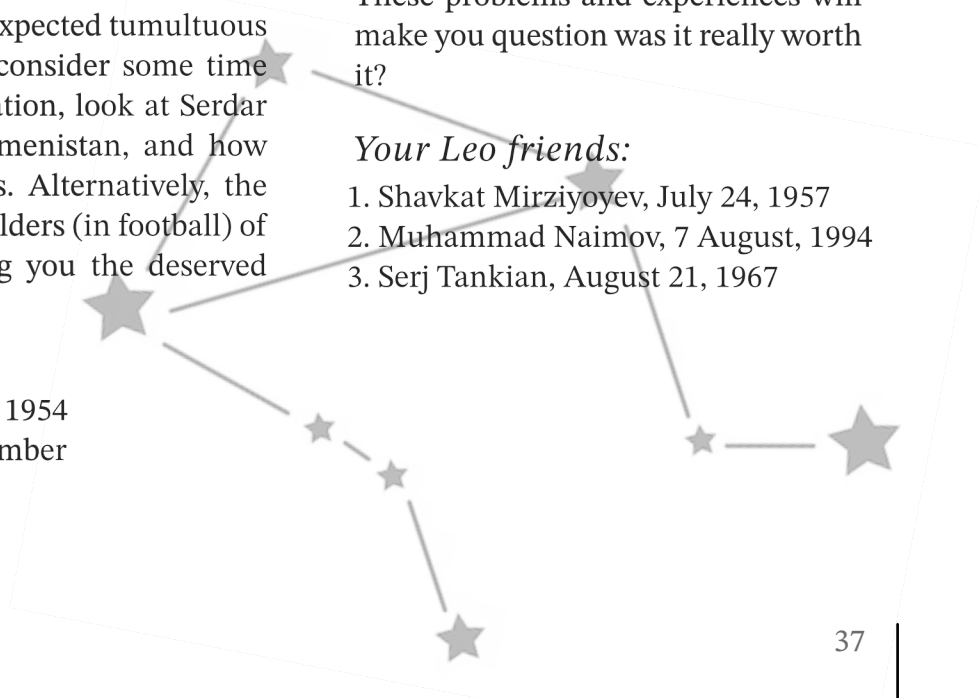
Leo

July 23 – August 22

Your confidence seems to be fading as you are losing your identity. You no longer enjoy the spotlight, but you miss being in the centre of attention. Yet, it is impossible until you find your new and better identity but dominant, nonetheless. While you're on an identity search, check up a fellow Leo Serj Tankian, an Armenian-American musician and activist, for inspiration. He combines both the USA and Armenia into one identity. Despite the hardships, you will remain a dominant personality. Perhaps, you will show your dominance in the ring as Muhammad Naimov, a Tajik MMA fighter, would. As you will change, you will experience new problems that will question your desire to change. Just as Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the president of Uzbekistan and so-called reformer, has been experiencing since taking the power. These problems and experiences will make you question was it really worth it?

Your Leo friends:

1. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, July 24, 1957
2. Muhammad Naimov, 7 August, 1994
3. Serj Tankian, August 21, 1967



Libra

September 23 – October 22

New year, new me. You had ambitions, didn't you? But the beginning of 2025 has not treated you nicely. It's okay, you can always try next year again. Have some chocolate, maybe a Roshen chocolate. This is exactly what your Libra friend, Petro Poroshenko, a former president of Ukraine and a chocolate magnate, would do. And if you are in need of relaxation tips for this year, don't look further than Lech Wałęsa, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and a former president of Poland. Just book a trip to a SPA town and get in that jacuzzi! Finally, if you require a lesson on patience, don't look further than Vladimir Putin - after all, 3 days became 3 years. Time flies, doesn't it!



Your Libra friends:

1. Vladimir Putin, October 7, 1952
2. Lech Wałęsa, September 29, 1943
3. Petro Poroshenko, September 26, 1965

Scorpio

October 23 – November 21

Abundance - this is your word for 2025. The stars have been looking out for you, and a monetary reward is on its way. It's time to build that generational wealth! It can't be any other way, since a fellow Scorpio Tommy Cash, an Estonian rapper and singer, might be going to the Eurovision 2025 making big bucks. But don't get too vain and sure of yourself. You never know where the downfall is. Roman Abramovich has found out about it the hard way. Goodbye, Chelsea FC. Speaking of sports, Rokas Jokubaitis, Lithuanian professional basketball player, should be your inspiration this year to get off the couch and go to the gym. You do need this. Finally, despite the darkness, it is advised that you limit the consumption of Espresso Macchiato and Espresso Martini this year.



Your Scorpio friends:

1. Tommy Cash, November 18, 1991
2. Roman Abramovich, October 24, 1966
3. Rokas Jokubaitis, 19 November, 2000.



Sagittarius

November 22 – December 21

You're going to be the star this year, although you will shine the brightest in December. Precisely like an iconic Polish signer Maryla Rodowicz does every year. So, it is time for you to simply embrace being iconic. However, this will cost you as you will get close to the physical limits of your body, just like Nariman Kurbanov, the 2024 Olympic silver medallist in gymnastics from Kazakhstan. Relax, this is fine if you approach it as Marina Abramović would, a Serbian performance artist, and treat it simply like a piece of art. After all, you only live once.

