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Adam Karpiński
Karina Zając-Haduch

Notes from a journey through post-Soviet Russia – *Dzieci z Putino* (*Children from Putino*) by Ana Uzelac

In 2024, the Polish publishing house *Wydawnictwo Krytyki Literackiej* published Professor Alexander Etkind's momentous essay *Russia Against Modernity*, translated from English into Polish as *Rosja kontra nowoczesność* by Andrzej Wojtasik. The book was originally published a year earlier by the *Polity* publishing house in Cambridge.[1] It resonated with both English and Polish readers. In her review, Agnieszka Lichnerowicz called the work "one of the most inspiring diagnoses of contemporary Russia."[2] Etkind analyses the state of contemporary Russia in a very succinct manner, while simultaneously presenting the Russian war in Ukraine from a broader perspective – as a war between Russia and modernity. The author addresses issues that have plagued the country for years and, despite the passage of time, still seem unsolvable. This article will not serve as an analysis of Etkind's essays, but his depiction of Russia is reminiscent of the portrayal in Ana Uzelac's Polish book from twenty years ago, *Dzieci z Putino* [English translation: *Children from Putino*[3]]. The writer's reportage can be read retrospectively as a kind of travelogue, consisting of notes written while traversing Russia, records of an attentive listener and observer of the lives of Russians at that time. Of course, the aim is not to compare the two works, but rather to focus on a certain time frame, showcasing Russia in 2004 and the same country in 2024.

The contemporary Polish writer and journalist Ana Uzelac was born in 1972 in Belgrade to a Polish-Serbian family – her mother Polish, her father Serbian. From birth, she lived on the borderlands of identity: Polish was spoken at home, while outside, she was surrounded by the many South Slavic languages of Yugoslavia. In 1995, Uzelac became a correspondent for *Gazeta Wyborcza* in the Balkans. She wrote her first article *W drodze do wielkości* on 17 May 1995. The journalist described the

[1] See the publisher's website: https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=russia-against-modernity--9781509556571 [accessed December 1, 2024].

[2] Review by Agnieszka Lichnerowicz, https://wydawnictwo.krytykapolityczna.pl/rosja-kontra-nowoczesnosc-aleksandr-etkind-1284 [accessed December 1, 2024]..

[3] The book has not been translated into English. All translations of titles and quotations that appear in the text are the author's own. This applies to the following pages as well, where no separate footnotes are provided.

complex political and social situation in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. In 1998, she moved to Moscow as a correspondent for *Polska Agencja Prasowa* [*Polish News Agency*]. Uzelac worked there on Russia's international relations, as well as on Polish-Russian conflicts. She spent four years in Russia, traveling and engaging with its people. The result of these travels was the book *Children from Putino*, which was published in 2004 by *Pogranicze*.[4] Uzelac noted that:

> […] thousands of kilometres from the national borders also existed border areas. The most extensive ones were inhabited by Russians born in the Soviet years and their children, who no longer knew or understood old phenomena and concepts. People who should have been closest to each other turned out to be strangers through dramatic social changes, separated by a generational divide, on the border between realism and utopia, where the coexistence and interpenetration of life ripples like an infinity sign. I realised that people are the most important borderland – the place of knowing and reconciling separateness – and wrote this book.[5]

Children from Putino aroused interest among Polish critics and readers alike. Newspapers and magazines published reviews of the work.[6] The promotion of *Children from Putino* took place in Warsaw at the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw and at the book club *Czuły barbarzyńca*, as well as in Poznań at the *Bookarest* bookstore.

