

international edition

The Ukrainian Week

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**WHY
THE MAJORITY
ALWAYS VOTES
AGAINST
THE PARTY OF REGIONS
BUT THE MINORITY
ALWAYS WINS**



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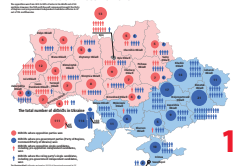
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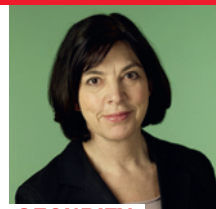
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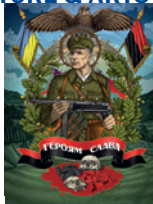
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AFTER THE E

International organizations have paid close attention to the election, taking a deep insight into the process, and getting a better picture of the election reality in Ukraine. While some gave positive feedback, most foreign observers and media noted serious violations and flaws that may delay the prospect of the EU Association Agreement ratification for Ukraine

Frankfurter Allgemeine

"The EU should give some signals to regulate democracy in Ukraine, but those signals should not have a negative impact on the Ukrainian people. The Council of Europe can ban the traveling of some SBU (Special Service of Ukraine – Ed.) chiefs and prosecutors involved in demonstrative trials. But, first of all, European politicians, especially those from Poland, should stop treating Yanukovich as a gentleman and walk the red carpet with him. The Poles' historical concern that Russia may one day "swallow" Ukraine and once again appear on their Eastern border is understandable indeed... Oligarchs in Ukraine are very well aware that their game is over as soon as they are left alone in Moscow's orbit without European support. Ukraine will turn into the empire's satellite and its president will become a princeling. Neither Yanukovich, nor his billionaires want this. They need a partner, therefore they will not find it easy to ignore demands concerning the rule of law. Still, these demands should be specific and unanimous, not just indecisive hints at European values."

OSCE

"Ukraine's parliamentary elections were characterized by a tilted playing field... This was the result, primarily, of the abuse of administrative resources, as well

as a lack of transparency in campaign and party financing and of balanced media coverage. "Considering the abuse of power, and the excessive role of money in this election, democratic progress appears to have reversed in Ukraine," said Walburga Habsburg Douglas, the Special Co-ordinator who led the OSCE short-term election observation mission and the Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation. "One should not have to visit a prison to hear from leading political figures in the country."

"Ukrainians deserved better from these elections. The 'oligarchization' of the whole process meant that citizens lost their ownership of the election, as well as their trust in it," said Andreas Gross, the Head of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) delegation. "Unfortunately, the great democratic potential of Ukrainian society was not realized in yesterday's vote."

"Tymoshenko and Klitschko should now oppose (the government – Ed.) together in the new parliament. For this they need a Europe that will support them, show interest and criticize problems with the rule of law. They have three years to do this. In the 2015 presidential election, they should agree on a single candidate to run for the presidency. And they must win back the people who lost trust in the power of transformation in politics. This is probably an almost impossible challenge."

DIE ZEIT

DER STANDARD

"After its defeat, the opposition complained about voter bribery and adminis-

trative pressure. These claims may be partly true, but are not good enough to explain the outcome because the opposition should have tried to work harder: political apathy is too high in Ukraine, and public trust is extremely low. The impact of this crisis is still visible, especially given the fact that Tymoshenko is still an opposition leader. Unlike in the 2004 presidential election where almost 80% of the population voted, this time voter turnout was barely 60%. Those who stayed at home on election day were the voters strongly disenchanted with the Orange Revolution."

ELECTION DAY

WSJ THE WALL STREET JOURNAL ONLINE

"There appears little hope for closer ties with the West, even if the elections are deemed free and fair. Western leaders have indicated Mr. Yanukovich needs to free Ms. Tymoshenko, relax the ruling party's grip on the media and push through legal and other overhauls if the European Union is to revive a political-association and free-trade deal it shelved last year.

That could increase pressure on Mr. Yanukovich to give in to Russia's demands to join a customs union it has formed with other ex-Soviet republics in order to receive lower-price gas."

FINANCIAL TIMES

"...even if Yanukovich does lean westwards, there is still the big neighbour to the east. "The key will be the relationship with Russia," says Timothy Ash. "Russia has supported Yanukovich and now it wants delivery. Warm words may no longer be enough. It could get ugly and aggressive." Russia wants Ukraine's energy sector assets and, especially, access to Ukraine's gas pipelines. If Russia decides to play hardball, it could get ugly indeed: Russia is a big customer of Ukraine's agricultural and industrial goods. As Ash puts it, Russia has considerable ability to disrupt the Ukrainian economy."

"The United States Government is concerned that the conduct of Sunday's parliamentary elections constituted a step backwards from progress made during previous parliamentary elections and the 2010 presidential election, elections that had marked important steps forward for Ukraine's democracy... While election day was peaceful overall and observed by a large number of domestic and international observers, we are troubled by allegations of fraud and falsification in the voting process and tabulation, by the disparity between preliminary results from the Central Election Commission and parallel vote tabulations, and by the Central Election Commission's decision not to release precinct results. We also reiterate our deep concern that the politically motivated convictions of opposition leaders... prevented them from standing in these elections."



Süddeutsche Zeitung

"Ukraine is structurally underdeveloped and politically authoritarian. Yanukovich and his people managed to fool Ukrainians that their grief over 2004, the dreams of the Orange Revolution, hopes of openness, democracy and Western integration, as well as simultaneous friendship with Russia are in the best hands as long as he is in power... The struggle for power that raged for years between ex-president Viktor Yushchenko and his premier Yulia Tymoshenko changed the way many people thought: they no longer want to know about democracy if it only means that everyone is fighting against everyone else... The opposition, grouped around the imprisoned Yulia Tymoshenko, gained fairly good results despite massive falsifications before the election. Anti-government parties managed to convince almost half of all voters to support them. But it wasn't enough. A new uprising, another Orange Revolution, is a remote prospect. Yanukovich was successful with his policy: he satiated the voters' hunger with propaganda and paternalism."

ENEMO

"ENEMO international observation mission to Ukraine has noted that parliamentary elections held on October 28, 2012 were competitive, offering voters choice between various political parties and candidates, however, election campaign and polling day were negatively affected by serious flaws and violations. Mr. Peter Novotny, Head of the Mission stated: "Compared to previous 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections, ENEMO mission observed in the pre-election period significantly higher number of campaign violations, abuse of administrative resources, voter bribery, harassment and intimidation of candidates and campaign workers and intimidation of journalists. The political landscape of 2012 elections was also influenced by imprisonment of two prominent opposition figures, Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko."

The Distorted Will of the People

The absolute majority of Ukrainians voted against the Yanukovych regime, however, a pro-presidential majority will once more dominate parliament

Author:
Oleksandr
Kramar

Representatives of most influential international organizations, who observed the election in Ukraine, noted that this year's parliamentary election was accompanied by mass violations, and has thus become the latest step away from democracy. They are refraining from making final evaluations until the completion of the vote counting process, both under the proportional and the first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government is actively working to legitimize the results of the will of the people, referring to the fact that under the proportional component, they almost correspond with exit poll data. Based on this, Mykola Azarov even spoke about the "classic free and democratic elections that have taken place".

However, in fact, the election testified to the exact opposite: civilized mechanisms for the renewal of the representative body in accordance with the public disposition in the state, remain blocked, even though that is the purpose of parliamentary elections in democratic countries.