Your Sagittarius friends:

- Maryla Rodowicz, December 8, 1945
- Nariman Kurbanov, 6 December 1997
- Marina Abramović, November 30, 1946

Capricorn

December 22 – January 19

You've set yourself goals for this year. You'll do everything you can to fulfil these goals. Whether it's exercise or doing your homework, you can do it, but please forgive others' mistakes and faults. Next months will also be full of music, good and bad. A fun concert is ahead of you, and perhaps you will embrace the inner musician in you. Thank your Capricorn patrons for this year: Levon Malkhasyan Malkhas, an Armenian Jazz musician, and Andrzej Piaseczny, a Polish singer and celebrity. Nevertheless, art is not everything in life. So, remember to move and get these steps in as probably Linas Kleiza, a former Lithuanian basketball player, is doing so right now!

Your Capricorn friends:

1. Levon Malkhasyan, 1 January, 1945
2. Linas Kleiza, January 3, 1985
3. Andrzej Piaseczny, 6 January, 1971

Pisces

February 19 – March 20

Just like Natalia Vodianova, Russian supermodel, you will enjoy a more luxurious and lavish life, although let's be real with limits in this economy. Perhaps, a trip to Paris and truly great and greater things are ahead of you. So just like Aleksandar Vučić, the president of Serbia, you will enjoy the greater things in life. And if you start losing your identity in all of this, take a step back. It's going to be okay. You're not the only one. After all, Salome Zourabichvili is and is not the president of Georgia (the country). It's a bit of conundrum. But hey, if you don't know what to eat, just get yourself some khachapuri.

Your Pisces friends:

1. Salome Zourabichvili, 18 March, 1952
2. Aleksandar Vučić, 5 March, 1970
3. Natalia Vodianova, 28 February, 1982



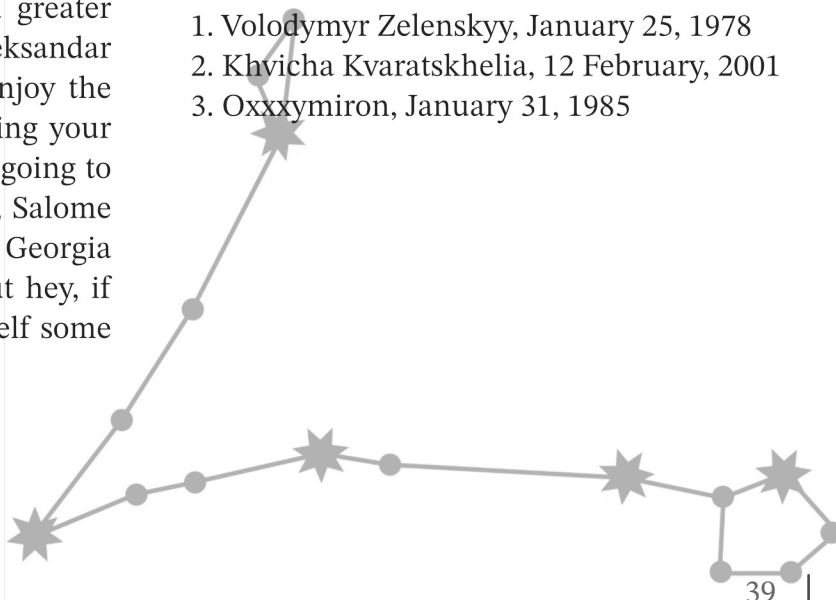
Aquarius

January 20 – February 18

It seems your good days are behind you for the time being. Let's be honest, this sucks. At least you know how Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine, must feel as his buddies are losing interest in him. But, hey, it's not over. Just find inspiration elsewhere and it will get better. Look at your Aquarius buddy Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, a Georgian football superstar, taking his team to the Euros. This is the spirit you need to manifest for a delightful 2025. And whatever happens, change is always an option. Look at another Aquarius buddy Oxxxymiron, a Russian rapper - he read English at the University of Oxford, not the Oxford Brookes, but became a rapper instead of a puffed posh and annoying man. A rare breed.