In 2005, the Belgrade publishing house *Fabrika knjiga* published *Deca Putina* in Serbian, translated by Ana Uzelac. Serbian critics (Ivana Matijević, Mića Vujičić, Tatjanja Csanak, Tatjana Gromaca) focused not only on Uzelac's Serbian roots but also on the genre of her book. They categorised *Children from Putino* as documentary prose and as "news writing" or "new style" – a distinct type of prose used by modern journalists. Among Polish critics, there were also attempts to define the genre of Ana Uzelac's book. Michał Olszewski, for example, in his review *Nowa twarz imperium* [*The new face of empire*], wrote:

> The character of the narrator is relegated to the background in Uzelac's book, and there is less literary value. The author primarily takes notes, treating the artistic cut as a side issue. It is first and foremost an honest, journalistic record of reality. These testimonies, devoid of any literary cover, perfectly illustrate the change that has taken place in the Russian mentality. Instead of slogans about communism, we hear stories about money, career, life in the big city.[7]

After returning from Moscow, the writer moved to Amsterdam, where she began working in the Hague bureau of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, an

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[4] A. Uzelac, *Dzieci z Putino*, Pogranicze, Sejny 2004.

[5] Ibid., p. 221.

[6] See reviews by authors such as Michał Olszewski (*Nowa twarz imperium, Ana Uzelac „Dzieci z Putino"*, „Gazeta Wyborcza" 2004, no. 274, https://classic.wyborcza.pl/archiwumGW/4228927/Nowa-twarz-imperium [accessed December 1, 2024]) and Paulina Wilk (*Wstrząsający portret pierwszego postkomunistycznego pokolenia. Dzieci nowej-starej Rosji*, „Rzeczpospolita", no. 268 (6951), November 16, 2004).

[7] M. Olszewski, *Nowa twarz imperium…*, p. 18.

organisation that deals with the processes of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations.

Serbian critics highlighted that A. Uzelac continues the long and rich tradition of Polish journalistic writers, such as Hanna Krall (*Na wschód od Arbatu*) and Ryszard Kapuściński (*Imperium*), who have described Russia. The writer emphasises that:

> Poland has a strong tradition of reportage – long-form, in-depth, written more in a prose than a news style. It's a tradition that began even before the Second World War and is an important part of the cultural identity of Polish journalism – and one that managed to survive even generations of communist censors. My book is firmly placed in that context, genre-wise, and I certainly looked for initial inspiration among Polish reporters who did or still do similar things – in Poland, for example, any attempt to write about Russia is automatically compared to "Imperium" by Ryszard Kapuściński, the strongest representative of that tradition.[8]

To better understand the meaning of *Children from Putino*, one should familiarise themselves with Ryszard Kapuściński's essays. In *Empire*, the writer presents the last years of the USSR. During that time, a foreign journalist in the Soviet Union aroused negative feelings; people considered him a spy and were unwilling to talk to him.[9] A. Uzelac, however, faced no such issues. She easily established relationships with young Russians who did not have any firsthand experience of life in the totalitarian communist state in which their parents had lived. Post-perestroika Russia was undergoing complex changes that directly affected its inhabitants. These changes were particularly evident in the lives of the younger generation, the first to grow up after the fall of the Soviet Union. Describing these changes is challenging, as they are most keenly felt by the Russians themselves. As Paulina Wilk suggests:

> Perhaps it is best to let the Russians tell the story themselves. This is what Ana Uzelac, author of the reportage "Children of Putino," did – a portrait of the first generation to grow up after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And because she listened to her young interlocutors in their twenties or teens with attention and sensitivity, the result was a moving collection of personal stories. As often harrowing as they are sad and hopeless. All are shadowed by the Soviet past. And although several of the protagonists managed to realise their dreams, reading this book does not allow one to think about Russia's future other than with anxiety.[10]

As a result of the reforms initiated by Gorbachev, Russia experienced a dramatic shift in its development course, transitioning to a market economy. Therefore, today's Russian youth face different challenges than their parents, who lived in the Soviet Union. Ana Uzelac's *Children from Putino* are, as Michał Włodarski observed:

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[8] T. Gromača, *Vrla nova tranzicija*, http://feral.audiolinux.com/tpl/weekly1/article_sngl.tpl?IdLanguage=7&NrIssue=1062&NrSection=15&NrArticle=12729 [accessed December 1, 2024].

[9] See R. Kapuściński, *Imperium*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1993) pp. 40–41.