First of all, even under party lists, the preliminary data of the Central Election Commission (CEC) differs significantly from the data of exit polls and the parallel counting of votes by various opposition forces. There are two obvious disparities: the significantly understated result of the opposition party, Svoboda, and the overstated result of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), an ally of the Party of Regions (PR) under the currently ruling coalition in Ukraine. PR's result is somewhat higher, while that of

UDAR is somewhat lower, than indicated in the parallel counting of votes by opposition forces and the results of most exit polls.

However, voting under party lists attested to the government's defeat, although it was not as significant as it could have been if equal conditions had been provided to all campaign participants; Yulia Tymoshenko had not been imprisoned; opposition political forces had had free access to the mass media; and the PR had not applied an extensive arsenal of means to distort the voters' dispositions in its favour during the pre-election campaign and domination at election commissions at all levels, as well as diverse violations during voting, which will obviously affect the result.

According to preliminary CEC data, PR has achieved the lowest percentage it has ever had – 30% of votes (the National Exit Poll gave it 28.1%) versus 34% in 2007 and 32% in 2006. On the other hand, three opposition forces, who made it into parliament, collectively gained a much better outcome than the party in power. PR's allies under the current parliamentary coalition – the CPU – obtained 13%, but only because they were able to persuade their voters that they would allegedly truly oppose the Yanukovych regime.

THE DISCRIMINATION OF THE MAJORITY

In spite of the unequivocal public vote of no confidence, the Presidential Administration will once more be able to create a loyal majority in parliament, due to the distortion of the electoral

disposition in FPTP districts, and subsequently, the agony of the Yanukovych will continue until the presidential election.

The defective law on elections played a key role in this, since it did not provide for voting in FPTP districts in two rounds, as is the case in most civilized countries with a mixed election system. As a result, having attained about 28% of the vote (according to the exit poll conducted for the Inter and ICTV TV channels) on 28 October, PR candidates obtained mandates in most FPTP districts. This shows that the gap in the proportional and FPTP vote outcome for a given party has nothing to do with the assumption that the party may be unpopular in a given district, while its candidate is popular there – as the widespread stereotype has it. When "popular candidates", who have the support of 28% of voters, gain more than half of all the mandates, this is evidence that the system ensures an unprecedented distortion of electoral dispositions and deprives the absolute majority of citizens of the right to choose the representatives they prefer at the Verkhovna Rada. After all, 20-30% of those who participated in the voting or just 10-15% of all registered voters was quite



enough in a number of districts for a given candidate to win.

However, even this insignificant percentage was reached with large-scale manipulation in a number of cases. These included the absurd division of districts in favour of a specifically determined pro-government candidate, bribery, unequal access to voters, pressure on the competition and other signs of an unfair pre-election campaign, as well as during the voting and vote-counting at polling stations. The essence of the idea of on-line observation at the polling stations was completely wiped out, since the subsequent counting at polling stations and DEC had no video monitoring, while a series of scandals in a number of districts showed that it was these processes that should have been monitored. As a result of the constant clarification and re-writing of the protocols the CEC had not even received preliminary results two days after the conclusion of voting.

EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

Having taken advantage of control over the majority of polling station members and the support of administrative resources, pro-government candidates decided to win at all cost in a number of districts, or sabotage the election, guided by the "if I can't have it, neither can anyone else" rule. The most problematic, were ten districts in Kyiv and adjoining regions of the oblast (District Nos. 211, 214, 215, 216, 217, 223 and Nos. 90, 91, 95, 97), as well as at least eight in the regions: in the Cherkasy (Nos. 194 and 197), Vinnytsia (No. 11), Zhytomyr (No. 67), Kirovohrad (No. 101), Mykolayiv (No. 132), Kherson (No. 182), Luhansk (No. 104) and other oblasts. Because of the threat of the defeat of pro-government candidates there,

vote-counting was blocked for a considerable amount of time, using various means. Meanwhile, representatives of opposition single candidates signaled that the falsification of results was taking place.

According to a Batkivshchyna report, after it became clear that its candidate had won in District No. 197 in Cherkasy Oblast, Bohdan Hubsy, the pro-government self-nominated candidate, arrived at the DEC and provoked the suspension of its work, in order to sabotage the election. "Electricity disappeared on the premises, three commission members were taken to hospital, and seven others simply fled from the DEC," stated the announcement from the Batkivshchyna press-service. As a result, no quorum was possible. When the likelihood of the victory of Batkivshchyna's Ksenia Lyapina was clear in District No. 216, the head of one polling station disappeared with the seal and protocols. The

for pro-government candidates. Svoboda also experienced a similar problem in two Kyiv districts. For example, during a verification of the results, it was established that the results of its candidate, Andriy Illyenko, who was a candidate in District No. 215, at one of the polling stations, was attributed to his rival, the Secretary of the Kyiv City Council and owner of the Epicentre chain, Halyna Hereha.

While it was possible to defend the victories of opposition candidates in most cases in Kyiv, in many oblasts, where the opposition had won a convincing victory under party lists, the victory of pro-government candidates was nevertheless announced, and where it proved impossible to reach such a goal, the counting of votes was literally blocked. In a number of cases, this provoked actions on the part of the supporters of the candidates, who considered themselves to be the victims of falsification. For example, in Nova Kakhovka, people took DEC No. 184 by storm, demanding that legitimate re-count of the protocols, under which PR's Mykola Dmytruk allegedly won, be conducted, while popular local self-nominated candidate, Ivan Vynnyk, obtained only 100 votes less. After this, the Head of the Commission and several of its members tried to escape, in order to prevent the re-count.

Mykola Tomenko, one of the leaders of Batkivshchyna, announced that on 29 October, the Heads of Oblast State Administrations (who also hold the office of Heads of PR Oblast Election Headquarters) instructed representatives of oblast state administrations and the heads of regional administrations to put pressure on members of DEC and polling stations to change already counted protocols to new ones, which contained the figures they preferred. The situation in District No. 132 in Mykolayiv Oblast, where "Berkut", a special force unit, stormed the DEC, after which the previous results of the counting of 100% of votes, which determined Batkivshchyna's Arkadiy Kornatskiy as the winner, was reversed, in favour of PR's Vitaliy Travnyanko. Batkivshchyna also reported the attempt to apply a similar scheme »

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR CONTROL OVER MOST OF THE CECs, PRO-GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES USED WERE DETERMINED TO GAIN A VICTORY AT ANY COST

confrontation and blocking of the work of DEC was equally acute in districts where opposition candidates were winning in Kyiv Oblast and in Kyiv itself.

Oleh Tiahnybok stated that "the government is trying to steal every third vote cast in favour of Svoboda and every third district, where the election was won by a Svoboda candidate." The party's preliminary results, as announced on the CEC website, indeed appeared significantly lower than in the results of the exit poll and parallel vote-counting, conducted by various opposition parties. Meanwhile, according to Svoboda, in two districts in Kyiv and Khmelnytsk Oblasts, information was forwarded to the CEC, that contradicted the parallel counting of the party's votes, based on the protocols with original ink seals from the polling station and ensured a minimal advantage (in the number of votes)

in District No. 130 (also in Mykolayiv Oblast), where its single candidate, Ihor Brychenko won over Felix Olshevskiy (PR). The result in District No. 14 in Vinnytsia also changed radically, where on the morning of 31 October, after the counting of 100% of the protocols, Batkivshchyna's Ivan Melnychuk won, and during the day, the victory of self-nominated candidate, Viktor Zhrebniuk, was announced.

The pro-government self-nominated candidates, who failed to achieve a review of the results of the election in their favour in the DEC, decided to turn to the "independent" court. These are the means taken by Tetiana Zasukha, the wife of the odious former head of the Kyiv Oblast during the Kuchma era, who filed a claim for the recognition of the invalidity of voting at districts, where Viktor Romaniuk, the Batkivshchyna candidate, won.