Your Aquarius friends:

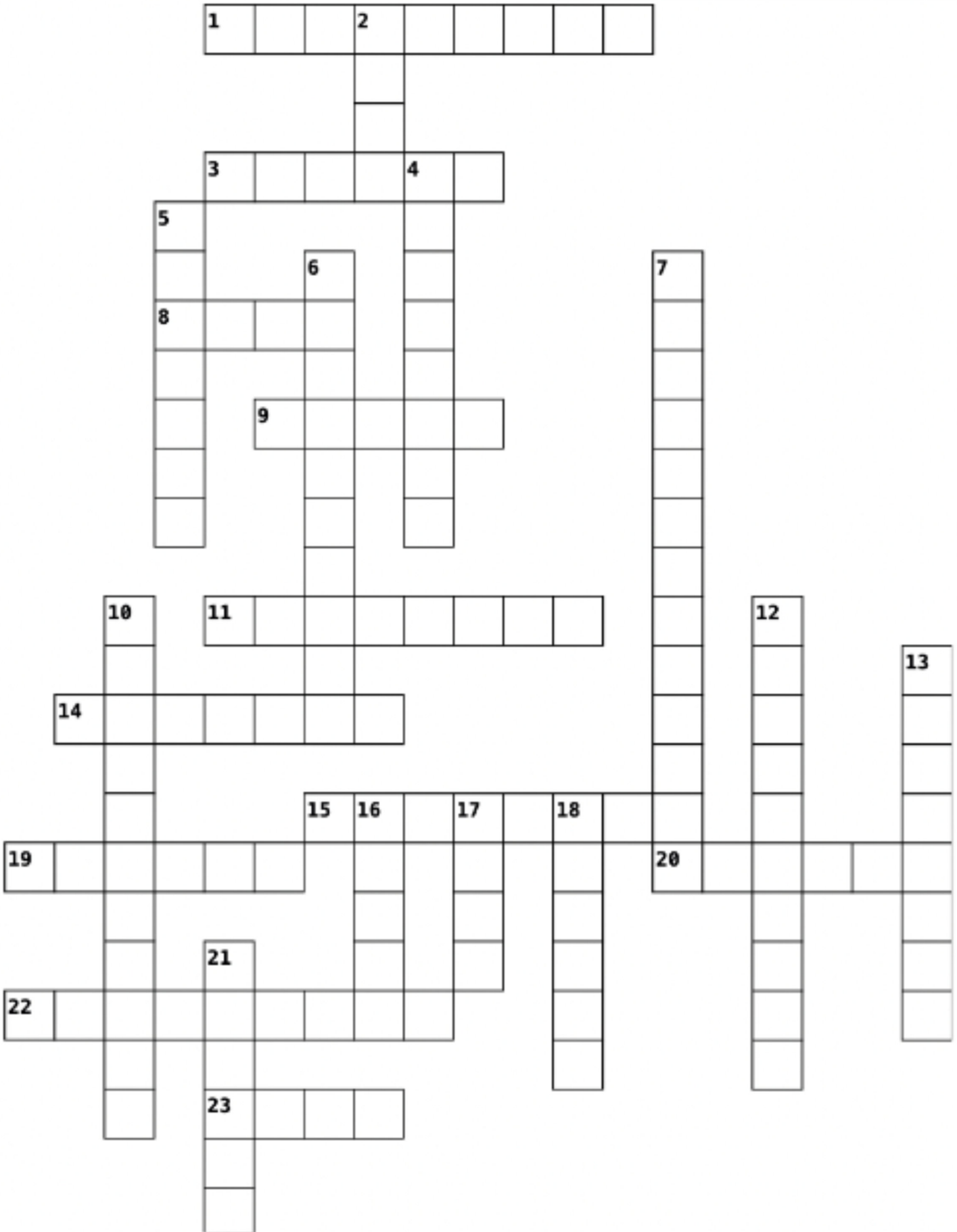
1. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, January 25, 1978
2. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, 12 February, 2001
3. Oxxxymiron, January 31, 1985



Crossword Puzzle

1. An Armenian national symbol that geographically lies in Turkey
2. A Turkic ethnic group from the Volga region
3. The Georgian name for Georgia
4. A mountain range in Central Asia, often called the “Roof of the World”
5. A type of fertile black soil found in parts of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, crucial for agriculture
6. Upholders of the Putinist regime, often with a military or security background
7. First letters of the party of Zelensky (in English)
8. A Russian-language television channel based in the Netherlands (in English)
9. A city where the 1975 document meant to improve détente between the East and the West was signed
10. The condition of Eurasian dissidents who have fled their respective autocracies to avoid persecution or imprisonment
11. First name of the Moldovan president
12. A Turkic ethnic group native to southern Moldova
13. The birthplace of the Solidarity movement
14. A dissident movement in Czechoslovakia during the Soviet occupation
15. A national dish of Crimean Tatar cuisine
16. Sentimentality for Yugoslavia
17. A northern sea extension of the Black Sea
18. A mountain range connecting the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia
19. Local government assemblies in Imperial Russia
20. A treaty that redrew Hungary’s borders after WWI
21. Persian New Year, widely celebrated in Central Asia
22. The process of vetting officials after the fall of communist regimes in CEE
23. A 2011 massacre on striking oil workers in Kazakhstan

Right answers: 1. Ararat 2. Tatars 3. Sakartvelo 4. Pamir 5. Chernozem 6. Siloviki 7. SoTP 8. Rain 9. Helsinki 10. Exile 11. Maia 12. Gagauz 13. Gdansk 14. Charta77 15. Cheburek 16. Yugonostalgia 17. Azov 18. Carpathians 19. Zemstvo 20. Trianon 21. Navruz 22. Lustration 23. Zhanaozen



gazeta sasha