Kyiv, Ukraine - Revised Edition
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One of the main themes in this book is the anger of the Ukrainian people at the corrupt political system that they have been forced to endure since the time that their country became unexpectedly independent in 1991. The first edition of *Kyiv, Ukraine* was being put together as the people's anger mounted specifically against the president at the time, Viktor Yanukovych, and his close cronies in government, all members of the Party of Regions. Both the president and most of his inner circle are from Donetsk oblast (province) in eastern Ukraine, a part of the country where the Russian language is more prevalent than Ukrainian and where many citizens identify fondly with Russia and/or long for the old days of the Soviet Union. When on November 21, 2013, Yanukovych announced that he was pulling back on an earlier promise to move Ukraine's future in the direction of the West and the European Union, and would instead seek to ally the country with Russia, a new wave of protests turned against him. This was the beginning of “Maidan” or “Euromaidan,” a grassroots protest movement that was centered on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the Independence Square in the center of Kyiv, the national capital. The first protesters were mostly college students, but when riot police descended on Maidan on the night of November 30 and began beating protestors and journalists, the nation's anger quickened, and soon there were thousands of people on the square, and then hundreds of thousands, as well as protests in cities across the country. As the world knows, Euromaidan reached a crescendo on February 18-20, 2014 when riot police attempted to liquidate the tent encampment in the center of Kyiv by setting it ablaze. Even worse, trained snipers fired into the crowds from behind trees on hilltops and from rooftops, killing more than 100 civilians. Those who perished are referred to as the Nebesna Sotnya, “Heaven's Hundred.” The public's anger ignited still more, and as speakers on the Maidan stage began to urge the protestors, many of whom were now armed for all to see, to rush uphill and storm the presidential office building, Yanukovych abandoned the presidency and fled the country. His termination date is recorded as February 22. He found exile in Russia where he has lived ever since with a scowl on his face.

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1 As used in Ukraine, the word *maidan* can refer to a public square or to a gathering of protestors. It can refer as well to a protest movement, even without the physical gathering of protestors, as in “a spirit of maidan is sweeping the nation in response to the parliament’s actions.” When written with a capital M, “Maidan” refers to either the Independence Square, just as “the Mall” in Washington is written with a capital M and does not refer to an indoor shopping center, or is a proper name alternative to the word “Euromaidan.” “Euromaidan” refers specifically to the protest movement that responded to Yanukovych's announcement on November 21, 2013.
face. His inner circle fled too, most of them to Russia as well. I wish I could have seen the reactions on the toppled president’s face when days later he saw footage of the public examining with amazement, amusement, and anger what he had left at Mezhyhirya, the opulent estate that he shared with his secret girlfriend on the shores of the “Kyiv Sea” north of Kyiv. More on all this later.

Unfortunately for this book, these momentous events took place just after the final manuscript was accepted for publication and the production process got underway. We managed to add a postscript to the original text that included the outlines of Euromaidan and the toppling of Yanukovych, but even that was being written at a time when still more history was being made, and it became instantly outdated. Specifically, neither the snatching of Crimea from Ukraine by Russia right after the Yanukovych downfall (and after the closing ceremonies of the Sochi winter Olympics of February 23), nor the aggression against Ukraine’s sovereignty in Donetsk and Luhans’ oblasts in eastern Ukraine soon thereafter, made it into the book; the production process had already moved beyond a point of no return. That is one reason for this second edition of Kyiv, Ukraine just two years after the first – to update some of what has transpired. But still, events keep moving forward faster than updates can be inserted, so that this edition, too, will lag behind the news. We take solace in the fact that at least we have a hot topic, even if the typing speed of the author and the publisher’s production process cannot keep pace.

Thus, we have both a blessing and a problem as a result of the fast pace of events in Ukraine. The blessing is that there might be wider interest in what I have written because attention about Ukraine has been heightened world-round. Indeed, I have received more invitations to speak about Kyiv than I ever dreamed possible. However, the problem remains that events in Ukraine change faster than I can type, so that no matter what I write or where I leave off, my text is always almost instantly out of date. Therefore, I have decided not to try to fully catch up with changing events as I prepare this paperback edition of the book, and to keep updates to a minimum. The full new story can wait until the outcomes of the turmoil in Ukraine become more apparent. There is, however, a new Chapter 13 that replaces the postscript, and that summarizes the situation in Ukraine almost two years after we left off. The big news, of course, is that the country has a new government, and that it is defending its sovereign territory in a war against Russia-backed separatists and the many Russian troops who fight beside them. Chapter 13 also updates information about Kyiv specifically and the personalities who figure in the first edition. I do this happily, because it has been my pleasure to field questions from readers about how certain issues or conflicts in the city
were resolved, and about specific characters. This edition also corrects the small errors and annoying typing mistakes that slipped into the first edition.