DEFEAT AT THEIR FAULT

The sensation of this election was not only the unexpected high result of Svoboda (which the majority of the population considered to be one that is unlikely to cooperate with the government), but also a signal from society to the politicians for the latter to stop underestimating it. Large-scale manipulations, particularly the publication of clearly customized opinion polls by respected sociological services and the pressure of administrative resources raised doubts among a significant amount of politicians and experts as to the ability to counteract such pressure. The opposition virtually ignored districts in Central and Southern Ukraine. A lot of candidates were nominated there, who had neither the chance, nor the will to win. However, the results of voting confirmed a well-known truth that he who tries, will overcome. This was not only the case for Svoboda, which gained almost twice as many votes in regions that were new to it, than in the previous election, but also for a number of opposition candidates in districts, which they had already given up on (districts where candidates included Oles Dovhiy, Halyna Hareha and Viktor Pylypshyn in Kyiv, FPTP districts in Vinnytsia, Cherkasy, Poltava, Sumy, Kirovohrad, Mykolayiv and

Kherson Oblasts). Quite high results were also attained under the party lists of opposition forces in the South East (Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Mykolayiv and even Kharkiv and Odesa Oblasts), where in aggregate, they were snapping at the heels of the PR.

At the same time, because of mistakes made during the determination of candidates, also as a result of the passivity of the latter and the lack of systematic work with voters, the opposition lost a significant amount of seats in parliament, which gave grounds, in some cases, to talk about a lack of wish to win. This is evidenced by the fact that the rating of the United Opposition, Svoboda and UDAR candidates in a number of districts in Central and Northern Ukraine is significantly lower than that of the party they represent.

The lack of agreements among the major opposition forces on the removal of less popular candidates in favour of one another also had a negative impact in their results in the districts, where pro-government candidates had been likely to win. If Batkivshchyna, UDAR and Svoboda had come to an agreement, their chances to gain several dozen extra districts would have soared. This could have been done in all South-Eastern regions. An analysis of published preliminary CEC data shows that in this case, opposition candidates could easily have won at the very least in Districts No. 182 and 184 in Kherson Oblast, District No. 132 in Mykolayiv Oblast and District No. 82 in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. In Central Ukraine, the timely removal of a less popular single candidate could have ensured victory in District No. 66 in Zhytomyr Oblast, District No. 96 in Kyiv Oblast, District Nos. 100 and 102 in Kirovohrad Oblast and District No. 199 in Cherkasy Oblast.

It was because of the lack of an agreed candidate that the opposition forces virtually lost in the entire Khmelnytsk Oblast. A single candidate representing all three main opposition forces would also have won in District Nos. 20 and 21 in Volyn, District No. 155 in Rivne Oblast and District No. 87 in the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast.

Overall, this makes at least 16 districts, where together, candidates from the three opposition forces which had crossed the parliamentary threshold gained significantly more votes than the pro-government candidates, which according to preliminary CEC data, won in the relevant districts.

Meanwhile, there is the impression that after the parliamentary election, opposition parties are being drawn more actively into conflicts between themselves. This was reflected after the break-down of agreements on the mutual agreement of candidates in FPTP districts. In this case, the core of the contention was District No. 95 in Irpin, where, after the publication of the exit poll, when it became clear that the pro-government self-nominated candidate, Petro Melnyk would not win, a battle began between the candidates from Batkivshchyna and UDAR, who, according to exit poll data, had attained first and second place. Batkivshchyna accused UDAR of

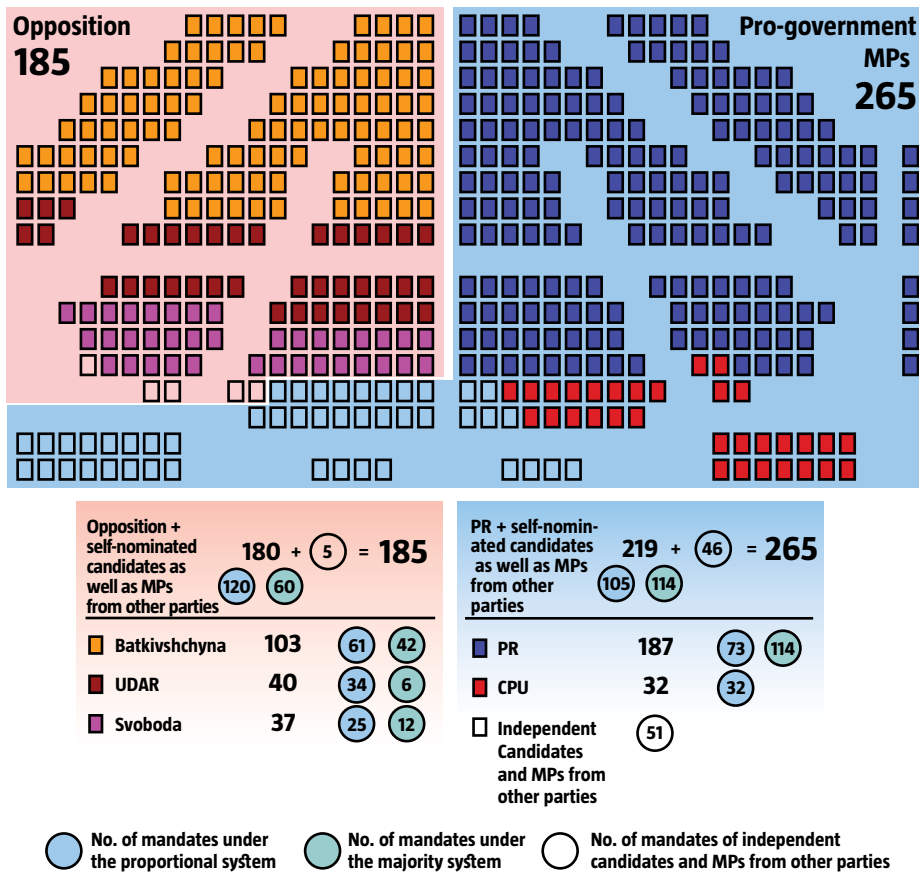


THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE OPPOSITION WAS THE LACK OF AGREEMENTS REGARDING INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES WHO MADE IT INTO PARLIAMENT

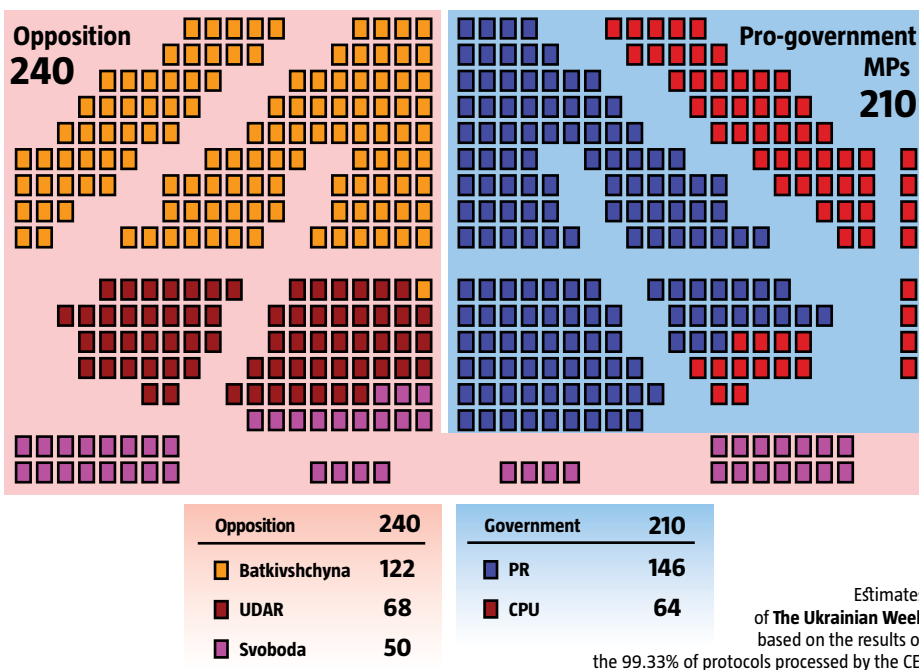
playing up to Petro Melnyk, while he, in turn, responded that there was no such threat any more, and that it was necessary to establish which of the opposition candidates had actually won. Bearing the latest announcements in mind, pro-government candidates decided to take advantage of the Irpin precedent in their own interests, at the same time, heating up conflicts between opposition forces. UDAR gave information on a provocation that was discovered in District No. 223, where self-nominated Viktor Pylypshyn was running against Svoboda candidate, Yuriy Levchenko. On 31 October, two young men with IDs that were allegedly from the UDAR party newspaper, came to the District Election Commission and started to provoke a conflict with Svoboda representatives. When de-