[10] P. Wilk, *Wstrząsający portret*…

> […] the result of an almost year-long "slow stroll through Russia." And it was a very interesting walk, not only in terms of the reporter's description or the accuracy of his journalistic observations, but rather at the level of psychological probing into the souls of the people he met.[11]

During her journey across Russia, Ana Uzelac visits the Ural village of Putino, as well as St. Petersburg, Gatchina, Ufa, Nizhny Novgorod, and Moscow. In all of these places, young people live – each very different from the other, yet united by their concern for the future and their struggle with everyday problems that differ greatly from those their parents had to face: the loneliness of young mothers, unemployment, the hopeless situation in the provinces, drug addiction and AIDS, the war in Chechnya, and the thousands of men suffering from the "Chechen syndrome."

Ana Uzelac's book consists of a series of six reports, in which the writer explores nearly all strata of contemporary youth in Russia. This article will Focus on just a few topics that perhaps most vividly characterise Russian society of that era. It is concerning that Uzelac's notes from her journey through post-Soviet Russia remain just as relevant today.

The writer begins her journey through Russia with a chapter titled *Dzieci Putino. Przyjazd* [*Putino's Children. Arrival*].[12] Putino is a small village in the Perm region, where young people work and study in the city of Perm from Monday to Friday, only returning home on the weekends. In the past, before the fall of the Soviet Union, young people used to return to the village after finishing school to work on the state farm. Today, wages in the businesses in Putino are too low, or there is no work at all. Unemployment is a common issue in the Russian provinces. Andrei, the protagonist of the first report, managed to get into German studies in Perm, despite everyone in Putino believing he would be unlucky. At the school he attended in the village, teachers told him that rural students had fewer opportunities to attend university than their urban peers. No one but his mother believed in Andrei, yet he was lucky. After finishing school, he works as a bartender at a nightclub called *Space Jam*, which belongs to one of the biggest criminal organisations in Perm. The owner of *Space Jam* also owns the famous professional basketball club *Ural-Great*. Andrei earns a thousand dollars a month, which is a lot. He wants to buy a flat in the city and get married. However, his mother cannot understand why Andrei does not think about having children. She believes that money is not necessary to start a family:

> My mum says that there used to be more spirituality in life, and now we are supposedly all just chasing money. And that they lived more dignified and secure lives because they didn't have to do that. And yet she says that money in our time is amoral. […] And I tell her: mum, money is everything today. Security, dignity, morality. And freedom – the only freedom that exists.[13]

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[11] M. Włodarski, *Reportaże z Russlandii. O książce "Dzieci z Putino" Any Uzelac,* Pogranicze, November 29, 2011, https://www.pogranicze.sejny.pl/artykuly/reportaze-z-russlandii-marek-wodarski-lampa [accessed December 1, 2024].

[12] For a discussion on the semantics of the title of Uzelac's book, see also: A. Karpiński, *O semantyce nazwy utworu Any Uzelac „Dzieci z Putino"*, [in:] *Z zagadnień semantyki i stylistyki tekstu*, red. A. Ginter, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2010, pp. 133–138.

[13] A. Uzelac, *Dzieci z Putino…*, p. 38.

Andrei's mother belongs to the generation that lived in the Soviet Union, while Andrei is a representative of a new generation of young Russians who understand the rules of the capitalist system. They do not work for ideology but to earn a good salary for their labour. The difference between the generations, according to Andrei's mother, is that:

> We used to work because they said it was the right thing to do. Out of a sense of duty, not for money. Andriusza is also a hard worker, like an ant. But he can already demand money for his work. I can't, he can.[14]

