

in a series of chapters, especially from the late 1950s, contributed to Tunguska through the Complex Amateur Expedition (KSE).

Bruno concludes *Tunguska* with an analysis of the establishment of the Tunguska State Nature Reserve (zapovednik) in 1995. If the reserve arose out of Soviet thought and scientific-technical optimism, there is now, Bruno notes, a frightened post-Soviet pessimism about civilizational clashes, population growth, and dying ethnic groups. Unfortunately, the zapovednik has ignored the Evenki for whom Tunguska, long before 1908, has been a homeland. (A nearby on-again hydropower station project may inundate Evenki homelands and trigger more catastrophic environmental change.)

By 2018 when Bruno visited Tunguska, the environment no longer immediately revealed the traces of the explosion. He reconstructed its history through a rich array of primary source documents and photographs from various archives and a series of critical interviews. The territory has faced minimal intrusions from economic and military interests, and it remains largely unsettled for much of the year. Pessimism about its future may be appropriate given climate change, forest fires and the closing of Russian civil society that has long sought to preserve and understand Tunguska. There are ultimately many accounts of Tunguska: scientific, fantastic, travelogue, unofficial, and Evenki. Bruno explores these understandings in a fair, engaged, and passionate effort to explain the mystery of Tunguska for all of them and for us.

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What Happened to the Soviet University? By Maia Chankseliani. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. xiv, 193 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Figures. \$100.00, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.69

Drawing on extensive sources from the region and abroad, Maia Chankseliani traces the fate of universities in the fifteen successor states to the USSR, a daunting undertaking. Differences among the successor states are vast: about half have retained authoritarian governance while others are semi or not quite full democracies; the Human Development Indices of the fifteen nations differ significantly as does GDP; regional military conflict has impeded the success of universities. The number of new universities has exploded (in Russia the 40 universities existing in 1991 had burgeoned to around 400 by 2011).

The purposes of Soviet higher education, which was largely divided between teaching in universities and research in institutes, were to prepare a workforce within a planned economy capable of advancing modernization and building a communist society by instilling communist morality in demonstrably loyal students. Academics enjoyed high status and comfortable living, and students were fully supported financially. State appointed rectors exercised almost unlimited authority in administration. International collaborations by Soviet universities or institutes were rare. In the 1960s the USSR did welcome Third World students and supported educational institutions in their countries to advance its ideological profile.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and demise of the planned economy launched a decade of chaos in higher education in the successor states. Public funding was curtailed or ended, socialism was replaced by marketization; competition for tuition paying students was fierce. Private universities, some with links to or funding from abroad, introduced an element of internationalization into the system as well as new models for university administration. Opportunities for study abroad further drew

higher education into a global competitive market. Research declined in the 1990s as institutes merged with universities and research subsidies ended. Quality assurance mechanisms were totally absent; corruption in admission and assessment was rife. The status of academics plummeted as did their salaries, and bribes were common.

The commodification of higher education and competition gradually fostered greater understanding of market models that promoted efficiencies and educational quality. Universities began to adapt to the needs of the free market. By the turn of the century, various levels of public funding returned. Tuition fees remained but varied widely from nation to nation and within nations. Only Estonia provides free access. An early intervention to manage corruption was the establishment of state-wide school leaving examinations to govern admissions. That step heralded a further move toward the internationalization of higher education among the successor states that culminated in the entry of eleven of them into the European Higher Education Area under the Bologna Process of 2010. Bachelor, masters, and doctoral degrees replaced the Soviet degree structure (except in Belarus), and mandated credit transfers and common quality assurance standards. Widespread English language teaching facilitates advanced study abroad. Although the flow of students across borders has increased, less than half of post-Soviet universities pursue internationalization. Several Russian universities have branch campuses in Central Asia to exert influence in the region and also host many students from Central Asia and China. Elsewhere Russian language study has declined. Students generally prefer former Soviet universities to newcomers.

Along with public support came a diminution of university autonomy and academic freedom. On the Academic Freedom Index, only five states hold A status and four have the lowest rank E. Russia ranks at D. As in the USSR, state appointed rectors, except in the Baltic States, exercise extensive authority. Working on renewable contracts keeps professors compliant. Teaching loads are heavy, leaving little time for research, which narrowly focuses on economic development and eschews civic society building. In Russia the latter is grounds for dismissal. Universities serve the needs of the labor market, and student career choices drive the curriculum. Critical thinking is not valued. States impose restrictions on what can be taught.

Universities in the region are, however, a work in progress. The author detects signs of further change at least in several of the successor states. Universities are serving nation building, and some aspire to internationalization and a global profile. She concludes, however, that governance structures and curriculum are in most states centralized on the old Soviet model, making academic liberation a distant if desirable goal.

This is an admirable work of thoughtful scholarship that will be of interest to all who care about universities both in the region under study and elsewhere, where public universities increasingly face related issues.

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Mother Tongue, Other Tongue: Soviet-born Jewish Writers in Their New Language Environment. By Sergii Gurbych. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2021. 225 pp. Notes. Bibliography. €32.00, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.70

Emigration of Jews from the former USSR to Israel, the United States, and Germany created circumstances for the emergence of literary fiction in the migrants' adopted