Lost Victory

Having voted last year for a mixed election system, the opposition, which has significantly greater support in society than the government, has actually programmed its own defeat. The composition of the new parliament, based on the results of voting under the mixed system (proportional and majority) on 28 October



Composition of the new parliament, if it had been formed under the proportional system (taking into account the results of voting under party lists)



mandated to present their ID documents, and after phone calls were made to the leadership of Klitschko's political force, they quickly disappeared.

VICTORY, REALLY?

In spite of everything, PR was unable to win more mandates than it has in the current parliament, even notwithstanding the application of the FPTP system and will have 186–187 mandates. They will obviously compensate their shortages with pseudo-independent self-nominated candidates and crossovers from opposition forces. However, there is a fundamental difference from the 2010 election – the awareness of the fact that the Yanukovich regime is in agony. This is why the results of this election will be tricoloured and parliament will be composed of pro-government MPs, those from the opposition and representatives of the “mud”. The latter will be guided by personal and business interests, as well as the instinct for self-preservation, which will determine which course they follow. Among the self-nominated candidates that made it into parliament, there is an element of those, who under current conditions, could try to play their own game and display resistance to pressure from the party in power. Under certain conditions, they could distance themselves from the pro-government majority. Traditionally, such a scenario is considered to be the most likely one – closer to the 2015 presidential election, as was the case in 2004. However, in fact, this process will be related to the situation, whereby the balance will tip in the opposite direction from the current centre for approving decisions in Ukraine, as opposed to the date.

This is why, in spite of the clear distortion of the will of most Ukrainians, the chances for the opposition will largely depend on the ability to join efforts to protect election results and avoid battles for mutual destruction, such as those between Yulia Tymoshenko, Viktor Yushchenko and Arseniy Yatseniuk during the previous presidential election campaign. After all, the presidential race has clearly begun. ■

Stealing Ukraine: Vote by Vote

Indications of falsifications in the national election

1. The government's most effective technology in rigging the parliamentary election was the newly-introduced mixed system. Three opposition parties enjoyed an undeniable victory in the party-list vote, gaining from 60% to 94% in 16 oblasts of Ukraine. However, the Party of Regions' nominees and pro-government independent candidates ended up winning the FPTP vote in 57 out of 119 constituencies. On the whole, single-candidate constituencies gave the Party of Regions 115 seats in the new parliament, plus at least 40 "independent" MPs who are most likely to join the pro-government majority, and 73 seats gained under the party-list vote. If the election had been held under the proportional system used before the parliament changed the procedure, the opposition would now have over 50% of seats in the parliament, given the outcome of the party-list vote, while the Party of Regions – even with the Communist Party – would end up with less than 45%.

2. Single candidates bribed voters on a massive scale. Some paid UAH 200 or 300 per vote, making the voters sign documents to make sure that they vote for the right candidate. Observers, media and party activists noted voter bribery all over Ukraine. Disparities in the support of parties from one political camp and single candidates from another signals that this mechanism was used in a given region. For instance, Batkivshchyna won the party-list vote in all constituencies in Vinnystia Oblast, while the United Opposition's single candidates won in just three of the oblast's eight single-candidate districts.

3. Voters, especially public sector employees, faced intimidation in all oblasts, particu-

larly those focused on agriculture. To reinforce the psychological effect, representatives of the authorities collected copies of their passports and signatures confirming their support of the Party of Regions, and threatened to fire them if they voted for an opposition party or single candidate. Many were warned that their choice would be monitored with video cameras installed at the polling stations. Facts of forcing doctors, teachers, and employees of utility service providers to give their signatures in support of the Party of Regions were recorded all over Ukraine, including Western Ukraine and Kyiv. In some places, including Kharkiv, college students were forced to vote under the control of supervisors.

According to sources in the Party of Regions, bribing and intimidation were part of the plan to compile a register of voters who will vote for the party in power in given oblasts and regions, which was provided to its local organizations from above.

4. Up to 10% of all voters applied to vote at home, many of them listing sickness as a cause. In the Kharkiv Oblast, the number of such people was 1.5 times higher in comparison to the 2010 local election. Moreover, observers noted that many people voted without any documents or certificates proving reasons for such voting in some FPTP districts. Half of those who voted at home in Cherkasy Oblast had no proper documents to confirm why they could not vote at polling stations.

5. All members in many polling stations were directly or indirectly controlled by the Party of Regions, according to UDAR, which learned this in Sevastopol after calling representatives of some DECs.

6. Svoboda and several single candidates from the opposition were marked as "withdrawn" on the ballots in some constituencies.

7. Video cameras recorded massive ballot stuffing, especially in Donetsk Oblast and the Irpin district of Kyiv Oblast where the Party of Regions' Petro Melnyk was running.

8. Some voters were given only one ballot to fill in, while the ballot for single candidates was held back.

9. Observers noted carousels – a technology whereby groups of people are driven from one polling station to another to vote several times over; voters cast ballots filled in by falsifiers in advance and give away their clean unused ballots, or photograph the ballots they fill in to prove that they have voted for the right candidate or party – in Odesa and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, Uzhhorod and other regions.

10. Voters were driven to polling stations in buses. This technology is not officially illegal, unless it is used as the promotion of a specific candidate or party. Such services were provided massively to voters in Zakarpattia, Donetsk and other oblasts, by people cooperating with certain parties.

11. The "blue sweater" is a technology whereby commission members involved in falsifications wore signs to make sure that certain voters recognized them – this was mostly for those who intended to vote for absent voters. Reports on such activities were forwarded from several oblasts. UDAR representatives found this was the case in the Orikhiv Region, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, where opposition observers spent several hours trying to prevent a dozen people who were

The violations mentioned in the article are based on reports observers shared with *The Ukrainian Week* and the analysis of data on recorded violations shared by international observers and candidates





not on the voter list at the polling station, from getting ballots and voting there.

12. Pens with disappearing ink were used in a number of polling stations, including those in Odesa, the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast and other locations.

13. Most districts in Crimea, as well as a number of others – especially in South-Eastern Ukraine – delayed the disclosure of voter turnout.

14. Voter turnout in the Donetsk Oblast exceeded the overall turnout in the country significantly, reaching up to 100% in Horlivka, for instance, despite exit polls showing that the voters there were significantly less willing to go the election compared to the rest of the country.