Regardless of what happens in Ukraine down the road and what news events I miss because of the book’s production schedule, I think that this book will help the reader understand the attitudes of many Ukrainians today about their country, their government, and their own prospects for a better future. I believe that the book succeeds at explaining why Ukrainians became so angry that they took to the streets against the previous president, and why they will not rest until, at last, they have good government, true independence, and a fair chance at earning a good living. Even though they have elected a presidential successor to Yanukovych, the wealthy businessman in chocolate Petro Poroshenko (Roshen brand chocolates), and a new mayor for Kyiv, the opposition political leader and retired champion heavyweight boxer Vitalyi Klitschko (See Chapter 4), many citizens are not satisfied that either the country or the city is on the right course, or that cronyism and corruption have been brought under control. There are, in fact, responsible voices who agitate for another Maidan, and who say that the Maidan (or Euromaidan) that chased Yanukovych from office should never have ended, because the goals that the public had wanted have not yet been achieved.

The subtitle of this book is “The City of Domes and Demons from the Collapse of Socialism to the Mass Uprising of 2013-14.” The word “domes” stands for the long history of Kyiv as symbolized and reflected in the glorious domes of beautiful old churches, while “demons” refers to the city’s many current problems, and as well as to the forces (e.g., greed) and individuals (e.g., crooked politicians) that have created and exacerbated those problems. With the addition of Chapter 13, we could add the phrase “and into 2016” to the subtitle, but that would be awkward. This book is based on fieldwork, and whether we end it in 2014 or 2016, there is a similar assessment: the people are angry. I saw why in my many stays in Kyiv and in wide travels across Ukraine: there is way too much poverty in a country that is rich with resources and superb farmland; there is considerable social injustice; there is bad government and way too much corruption; there is a hatred of things Ukrainian (Ukrainian language, national pride, national history) by many supporters of Russian dominion over neighboring countries; and there is anger at Russia that despite all the turns in history, both globally and locally, it still wants to be a colonial power. Furthermore, where there was once at least a semblance of equality under socialism, there is now glaring inequality, as the wealth of the nation has been appropriated by a new class of oligarch billionaires and exported to offshore banks and luxury offshore residences and yachts.
Instead of my own anger, I have strived to convey that of Ukraine with my writing, and if you sense it in this book, then I will have succeeded as a reporter. A great many citizens for whom Kyiv is home shared their pains with me, and many of those who knew that I was working on a book urged me to write swiftly, before it was too late, and to explain what was going on. I was urged to not hold back. “V Ukraini nemaye poryadku!” summarizes what people said then, twenty-two years after independence, and still say now: “In Ukraine there is no order;” “Ukraine is in disarray.” The same holds for Kyiv. Some informants even begged with tears for me to tell the city’s story. I strive to be their voice, as I also strive to be fair and balanced, and to back up what I say with data, specific examples, and my own close-up observations. Thus, this book is both reportage and ethnography, at least in many parts, and tells what I saw and heard during fieldwork in the city. If I seem overly strident at times, it is because I convey the stridency of many informants from all levels of society and all walks of life. To a man or woman, without a single exception other than those closely and officially affiliated with Yanukovych’s Party of Regions, Kyiv’s citizens were extraordinarily critical about where they saw Ukraine headed and skeptical about its prospects. Many professed great fondness for Kyiv despite the problems, and saw it as emblematic of the country’s mess. Public opinion polls in the country supported my assessment. I came to understand the cause that many Kyivans shared, which is to save a great city, and became a believer. It is for them that I worked hard to write this book. I hope that I have accurately reflected their concerns, and have written something that is interesting and credible for readers who do not know Kyiv or Ukraine and who do not have a direct stake.