Unlike Andrei, Nadia – the next protagonist of *Putino's Children. Arrival* – can only dream of independence. She was eighteen when she started working in Perm, returning to Putino on Saturdays. When she became pregnant, everything changed. She made many attempts to terminate the pregnancy – lifting heavy wardrobes, drinking iodine dissolved in milk. Her daughter Ira was born nonetheless, and Nadia lost her job. Her husband works in Moscow and is away from home eight months a year. Nadia keeps dreaming of leaving Putino for the city. Although she has a family – husband Sasha and their daughter – she feels lonely in Putino. She has no friends; she only sits at home reading novels. A significant problem in contemporary Russia is the prevalence of single motherhood among young women. The number of underage mothers has increased a lot recently. Ana Uzelac describes this phenomenon in the chapter *Faceci to mają nieźle porąbane w głowach* [*Guys Are Pretty Messed Up in the Head*]. As the author notes, thirty percent of children born in Russia are born out of wedlock, and half of them are the children of young mothers.[15]

Sisters Ira and Yulia live in Gatchina. They are unmarried, yet both have daughters. Their mother, Eleonora Boleslavovna, is also unmarried. The story of these three women illustrates how societal attitudes towards such concepts as motherhood, marriage, divorce, and the loneliness of single mothers have evolved in Russia over the years. Yulia married Vladimir after becoming unexpectedly pregnant. The father of the child initially refused to marry her, agreeing only under pressure from his parents – who learnt of the situation through a phone call from Yulia's mother. Their daughter, Lera, was born. The newlyweds received a room in a dormitory, but everyday problems turned out to be much more complicated than the young parents had expected. Vladimir – an archetypal Russian "man" – had little appreciation for family life. In his opinion, the foundation of the home was a woman.[16] Yulia – underage and absolutely not ready to become a mother – had no desire to run a household. They divorced three years after their marriage, unable to reconcile their differences in everyday life. After the divorce, Yulia returned home to live with her mother and sister, Ira. Now twenty years old, she is raising her daughter Nastya on her own. Ira, meanwhile, is looking for a husband with the help of newspaper and magazine advertisements. She writes marriage adverts and responds

[14] Ibid., p. 18.

[15] See also: A. Karpiński, *Rosja Putina oczami polskiej dziennikarki Any Uzelac (na przykładzie utworu „Dzieci z Putino"*, [in:] *Vade Nobiscum. Materiały Studenckiego Koła Naukowego Historyków Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego*, vol. IV: *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna*, Uniwersytet Łódzki, Łódź 2010, p. 265.

[16] A. Uzelac, *Dzieci z Putino…*, p. 100.

to letters. However, most of the replies she receives turn out to be from prisoners (convicts). They have a lot of free time and read all the advertisements, hoping that some woman will believe their sad stories and invite them into her life after their release. But Ira immediately discards the prisoners' letters. Her ex-husband is also in prison for killing a woman. From among the letters that Ira receives, her mother selects only the serious proposals and then replies on her behalf, signing with Ira's name. Despite these efforts, all attempts to find a good husband have been unsuccessful. As a result, Ira states that:

> […] so I prefer to live alone, that is, with my mother. Because *muzhiks* are usually very bad in the head. What do we need such people for, Nastiena? – turns to her obediently trotting two-year-old daughter – We are good together.[17]

The mother of both sisters, Eleonora Boleslavovna Usacheva, is a representative of the older generation of Russians who were raised in the illusion of socialist reality. At the age of eighteen, she was married off to a young architecture student from Alma-Ata – not by choice, but by arrangement. Her parents had found her a husband, but it soon became clear that the couple did not love each other. Two years after the birth of their daughter Natasha, Eleonora left Alma-Ata and returned to St. Petersburg:

> Mrs Ela had already returned to St. Petersburg with Natasha, her first-born daughter. Her mother did not take them in, so for a few years they wandered around relatives. People looked down on her, avoided her, didn't invite her, because how can you raise a child without a husband? There was no money either, as Ela did not have the strength or courage to divorce, so she could not claim alimony either.[18]

Divorce is considered a shameful state by the older generation. However, the children of the new Russia, such as Yulia and Ira, have a completely different opinion about it. No one invited Elenora Boleslavovna to social events; she was forgotten and felt very lonely. Over time, society's approach has changed. Today, Julia has many friends who, like her, are divorced by the age of twenty-five. She always attends social meetings with her daughter, and no one mocks her. For the new generation of Russians, divorce is a normal and common part of life.