15. Surprising results of the vote in special facilities, such as prisons, hospitals and the like. The party in power often exerted pressure on them to improve its ratings in the election. The penal colony in Berdychiv, Zhytomyr Oblast, that was No. 70 in District No. 63, was a telling example: its prisoners gave 237 votes for the Party of Regions and only 163 for Batkivshchyna, which is abnormal for a constituency where 43.77% of all voters supported Batkivshchyna compared to just 16.27% for the Party

of Regions. In many cases, observers were not allowed into colonies during the vote, and no video monitoring was installed at special facility polling stations. This is where the Party of Regions won with abnormally high support compared to the general election outcome, with some polling stations registering as many as 98% of the vote in its favour. Opposition representatives also recorded facts where all patients were released from hospitals right after they voted, or early because they refused to tell the administration whom they were going to vote for.

16. Some commissions found their work blocked. Some DEC members left commissions with the ballot boxes, unless they managed the right level of falsification during the vote at home – such as in the Holosiyevy District in Kyiv. DEC heads, loyal to the party in power, refused to sign protocols for other commission members in the polling stations where opposition parties or candidates won. Some DEC and polling station commission heads “disappeared” to avoid signing the protocols from polling stations where the party in power or its single candidates lost. DEC refused to accept ballots from the polling stations where the pro-government candidates lost, giving various lame excuses. Commission members who delivered ballots from polling stations

there or opposition candidates were obviously winning the election. This was how the work of most DEC in Kyiv and the Kyiv Oblast, where opposition candidates were likely to win, was blocked.

18. Votes were counted with a considerable lack of transparency. Vote counting for parties and single candidates includes two major stages: sorting ballots into piles by party and candidates, and then the counting. The most common and easiest rigging technology was to sort the ballots quickly without showing it to all the people present at the polling station. The law requires DEC members to show each ballot to all commission members while sorting them into piles, and to announce the party or the candidate marked in the ballot out loud. According to the OPORA NGO, its activists found that ballot sorting did not involve the demonstration of which party or candidate was marked in each ballot in as much as 11% of all polling stations. Based on reports from other observers, the share of such polling stations amounts to nearly 40%.

19. Vote counting was delayed in DEC where opposition candidates were likely to win. These included districts where the notorious President of the Tax Academy, Petro Melnyk, turncoat Bohdan Hubsyky, and others ran.

20. In many constituencies, the Party of Regions' candidates won in the last minutes, as the last 2-4% of the ballots were counted, beating their rivals by several hundred votes.

21. In a number of constituencies, phantom vote results were entered into the Election Electronic System. CEC Deputy Chairman, Zhanna Usenko-Chorna, admitted this: “We have a list of districts where the data entered into the Election software differs from that reported in the protocols with an original ink seal that was signed by commission members. There are quite a few such districts in Ukraine.”

22. Many DEC and polling station commissions refused to respectively register and accept complaints about various violations. Reports of this came from all over Ukraine during the voting and counting. ■

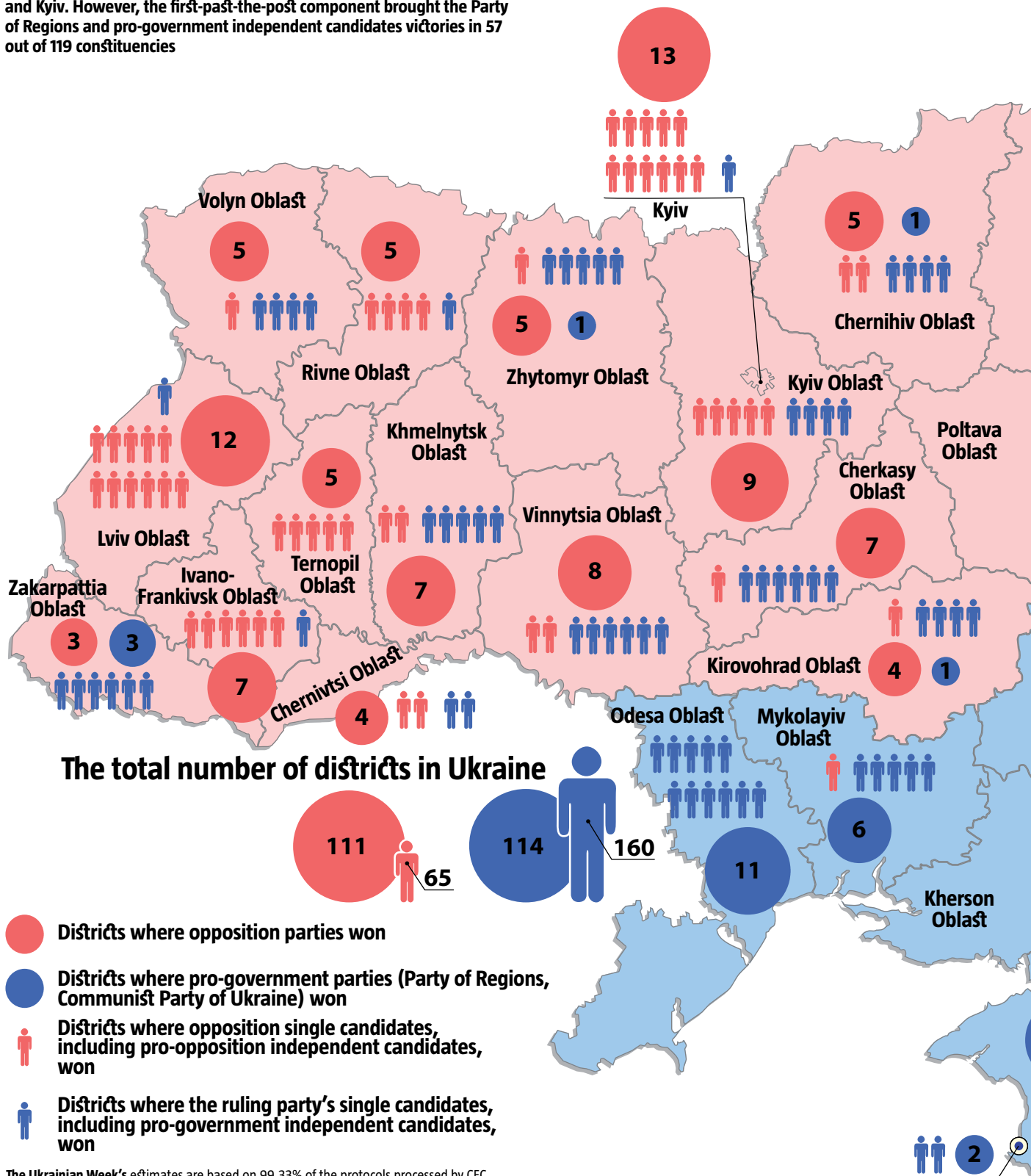
ATHLETIC YOUNG MEN BLOCKED THE WORK OF DEC AND POLLING STATION COMMISSIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN SERIOUS VIOLATIONS WERE FOUND THERE OR OPPOSITION CANDIDATES WERE OBVIOUSLY WINNING THE ELECTION

where the opposition had been projected to win earlier to DEC were intentionally made to wait long hours – or days – to exhaust them and make them less vigilant.

