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**IN MEMORIAM JULIA OBERTREIS (1969–2023)**

*This memorial text pays tribute to Julia Obertreis (1969–2023), who was a distinguished professor specializing in modern and contemporary Eastern European history at the Friedrich-Alexander University in Erlangen-Nuremberg (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg). The author recounts the significant milestones in her career, her major research contributions, and her notable visits to the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Additionally, the text reflects on the various collaborative events and initiatives she was involved in.*

**Keywords:** Julia Obertreis, Eastern European Studies, commemoration.

Julia Obertreis (1969–2023), a professor of modern and contemporary Eastern European history at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-

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Nürnberg, passed away on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Her life, though brief, was marked by vibrancy and academic excellence. Our relationship extended beyond professional collaboration to include a deep personal friendship.

Julia's academic journey began in 1988 after she graduated from a school in Ratingen, near Düsseldorf. She pursued her higher education at the Free University of Berlin, where she studied history and Russian studies until 1996. This period included a study at the Saint Petersburg State University from 1993 to 1994. She defended her PhD in 2001 at the Freie Universität Berlin. Following this, she served as an assistant to Professor Bernd Bonwetsch at Ruhr-Universität Bochum from 2002 to 2004, and later as an assistant to Professor Dietmar Neutatz at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, where she also held a position as a scientific advisor at the Department of Modern and Eastern European history until 2012.

After completing her habilitation in 2012, Obertreis was appointed the Chair of Modern and Contemporary History with a focus on Eastern European studies at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. Her research primarily concentrated on the history of Eastern Europe, particularly the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, as well as 20th-century Central Asian history. She delved into various aspects such as everyday life and social history, the history of infrastructure and the environment, and the global and cultural history of Eastern Europe, alongside employing oral history methods.

Her work, especially her dissertation, received significant acknowledgments, including the Young Talent Prize from the German Society for Eastern European Studies. Her numerous publications garnered extensive recognition in her field. Obertreis played a pivotal role in academic organizations: she led the Erlangen/Nuremberg branch of the German Society for Eastern European Studies from 2013, chaired the Association of Historians of Eastern Europe between 2015 and 2021, and served as the press secretary of the historical section of the same society from 2018.

A respected member of various scientific advisory boards and editorial boards, including the "Visnyk" (Bulletin of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series: History), Obertreis frequently visited Kharkiv University. She contributed through lectures and consultations, enriching

the academic community. In the following sections, I will detail our collaborative efforts and provide specific examples of our work together.

Our connection with Julia Obertreis was initiated thanks to Professor Bernd Bonwetsch. It all started in 2001, when I visited Bochum as the dean of the Department of History and met with Professor Bonwetsch. This meeting led to a fruitful collaboration. Not long after, Professor Bonwetsch visited Kharkiv with his young colleagues, among whom was Julia. Their visit coincided with a conference held in Kharkiv in September 2003 titled “The Everyday Life and Cultural History of Germany and the Soviet Union: 1920s to 1950s.” This conference brought together both Ukrainian and German researchers, and Julia presented an interesting paper. The conference papers were later compiled into a published collection, which included an introductory article by Julia Obertreis (*Epoha. Kul'tury. Lyudi* 2004).

In the 2005–2006 academic year, Julia conducted a lecture series at our department on “Everyday Life History and Oral History,” sharing her vast knowledge and expertise. I encouraged her to expand on her experiences, particularly how German universities were exploring new areas of academic inquiry. This conversation resulted in her insightful article “Everyday History, Oral History, and Cultural History: Teaching Experience in German Universities,” featured in the “Kharkiv Historiographical Collection” (Obertreis 2006).

One fond memory from the spring of 2006 was when Julia joined me and colleagues Lyudmyla Posokhova and Volodymyr Kulikov on an excursion across the Kharkiv region, which included a playful incident at the Kharkiv University Biological Station where we whimsically “woke” a groundhog to beckon an early spring.

In 2018, we started a new research project titled “Practices of the Self-Representation of Multinational Cities in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Era,” funded by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. The project, informally named CityFace, sought to metaphorically reflect its focus on urban identity. Considering that historical urbanism was a key focus at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität's Department of Eastern European History, I invited Julia to serve as an official consultant for CityFace.

She accepted and later provided valuable feedback as a reviewer for the resultant collective monograph “In Search of the City's Face” (Kravchenko & Posokhov 2021).

September 2019 marked the visit of a delegation from the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, including teachers and students, to Kharkiv. Their stay was part of a broader exploration of Ukraine, and I was delighted to have our city and university featured in their journey. During their visit, I delivered a lecture on “Contemporary Ukrainian Historiography: Heritage, Transformative Factors, and New Prospects”.

When Russia started its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Julia became a beacon of support. In those challenging times, she proposed creating a new forum for dialogue to sustain our scholarly exchanges and discussions. Her efforts came to fruition in October 2022 with the inaugural session of the Ukrainian-German colloquium “Historiography in Times of War and Displacement.” This event served as a platform for presenting cutting-edge research from Ukrainian historians, particularly from Kharkiv, and showcased various individual and collaborative projects (Obertreis & Posokhova 2022). The initiative was bolstered by active participation from our German counterparts at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz and the University of Münster. Within this colloquium, we also presented the project “The City and the War,” led by Yevhen Rachkov and supported by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. The colloquium demonstrated a profound solidarity between Ukrainian and German historians and facilitated the identification of future research trajectories and collaborative opportunities.

Julia's joy for life and her vibrant spirit made every encounter with her inspiring and energizing. We continue to miss her deeply and strive to honor her memory and the light she brought into our lives.

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## **ЗГАДУЮЧИ ЮЛІЮ ОБЕРТРАЙС (1969–2023)**

*У тексті, який має меморіальний характер, йдеться про Юлію Обертрайс (1969–2023) — професорку нової та новітньої історії Східної Європи Університету Фрідріха-Олександра (м. Ерланген-Нюрнберг). Автор відзначає віхи її біографії та напрями досліджень, а також згадує про її візити до Харківського національного*

університету імені В. Н. Каразіна та ті спільні заходи, у яких брала участь Юлія Обертрайс.

Ключові слова: **Юлія Обертрайс, східноєвропейські дослідження, спогади.**

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