Eleonora Boleslavovna was hired as a secretary at the famous Leningrad Institute of Nuclear Physics and was allocated a flat in Gatchina. There, she met a married man and was involved with him for twenty years, even though he had a wife – and both women were aware of each other. When Eleonora's daughter suffered a life-changing accident, she decided to adopt Yulia and later Ira as well. She was afraid of loneliness and did not want to live alone. Reflecting on the differences between herself and her daughters, she remarks:

> Heaven and earth – Mrs Ela shakes her head. – Heaven and earth. We are so different in this respect, my daughters and I. After all, I was ashamed to even pronounce the words: "childbirth," and they discuss, you know…. …things like that… – and Mrs Ela's pretty face

[17] Ibid., p. 87.

[18] Ibid., p. 89.

> flushes again. – Yulia tells me: "Mum, I've never had a lover like Tioma before." And a few other things…. Well, she would be ashamed. – Don't misunderstand me, I don't think my times were better at all. They were bad too, all this false morality that we were all lost in, like in a fog. But the way it is now, I don't think it should be either. Either complete silence or total irresponsibility. After all, there has to be a golden mean somewhere, right?[19]

The differences between Eleonora Boleslavovna's generation and that of her daughters are striking. Today's young people know much more about human relations than the socialist youth. Times and the political systems have changed, giving rise to a whole new generation of "children" who are misunderstood by parents raised under Soviet ideology. The society of modern Russia has a different approach to loneliness. In the past, being single and already divorced meant social exclusion. These outdated morals only deepened Eleonora Boleslavovna's sense of loneliness:

> Times, says Ms Ela, have changed a lot. It used to be terrible to be a single mother, a divorcee. She knows this best, because she has spent her entire life raising her children alone, first Natascha, then Yulia and Ira. And she will never forget how they avoided her, how they ran away from her, changed subjects, did not invite her to birthdays, children's parties, dinners and holidays. Loneliness was treated as a contagious disease whose carriers had to be avoided. So single mothers lived …. lonely. And now things are different. Fortunately. And the social stigma is gone, because Jula has more friends than she has had in her entire long life […].[20]

A completely different group of the young Russian generation comprises the students of the prestigious MGIMO. The Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation is the most elite of all Russian universities. The characters of the *Rynkowy specnaz* [*Market spetsnaz*[21]] chapter refer to it using terms such as "modern university," "Russian Harvard," "prestigious club," "the best Russian university," and "the most elitist university." The title of the chapter correlates with the words of MGIMO lecturer, Professor Oleg Likhachev:

> You may find this amusing, but military terminology fits these arrangements extremely well, and I will be using it frequently. After all, we want to make you a market spetsnaz, you will fight in the market for your companies. Do you think this is different from real war? We do not need fat companies hiding behind ethical principles, we do not need pampered market aristocrats. No, dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Russia needs Spartans, athletic and strong, always ready to fight.[22]

MGIMO students are seen as the future rulers of Russia. They have money and connections necessary for a political or economic career. They already plan their

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[19] Ibid., pp. 100–101.

[20] Ibid., pp. 108–109.

[21] See definition in the *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. "spetsnaz," https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/spetsnaz [accessed December 1, 2024].

[22] A. Uzelac, *Dzieci z Putino…*, p. 199.

future careers after graduation: financial advisors, diplomats, entrepreneurs, and politicians. Known as the state elite, MGIMO students are fully aware that in a few years, they will be the ones running Russia. That is why MGIMO students carefully maintain relationships with each other – because they understand that it is not knowledge, but contacts, that will help them succeed. MGIMO students can be divided into three groups. The first, the lowest, consists of capable but frustrated students who entered the university solely through their persistence and knowledge. They maintain the prestige of the university. The second group represents the so-called middle class. The last group comprises the children of oligarchs, who gained admission through connections. In many cases, parents bribe professors to secure a spot for their children at MGIMO.