17. Athletic young men blocked the work of DEC and polling station commissions, especially when serious violations were found

The First-Past-the-Post Element

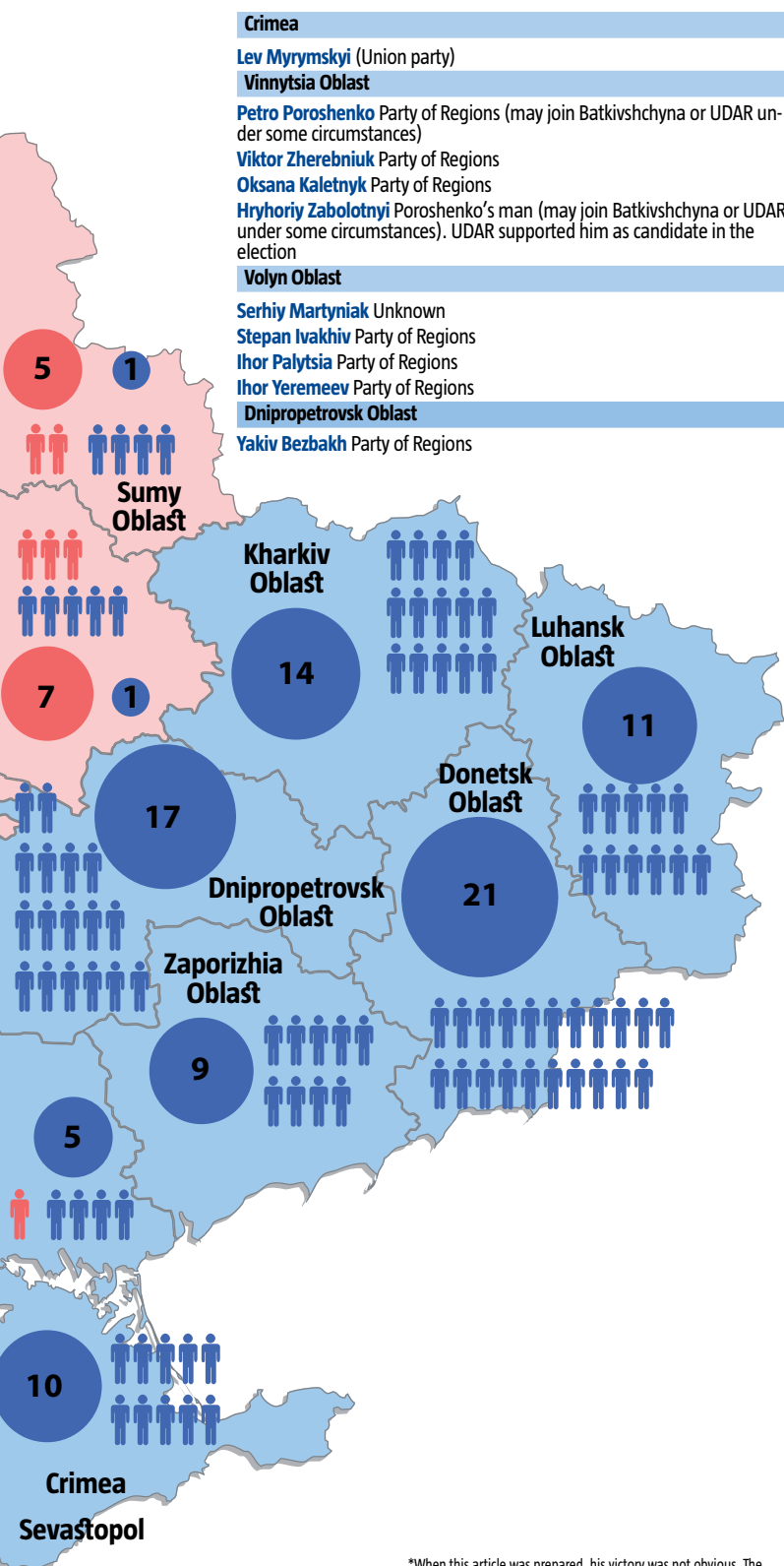
The opposition won from 55% to 90% of votes in 16 oblasts out of 24 and Kyiv. However, the first-past-the-post component brought the Party of Regions and pro-government independent candidates victories in 57 out of 119 constituencies



The Ukrainian Week's estimates are based on 99.33% of the protocols processed by CEC

The dependent “independent” candidates

The Ukrainian Week offers projections on which parties the independent FPTP candidates and those from parties that did not make it into the parliament are likely to join in the new parliament. Most are business owners and virtually all of them are likely to vote in accordance with the Party of Regions. At least 46 of the 51 “independent” MPs will turn out to be loyal to the government



Zhytomyr Oblast

Anzhelika Labunska Party of Regions

Volodymyr Lytvyn Party of Regions

Viktor Rozvadovsky Party of Regions

Zakarpattia Oblast

Viktor Baloha (Yedynyi Tsentr – The United Centre) Party of Regions (may join the opposition under some circumstances)

Pavlo Baloha (Yedynyi Tsentr – The United Centre) Party of Regions (may join the opposition under some circumstances)

Vasyl Petiovka (Yedynyi Tsentr – The United Centre) Party of Regions (may join the opposition under some circumstances)

Zaporizhia Oblast

Oleksandr Ponomariov Party of Regions

Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast

Yuriy Derevianko Party of Regions

Oleksandr Doniy UDAR

Kyiv Oblast

Vitaliy Chudnovsky Party of Regions

Serhiy Mishchenko Batkivshchyna or UDAR

Luhansk Oblast

Volodymyr Struk Party of Regions

Lviv Oblast

Yaroslav Dubnevych Party of Regions

Odesa Oblast

Ihor Markov Party of Regions

Serhiy Hrynevetskyi (The People's Party) Party of Regions

Davyd Zhvania Party of Regions

Anton Kisse Party of Regions

Poltava Oblast

Yuriy Shapovalov Party of Regions

Oleh Kulinich Party of Regions

Volodymyr Pylypenko Unknown (most likely the Party of Regions)

Kostiantyn Zhevahov Party of Regions

Sumy Oblast

Oleksandr Volkov Is likely to join the Party of Regions despite his pre-election loyalty to Batkivshchyna

Ihor Molotok Party of Regions

Kherson Oblast

Fedir Nehoy Party of Regions

Khmelnitsk Oblast

Serhiy Labaziuk Party of Regions

Serhiy Buriak Party of Regions

Viktor Bondar Unknown (most likely the Party of Regions)

Oleksandr Hereha Party of Regions

Volodymyr Melnychenko Party of Regions

Cherkasy Oblast

Volodymyr Zubyk Party of Regions

Bohdan Hubsykyi* Party of Regions

Viktor Tymoshenko Party of Regions

Valentyn Nychyporenko Party of Regions

Chernihiv Oblast

Vladyslav Atroshenko Party of Regions

Ihor Rybakov Party of Regions

Oleh Laishko (Radical Party of Oleh Liashko) Unknown (most likely UDAR)

Ivan Kurovskyi Party of Regions

Mykola Rudkovskyi Party of Regions

Kyiv

Viktor Pylypshyn* Party of Regions

*When this article was prepared, his victory was not obvious. The analysis is based on the processed 98.32% of protocols

Dame Audrey Glover

on the lack of a level playing field in the Ukrainian election

The election observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) was one of the key observation missions to the Ukrainian parliamentary election alongside the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe, NATO and European MPs. It employs deep analysis of the election process and a clear methodology. OSCE/ODIHR Head Dame Audrey Glover talks to *The Ukrainian Week* about the mission's observations.

UW: Your mission has been to follow the election campaign since the beginning of September. Can you share your observa-



OPINION

Not Quite "Free and Fair"



Author: Rebecca Harms,
Co-President of the The Greens–
European Free Alliance group in the
European parliament

The initial review of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine by the OSCE, the Council of Europe, ODIHR and the delegation of the European Parliament is very negative in tone, although in the opinion of observers, the election was well organized and mostly adhered to regulations. The biggest problems were related to the counting process, which lasted into the third night.