This book was originally written during the administration of President Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovych, the fourth president of independent Ukraine. He assumed office on February 25, 2010 after winning an election that almost certainly had a fair share of vote rigging in his favor. The bulk of my research was done during his administration as well. Therefore, Mr. Yanukovych comes under particular scrutiny in this book, as does his Party of Regions, which dominated the national parliament during his tenure. Because in Ukraine the President has (taken) very great powers, including considerable influence over the administration of the city of Kyiv and, in turn, over city planning and land development even though he himself is not a Kyivan, Mr. Yanukovych figures especially heavily in this book, much more so than would say a President of the United States in a book about an American city, even about Washington. Necessarily, I look at Yanukovych not just with respect to his policies for Kyiv and Ukraine, but also personally. He chose to consume a disproportionate amount of space in the city, even in comparison to his three predecessors, and
implemented questionable personal construction projects that impact the fundamental geography of Kyiv and its iconic urban image. After reflection, I agree with informants that there is much to criticize about Yanukovych's treatment of Kyiv, and I do so in the pages ahead based on what I was told and shown, what I read about in both the free and controlled press, and most specifically, what I saw with my own eyes. Even though the criticisms are harsh and include a separate section that I have called “A Geography of the President,” I am convinced that they are accurate and are deserved. Had I written this book earlier during another presidential administration, then I would have been critical of either Mr. Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk, the first president (in office from December 5, 1991 to July 19, 1994), his successor Mr. Leonid Danylovych Kuchma (July 19, 1994 – January 23, 2005), or the third president, the Orange Revolution’s Mr. Viktor Andriyovych Yushchenko (January 23, 2005 – February 25, 2010), all of whom also raised the ire of Ukrainians for how they conducted their responsibilities and for what they allowed to take place in Kyiv. Good government has not been one of Ukraine’s strengths. And if I ever write a full new edition of this book, it will take a hard look at the administration of President Petro Oleksiyovych Poroshenko (June 7, 2014 – present) and any presidents who succeed him by the time the writing is completed.

This is not my first book about urban change. I have been around a few years, have grey hair, and have worked in the past in various parts of the world, including on gentrification and related urban transition in Philadelphia and other cities in the United States, in Vancouver in Canada, and then with considerable production in Tokyo, the fascinating and dynamic capital of Japan where I lived for many years. I have worked as well in Southeast Asia in Singapore, Jakarta, and Phnom Penh. This project in Kyiv is a first professional venture for me into Europe and into the worlds of socialist society, Soviet control, and centralized planning, and then the emergence of newly independent countries, turns to capitalism, and the uncertain paths of postsocialist urban restructuring. I apply my earlier experience at studying cities to this project, plus a good knowledge of Ukrainian, which is the language my parents taught me, and Russian, which I studied a long time ago in college and then learned much better more recently, ironically, in Japan from a Russian-speaking Ukrainian resident who now lives in Ukraine again. Her name is Ilona Arkhangelska, and she is the first person I acknowledge by name because she has continued to provide me with insights into her country. I had been aware of Ukraine since childhood, since my immigrant parents made it a point to teach me as much as they could, and I had maintained an interest in the country all through my life. I chose not to focus my career on Ukraine because I had sensed as a young man that my Ukrainian-American
ethnic community, as well as my family, would have expectations of me that I did not want to face, so I became a geographer of cities in other parts of the world instead. It is only now after many years of doing other things that I turn to the subjects that my parents always wanted me to write about.

Although I had been to Kyiv several times before and have since been to the city several times more, often staying weeks at a time, the center of this project is the full year that I spent in the city as a Fulbright scholar. That was academic year 2010-11, when I had a sabbatical from my long-time faculty position at Temple University in Philadelphia in order to write this book. During that time I was attached to the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, one of Ukraine’s best universities, and taught undergraduates and graduate students in the Department of Sociology. My classes became sounding boards for my ideas. For most of that time, I lived in a comfortable apartment in the very center of the city on a beautiful historic street named Horodetskoho after a famous architect. The street had previously been named vulytsia Karla Marksa, Karl Marx Street, after an architect of different sorts. From that vantage point I had easy access to all directions in Kyiv and was at the doorstep of the city center, most notably Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) where there were often concerts, demonstrations, political protests, and other events that helped me understand Ukraine. A building on my block had an exclusive shop on the ground floor that sold diamond jewelry, but above the door there was still a prominent stone relief of a crossed hammers symbol of Communism and the Soviet Union. That combination was a constant reminder that I was studying a society in transition.

Later, on a longer return visit, I stayed for a while with a friend in a typical apartment in the far reaches of Troeshchyna, a huge residential complex on the Left Bank that is famously far from any subway line, and then for a longer time in the very comfortable Art Hotel Baccara (also spelled Bakkara), a floating hotel that is moored on one of the banks of the Dnipro River. From the latter vantage I was able to enjoy Kyiv’s famous beaches and other recreation in Hidropark (a large public park), and see Kyivans at play during a prolonged heat wave. I also met Kyivans who lived in the park out of necessity – poor people who had found for themselves a hideaway in the forest or in some old, abandoned facility from the Soviet period, much like the homeless who sleep on street-side benches or in derelict old buildings in the city center. It was during that time, too, that I gained a better appreciation for the natural environment of Kyiv, and for the famous bluffs of the city that stretched on the opposite bank of the river from my hotel room deck for nearly as far upstream and as far downstream as I could see. Several of the city’s major landmarks, glorious in the day and beautifully lit at night, were my landscape
neighbors, as were several new buildings on the bluffs that Kyivans refer to as “monsters” because they so poorly punctuate the historical profile of the city.