At MGIMO, students learn the principles of a democratic state, but they know very well who truly holds power in Russia. An MGIMO student says, for example:

> […] now I understand that the real decisions are not made by political scientists, nor by political PR specialists, nor even by polit-technologists. Everything is in the hands of the big oil, gas and other companies. […] That's where the money is, that's where the real power in the state is.[23]

Oligarchs with power and money heavily influence the political landscape in Russia. Their children are representatives of the new generation that will eventually take control. The future of Russia depends on their way of thinking. The elite of the state studying in institutions under the supervision of politicians is intended to become the backbone of the state – an army that will play a key role in shaping the state's future. How prophetic these words will prove to be becomes evident twenty years later, when the Russian war machine begins its invasion of Ukraine.

In the reportage *Children from Putino*, the writer employs the conventions of documentary prose. Uzelac allows the young people to speak for themselves about their lives and the country in which they live. The writer does not limit her focus to a single stratum of contemporary Russian society, but instead presents different representatives of the young generation, particularly unemployed youth from the Ural village of Putino, single mothers from the town of Gatchina, and wealthy students of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. The author's analysis of the characters of *Children from Putino* allows the reader to consider contemporary Russia as a diverse and complex country, which is still undergoing constant economic and moral transformation. The new generation of Russians is different from that of their parents. Uzelac characterises these young people as follows:

> This generation is perhaps even less ready to reflect on Russia's global responsibility than the previous one. Rather, young Russians are fighting for their own private gardens. They accept Russia as it is. For them, the freedom they have is something they take for granted, and even slightly aggravating. I have also met some who would be able to renounce this freedom in exchange for a little tidiness.[24]

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[23] Ibid., p. 211.

[24] See M. Kaźmierska, *Rosyjskie Bullerbyn – Rozmowa z Aną Uzelac*, „Gazeta Wyborcza", no. 269, November 17, 2004, p. 8, https://www.pogranicze.sejny.pl/artykuly/rozmowa-z-ana-uzelac-marta-kazmierska-16112004 [Accessed December 1, 2024].

The image of Russia's future, as presented in *Children from Putino*, is a pessimistic one. The political and social environment in Russia continues to be shaped by its Soviet past. The younger generation is unable to come in terms with this complex history, focusing instead on their own destinies in modern Russia. Ana Uzelac's reportage – despite being published 20 years ago – remains a relevant source of insight into Russian society. The problems it highlights still persist today, as yet another war unleashed by Russia continues to corrode the social fabric of the country. Unemployment, alcoholism, the struggles of single mothers, the power of oligarchs, and the dominance of oil companies cast a shadow over the new generation of Russians. Two decades ago, it seemed that with time, most of the problems would be resolved and Russia would embark on a path of democratic reform. But history has shown its tendency to repeat itself. Today, there is a need for fresh reportage, new travel accounts of Russia, and updated research on the state of contemporary Russia. Alexander Etkind's diagnosis in his acclaimed essay *Russia Against Modernity* serves as an excellent example. As a conclusion, let us recall the words of Przemysław Wielgosz in his review of the book: "Russia feeds on the neoconservative rejection of the ideas of progress, equality, universality and reason just as it profits from the plundering of natural resources."[25]

An analysis of *Children from Putino*, which was published twenty years ago, shows its continued relevance and potential as a subject of scholarly inquiry. Revisiting the themes it raises could form the basis of another study, including one exploring the changes that have taken place over these years in the consciousness of Russian society. It would also be interesting to examine subsequent studies by Polish and English-speaking journalists, philologists, and historians, and to consider their role in describing the Russian world not only to the West but also to Russians themselves.

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[25] See the publisher's website: https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=russia-against-modernity--9781509556571 [accessed December 1, 2024].