In order to determine whether the elections were free and fair, more needs to be evaluated than simply the election day events. Thanks to the long-term observers of the OSCE and the strong commitment of Ukrainian observers, many problems were discovered, leading to the harsh review on the day after the election. Even if these problems are not all new, any re-

gression of democracy must be condemned. For a return to democratic rules, it is essential that representatives of the OSCE, Council of Europe and European Parliament have expressed their disapproval.

Once again, instances of voter coercion were reported. Voters were threatened with firing, not only from government jobs but also private companies. Votes were bought. Direct candidates were willing to pay more than ever for a single vote. Some people were observed voting multiple times as the carousel technology¹ was used. It is not yet clear to what extent these manipulations could affect the outcome. But there are still more reasons for the harsh reviews.

According to observation findings, the current electoral law does not suit the country's needs.

BIO

Dame Audrey Glover is a UK human rights lawyer. From 1994-1997, she was the Director of the ODIHR, and headed the UK Delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission from 1998 to 2003. More recently, she has headed OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions, including those to Georgia and Azerbaijan (2010), Albania (2009), Italy and the US (2008) and Ukraine (2007).

tions on the whole electoral process in Ukraine? How has the situation changed compared to the previous national election campaign in 2007?

– The OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission has been in Ukraine since 10 September. The Core Team is comprised of 20 members, including election, political and legal analysts and a media analyst with a team of assistants. We were joined shortly afterwards by 90 long-term observers who were briefed and deployed around the country. During their time here they have been observing the whole election process, including the election campaign, and reporting regularly to the Core Team. 600 short-term observers joined us for the election day.

Our preliminary findings are that these elections were characterized by the lack of a level playing field, caused primarily by the abuse of administrative resources, lack of transparency of the campaign and party funding,

as well as a lack of balanced media coverage. Certain aspects of the pre-election period constituted a step backwards in comparison to recent national elections. However, voters had a choice between distinct parties. The election day was calm and peaceful overall. For the most part, voting and counting were assessed positively. Tabulation was assessed negatively as it lacked transparency. We are continuing to monitor the process.

UW: What major technologies were used to rig the election?

– The new mixed electoral system with MPs for half the seats being elected by the proportional system and for the other half by a single mandate has changed the dynamics of these elections. The competitive nature of the campaign was negatively affected by cases of violence, intimidation, harassment and vote buying. Candidates were prevented from getting their message across to voters. Numerous violations were observed or substantiated by long-term observers during the campaign. Most worrying is the fact that the campaign was marred by the abuse of administrative resources, blurring the distinction between the state and the ruling party in contravention of Ukraine's OSCE commitments.

UW: At which stages of the electoral process did your mission

PRELIMINARY REACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

In their **Statement on the Ukrainian election**, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and International Cooperation Minister Julian Fantino say that the "elections are a key benchmark in Ukraine's democratic development and are indicative of worrying trends in the country's progress towards achieving its democratic aspirations... Irregularities observed during the campaign created an uneven playing field which may have interfered with the ability of citizens to freely express their electoral will... Ukraine has made substantial democratic strides since 1992 and it is disheartening that this year's parliamentary elections do not appear to have measured up to Ukraine's past democratic performance."

UK's Minister for Europe David Lidington:

"Ukraine's parliamentary elections were disappointing. Although voters were presented with a wide range of choices, International Election Observers found evidence that these choices were restricted through, for example, an unbalanced media environment, a lack of transparency in the way the final results were collated, and the absence of leading opposition candidates imprisoned as a result of unsoundly applied law. We regret that Ukraine wasted an opportunity to show firm and consistent commitment to democratic principles.

The UK sees enormous potential in Ukraine as a European neighbour and partner. As a strong supporter of Ukraine's European aspirations, we urge the new Ukrainian government, when it is formed, to address what needs to be done to bring new vigour to the process of building and sustaining healthy and robust democratic institutions."

European Parliament President Martin Schulz:

"Noting the preliminary conclusions of international observers from the OSCE/ODIHR mission, I regret that many shortcomings marred the ballot. I am concerned by the lack of a level playing field among political forces caused, among other reasons, by the abuse of administrative resources."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland: "...breaches were observed during the elections, including the use of administrative pressure, the lack of transparency in financing political parties and restricting access to the media for opposition and independent candidates. For those reasons, the election process did not fully conform to democratic standards."

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle:

"We reiterate our regret that the consequences of trials that did not respect international standards have prevented opposition representatives from standing in the parliamentary elections and call on the authorities to address this matter and take further steps to reform the judiciary to avoid their recurrence."

FPTP system exacerbates the temptation for corruption. In this situation, the opposition parties had no chance to obtain a fair number of constituencies despite considerable electoral support shown earlier. Opposition candidates were disqualified for "technical" reasons. Complaints were rarely investigated during the campaign. Candidates from the Party of Regions and their friends from "technical parties" took advantage of their institutional power to snatch up voters for themselves. Stories about the financial gifts granted to schools, hospitals and playgrounds are ceaseless.

Unequal opportunities for single candidates have been confirmed. Moreover, access to media, especially the medium of television, was unfairly restricted for the opposition. The state television reported on the ruling party more often and in a more positive light. The district election commissions were also unequally staffed in favor of the government, facilitating the manipulation of the counting and recording processes. In light of the many complaints

regarding the processes of counting and documentation, a review should be considered.

It's a bad sign when a leading opposition figure like Yuriy Lutsenko must speak to election observers from a jail cell. Working for the OSCE, Walburga Habsburg Douglas traced the dark shadow that lies over this election. Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko are in prison because the president and his government want them there. The report by Pat Cox and Alexander Kwasniewski also describes this selective justice. Both make it clear that in a democracy, the success or failure of a government is decided by voters and elections, not by prosecutors in courtrooms. Politically motivated judicial systems are incompatible with free elections.

The ruling party would not have achieved a majority without the abuse of institutional power. In my view of Kyiv, it is still important that a majority of citizens support the opposition, despite all doubts. And that these majorities want to be represented by politicians

who do not serve themselves, but their country. Andreas Gross of the Council of Europe said: "A democratic election is more than a contest in which oligarchs pay to win," and "citizens are the source of democracy." It would be a big step if the results were not rewritten by turncoats to provide the Party of Regions with a majority. We need to give careful consideration to the reasons for the success of UDAR and also Svoboda.

These elections were not free and fair in accordance with OSCE standards. The European Union must state this and then increase their efforts for a new democratic start in Ukraine. We have a commitment to provide criticism. The dispute over the Association Agreement must not obscure the urgency of Ukraine's need for a good visa agreement with the EU. We must at last enable the citizens of Europe's largest neighbouring country to travel freely.

¹ A technology whereby groups of people are driven from polling station to polling station to vote over and over again

discover facts of falsifications? What were they?

– The OSCE observation mission is an ongoing process. It observes the whole electoral cycle. We have long-term observers monitoring, checking and clarifying events during the whole time. If we find anything, we reflect this in our Interim Reports. During the course of the mission, we published two such reports. We also issued our Preliminary Findings and Conclusion on the day after the election. We will be publishing a Final Report in about two months. It will reflect our observations of the election cycle on the whole and provide recommendations on how to improve electoral legislation and practices.

UW: Shortly after the voting, Ukrainian officials attempted to persuade Ukrainian society and part of the international community that this election was free and transparent. To what extent is this in line with your mission's observations?

– We have our methodology for observing elections and our mandate is to observe and assess the entire electoral process in line with OSCE commitments, other international standards and national legislation. But we are not here to legitimize the elections or declare them valid or invalid. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights would be willing to offer assistance to the authorities if they should require it. That is part of the ODIHR methodology.