The methodology is straightforward. I spent as much time in Kyiv as I could, explored the city daily, walked endlessly, and talked to as many people as I could. I also read what I could in English, Ukrainian, and Russian, attended public forums and lectures about the city (and spoke at several myself), attended political events and public protests, visited museums, libraries, and art galleries, went to concerts, opera, and ballet, and sampled some of the ample clean-fun nightlife that Kyiv offers. I suppose that such activity qualifies the research as participant observation. Even more than I did in Tokyo when writing my book about a controversial nightclub district, I avoided all places where I would not want to be with my adult children. Except for reporting from a distance, the famous sex-oriented nightlife of Kyiv did not interest me. My explorations of the city were supplemented by various interviews that I scheduled with key informants; mapping projects of my own such as of buildings in the city center by land use and visible condition, distributions of billboards by content, and the distribution of construction sites in fast-changing Podil; statistical data from the government of the city of Kyiv and other sources; examination of hundreds of historical maps and photos; and views of the city and its neighborhoods as provided via satellite images from above. In short, preparation of this book involved a range of methodologies and a sustained immersion in the city as I think good social geography requires.

After various permutations and numerous drafts, I finally settled on a book with 12 chapters plus this preface. The first edition had a postscript as well in an attempt to catch up with fast changing developments in Ukraine as the book entered the production stage. That postscript is now the added Chapter 13. Each of the original 12 chapters is divided into three to eight sections, with the total number of sections being 71. That means that some sections are quite short – no more than two or three pages in length. I choose to write this way because I personally prefer books that open many topics, even if briefly, and find that such reading is easier because one can opt to read about topics that interest them more and dismiss those that do not. We have short essays also because, in some cases, only so much can be said about a given topic. This is especially so for a city like Kyiv – a recently Soviet city for which the kinds of data about socioeconomic conditions, land use and development, and goings-on in local and national government that exist for urban areas in other parts of the world are simply not available. From among the 71 relatively short essays, I would like to think that this book can be of at least a little interest for everyone. As much as is possible without continually redefining terms, I tried to make individual sections stand on their own so
that they could be read in any order. Nevertheless, there is a broad flow to all 12 chapters too, from topics that are general and provide background to later ones that focus more on particular issues or problems, and from historical and geographical orientation to the city at the start to individual districts, individual construction projects, and individual people later on. I conclude the book with examples of activists who defend Kyiv and some of the remarkable fights that they have taken on. There is no “conclusion,” because Kyiv after socialism is a work actively in progress, and is itself not concluded. Even Chapter 13, the update that was prepared for this edition, is an unfinished work, because so much is changing in Kyiv and is still uncertain. Instead, I offer “reflections.” I imagine that a writer about the reshaping of space and society in postsocialist Kharkiv, Odesa, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Irkutsk, Tbilisi, Baku, or Tashkent, to mention some other examples of former Soviet cities, might also say something similar. Finally, I want to say that I try to be reader-friendly and to avoid the worst academic jargon, pretentious invented words, unnecessary kowtows to writers of dense theory, and other annoying trappings of the academy today. I simply want to tell you about Kyiv.

I now turn to my acknowledgements, which by happy coincidence I am composing on a (US) Thanksgiving Day. In addition to the aforementioned Ilona, many people helped me with this book, enormously so, and I am deeply indebted. I begin with the 27 students I taught in an urban sociology class in spring 2011 at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA). It was my first class at this venerable institution, and an experience that stands out as the most memorable and pleasant teaching experience in my career of more than 40 years. We spoke much about Kyiv during our seminars, and I learned a lot from these intelligent and eager young men and women. I can't name them all here, but note that the group was comprised of two male students (a Eugene and another Roman), and five Katyas, four Marias, and three Yulias among the 25 women. Roman Driamov, Maria Anchysykina, Yulia Mantrova, Dasha Pankratova, and Lily Chulitska deserve special thanks for going out of their way to be helpful. All 27 of them were wonderful, and I am happy to have my photo with them in this book. They, plus the one student who was absent on the day the photograph was taken, represent the future of Ukraine.