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Notes from a journey through post-Soviet Russia – *Dzieci z Putino* (*Children from Putino*) by Ana Uzelac

Abstract

Ana Uzelac's *Children from Putino* is a 2004 reportage book that explores the lives of young Russians two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union. Uzelac, a Polish-Serbian journalist, travelled across Russia to document the experiences and perspectives of this generation as they grappled with a rapidly changing society. The book highlights the stark contrast between their parents' Soviet upbringing and the new realities of capitalism and globalisation. Uzelac's journey takes her from the rural village of Putino to the bustling metropolis of Moscow, meeting a diverse range of characters along the way. She portrays the struggles of young people in the provinces, who face unemployment and limited opportunities, as exemplified by Andrei, who flees his village to work in Perm. The book also explores the challenges faced by single mothers such as Nadia and the sisters Ira and Yulia, reflecting changing social attitudes towards family and relationships. The author contrasts these experiences with the privileged world of MGIMO students, Russia's future elite, being groomed for success in a market-driven economy. Uzelac's observations at MGIMO reveal the influence of oligarchs and the persistence of power structures despite the transition to democracy. Through intimate portraits and insightful observations, *Children from Putino* paints a nuanced picture of post-Soviet Russia, capturing the fears, aspirations and contradictions of a generation navigating a complex and uncertain future. Although the book was written 20 years ago, its themes of economic inequality, social change and the legacy of the Soviet past remain relevant to understanding Russia today. Uzelac's work serves as a valuable time capsule and a reminder of the enduring challenges facing Russian society.

Key words: post-Soviet Russia, young generation, social changes, single mothers, oligarchs, historical context, future prospects

Заметки из путешествия по постсоветской России – *Dzieci z Putino* (*Дети из Путино*) Аны Узелац

Резюме

Книга Аны Узелац *Дети из Путино* – это репортаж 2004 года, в котором исследуется жизнь молодых россиян спустя два десятилетия после распада Советского Союза. Узелац, польско-сербская журналистка, путешествовала по России, чтобы задокументировать опыт и взгляды этого поколения на быстро меняющееся общество. В книге показан разительный контраст между советским воспитанием их родителей и новыми реалиями капитализма и глобализации. Путешествие Узелац проходит от деревни Путино до шумного мегаполиса Москвы, встречая на своем пути самых разных персонажей. Она рассказывает о проблемах провинциальной молодежи, сталкивающейся с безработицей и ограниченными возможностями, на примере Андрея, который бежит из своей деревни, чтобы работать в Перми. В книге также исследуются проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются матери-одиночки, такие как Надя и сестры Ира и Юлия, что отражает меняющиеся взгляды общества на семью и отношения. Автор противопоставляет эти переживания привилегированному миру студентов МГИМО – будущей российской элиты, готовящейся к успеху в условиях рыночной экономики. Наблюдения Узелац в МГИМО показывают влияние олигархов и сохранение властных структур, несмотря на переход к демократии. Через интимные портреты и проницательные наблюдения писательница рисует нюансированную картину постсоветской России, отражая страхи, чаяния и противоречия поколения, ориентирующегося в сложном и неопределенном будущем. Хотя книга была написана 20 лет назад, ее темы экономического неравенства, социальных перемен и наследия советского прошлого остаются актуальными для понимания России сегодня. Работа Узелац служит ценной капсулой времени и напоминанием о непреходящих проблемах, стоящих перед российским обществом.

Ключевые слова: постсоветская Россия, молодое поколение, социальные изменения, матери-одиночки, олигархи, исторический контекст, перспективы на будущее

Adam Karpiński, dr
ORCID: 0000-0002-4124-9262
Instytut Neofilologii (filologia rosyjska, literaturoznawstwo)
Uniwersytet Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Krakowie
e-mail: adam.karpinski@uken.krakow.pl

Adam Karpiński, PhD
Institute of Modern Languages (Russian Philology, literary studies)
University of the National Education Commission, Krakow

Karina Zając-Haduch, dr
ORCID: 0000-0001-6246-4909
Instytut Neofilologii (filologia rosyjska, językoznawstwo)
Uniwersytet Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Krakowie
e-mail: karina.zajac-haduch@uken.krakow.pl

Karina Zając-Haduch, PhD
Institute of Modern Languages (Russian Philology, linguistics)
University of the National Education Commission, Krakow