Likewise, I thank NaUKMA for hosting me during my Fulbright Fellowship year in Kyiv, and especially the Sociology Department and its acting chair that year Olena Bogdanova, my faculty colleagues in Sociology Volodymyr Ishchenko and Tamara Martsenyuk, the Vice President for Foreign Cooperation Larysa Chovnyuk, and the very capable president of the university at the time, Dr. Sergiy Kvit. Dr. Kvit is now Ukraine's Minister of Education. I
also benefited from being a frequent guest at the Visual Culture Research Center, where I attended many events and met numerous fascinating students, scholars, authors, and artists, including Olga Bryukhovetska, Oleskiy Radinski, Vasyl Cherepanyn, Nadia Parfan, and Anastasia Ryabchuk. Even though it is no longer affiliated with the university, the VCRC continues to be an exciting center of creative and intellectual activity in Kyiv. I also benefited enormously from regular attendance at various conferences and workshops about Kyiv that were sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Foundation from Germany. For this, I am especially thankful to the foundation’s officers in Kyiv, especially Dr. Kyrily Savin and Andrij Makarenko.

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The list of people who helped me in Kyiv is especially long, and includes fellow academics, architects, city planners, and others who work on the problems of the city, civic activists, and numerous life-long and short-term residents of Kyiv of various ages, ethnicities, occupations, and social standing. It is not possible to name them all, but I can start the list with super thanks to super friends Vladislava Osmak, Tamara Martsenyuk, Svitlana Slipchenko, and Natalia Moussienko for their special support, professional advice, and intelligent insights, and then continue in alphabetical order with thanks to Anna Andrievska, Mui Atala, Iryna Bondarenko, Kateryna Botanova, Sasha Burlaka, Olena Dmytryk, Oksana Dutchak, Marta Dyczok, Ilko Gladhsheitn, Oleksandr Glukhv, Oleksandr Hudyma, Mykola Ilchuk, Rev. Mykola Ilnytskyi, Anna Khvyl, Iryna Koshulap, Vitaly Kovalinsky, Ihor Lutsenko, Andrew Mac, Alla Marchenko, Maria Mayerchyk, Taras Myronyuk, Varvara Podnos, Raphi Rechitsky, Olena Reshetnyak, Yulia Soroka, Inna Sovsun, Catherine Stecyk, Serhiy Tselovalnyk, Lou Urenek, Andrea Wenglowskyj, Viktor Zagreba, Zenon Zawada, and Maxym Zayika. Furthermore, I am indebted to Evelina Beketova for generous permission to use one of her bright and happy paintings of Kyiv for the design of the cover of this book. In addition to that work, I am fortunate to own three other of her urban portraits and recommend that readers who are interested should look her up by name on the Internet. All the other photographs in this book are my own except for Figure 2.1, which is reproduced via the graces of Vitaliy Kovalynskiy, Figure 3.3 for which I am indebted to Alexander J. Motyl, Figures 6.4 and 11.3 (right) which were provided to me by Vladyslava Osmak, and Figure 11.4, which Viktor Kruk kindly allowed me to use. I thank these individuals for their additions to this book.

Four Kyivans merit the most special recognition. Dr. Lyudmyla Males, a sociologist at the Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University, guided me personally through unfamiliar parts of Kyiv, introduced me often to Ukrainian literature and websites about the city, and put me in touch with many individuals who became key informants, new sources of information, and new personal friends. I am deeply indebted to her and am proud to have her as a close professional associate and friend. The same is true for Nadia Parfan. A native of Ivano-Frankivsk, she is a PhD student in Cultural Studies at NaUKMA and was actually the first person in Kyiv with whom I had contact about this project. She too was a local guide and door opener for me, and a great friend. I was especially blessed to have her nearby in Philadelphia when she was a Fulbright scholar in my department during the year that I was writing and revising the original edition of this manuscript. Not only did she help me with Kyiv, she learned all about Philadelphia at lightning speed and inspired me with original insights to my own home city that form a basis for a possible book.
project for the future. Third, there is Vladyslava Osmak. She is also affiliated with NaUKMA, is a talented historian of Kyiv and professional tour guide, and a dedicated activist in support of Kyiv causes. She helped me immensely with answers to my questions, access to information, photographs, and reading materials, and unfailing support for this project. Finally, there is my former student at NaUKMA Maria Anchyskina. Not only was she wonderful as a student, but she has also been a great teacher about her native city, as well my best beach-and-bars buddy. Without such friends, there can be no book.

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Figure 0.1  The author and 26 of his 27 students at Kyiv Mohyla Academy, May 2011, plus Peter