UW: What was the role of the media in the election campaign?

– We conducted the monitoring of seven main TV stations, as well as the print media. The campaign coverage in the news and current affairs programmes was limited to the most popular TV channels of those we monitored. This may have negatively affected voters' access to different political views. The fact that the amount of paid political advertising was five times higher indicates that political parties required significant financial means in order to reach out to voters. State TV displayed a clear bias in favour of the ruling party.

UW: What to do you think about the efficiency of the first-past-the-post system in Ukrainian conditions? Most European countries conduct mixed elections in two stages. Ukraine had it all in one day. Almost 50% of Ukrainian voters did not know that they also had to vote for single candidates.

– It is the sovereign right of a country to choose whichever form of

electoral system it would like to have. We commented in our statement that the new mixed electoral system has changed the dynamics of these elections. This new electoral law was adopted without the required wide consensual discussion and reintroduced some deficiencies which were noted previously. The law includes some important improvements although it also contains a number of shortcomings. ■

Foreign observers share their opinion on the election



Peter Novotny, Head of ENEMO Mission: "Compared to previous 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections, ENEMO mission observed in a significantly higher number of campaign violations, abuse of administrative resources, voter bribery, harassment and intimidation of candidates and campaign workers and intimidation of journalists in the pre-election period. The political landscape of 2012 elections was also influenced by imprisonment of two prominent opposition figures, Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko. The new election legislation also opened space for "technical parties" to win excessive membership in district election commissions and to organize system of massive replacements. As a result, the work of district election commission was negatively affected by high number of replacements by technical parties and by partisan confrontation. Cases of pressure, closed door sessions, limited access for observers to decisions and documents raised serious concerns about transparency and integrity of DEC work."

Chair of Canada's Election Observation Mission
Raynell Andreychuk:



"Taking into account observation results received by us, we can state that the election process on October 28 had certain drawbacks in many regions, which do not allow us to describe the elections as absolutely fair... These elections demonstrated a certain regress in democracy."



Markus Meckel, Chairman of the Civil Society Election Observation Mission (CSEOM): "Despite all of the drawbacks, the elections process was competitive, and this allowed voters to express their political preferences... At the same

time, significant abuses of power by some officials significantly affected the fairness of the whole election process. The introduction of single-mandate electoral districts had a pretty negative impact on the election given the political situation and specific experience of the country. This intensified political polarization in the country and increased risks linked with vote buying, the use of black PR, intimidation of potential candidates and the use of administrative resource, all of which was demonstrated by the reports coming in."



Viola von Cramon, Member of the German delegation at PACE and OSCE observer, commented that there were no big and obvious manipulations during the vote, but many of those happened before the election. Earlier reports by various observers clearly show that. One is the procedure to set up election commissions in a way to let very few opposition representatives or people from small parties who had barely anything to do with the election be members of election commissions. All observers assumed that this election could hardly be free and fair. Repressions, mostly aimed against the opposition, took place on a massive scale, especially in single-candidate constituencies. In 44 out of 80 constituencies, numerous cases of intimidation – sometimes physical harm – occurred. The way election commissions were set up and games with commission members prove that someone had been trying to use all the leverage they could use prior to the election.

ever, the election had been rigged skilfully before it even started."



Jürgen Klimke, CDU/CSU Member of Bundestag and OSCE observer: "The Ukrainian election was a masterpiece of deceit. No obvious falsifications took place at the polling station I observed, and the vote went smoothly and without restrictions. How-

Old and New Ways to Distort the Voting

On Sunday evening – the day of election – I was suddenly struck by some optimism! The polling stations in Brovary were ok. The pictures of the candidates were on the wall in alphabetical order and I found some observers from the real opposition parties among the many “technical” observers who not always remembered whom they represented when asked. At this optimistic moment, I was watching the counting at a polling station in district 97. The process went very slowly – but it was mainly fine.

When they started the counting, a journalist told me that the exit polls for the nationwide election showed around 60% to 40% in favour of the opposition parties. I was still aware of the possibility that the Party of Regions could win many of the first-past-the-post districts, but the exit polls in “my” constituency gave 32% to the Klitschko party candidate, compared to 18% for the Party of Regions’ candidate.

Could it be that the result would be favourable to those opposition parties who had made an agreement to withdraw candidates in support of the local candidate with the best chance to win earlier? For a few hours, I tried to picture the possibility that the Party of Regions’ majority in the new parliament – which it got thanks to the many turncoats after 2010 – would disappear! How would the President react? Would he still be able to decide on the composition of a new government? Could we avoid a constitutional amendment to cement the power of an unpopular president? For a moment I hoped that the excessive misuse of administrative resources could not stop the voters from showing their anger at the government. The misuse of administrative resources in district 97 among many other things included a newspaper paid for by taxpayers’ money that was distributed to all citizens and included 32 pictures and an advertisement lauding the many good things the Party of Region’s candidate had done and intended to do and nothing about any of the other candidates. On top of this, there were several leaflets with strange rumours about the main opposition candidate: that he was a CIA spy, that he was annulled from the list because he was a Russian citizen, that he intended to spoil the environment with a factory and so on.

But then the first results began to come in. And I realized that I had only been dreaming. The reality was that the opposition figures in the nationwide part of the election shrunk during the night and the next day. And that in district 97 the opposition candidate was far from winning according to the first real results.

Observers are always told to stay in their polling station until the counting ends and follow the protocols, ballot paper and other material from the poll-

ing station to its delivery in the district election commission to see if it is registered accurately. An important moment is when parallel counting can prove that the figures announced at the polling station are similar to those announced in the district election commission.

But in district 97 the possibility for such observation was surprisingly poor. There was only a small, narrow area where about 10 people could gather to watch the results of 130 polling stations. The first box arrived around midnight from a little village with a small number of voters. The registration was extremely slow and included bouts of arguing and reading of some complicated rules. At 4 a.m. many observers left to sleep – by that time, only a few polling stations had been registered and other delegations were queued in long lines. When I returned at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, the commission was locked and busses began to show up waiting in the rain for the commission to open. Many had been sent back to the polling station to correct the protocols. This happened especially to those from the areas where you could suspect opposition to be popular. Stalin said that it doesn’t matter how the votes are cast, but how they are counted. But it also seems to matter how they are registered.

In a fair election it is important that you are able to

see – in public – the results of all polling stations. If we only have the final result after a week, then no-one knows what has happened in between. False parties and clone parties had been set up just to give a big majority

to the Party of Regions in election commissions and distort the votes. Threats to local personnel, bribes and all sorts of rigging were used in the election. I fully agree with the words from the OSCE: “Considering the abuse of power, and the excessive role of money in this election, democratic progress appears to have reversed in Ukraine. One should not have to visit a prison to hear from leading political figures in the country.” And this from PACE: “Ukrainians deserved better from these elections. The ‘oligarchization’ of the entire process means that citizens have lost their ownership of the election, as well as their trust in it.”

The combination of a bad election law and bad voting process means that one can tell the President: the good news is – you won; the bad news is that the voters did not support you.

In 2002, we saw that the Orange majority disappeared after the election, when the “independents” drifted to what is today the Party of Regions. At that time, it was said that we should change the system in order to avoid this in future elections. But 10 years after, the situation is even worse. ■



Author:
Hanne
Severinsen,
OSCE observer

**ONE CAN TELL THE PRESIDENT:
THE GOOD NEWS IS — YOU
WON; THE BAD NEWS IS THAT
THE VOTERS DID NOT SUPPORT
YOU**

Legitimizing the Regime

Why some international observers did not notice violations during the Ukrainian election

Author:
Oleksandr Horyn

The application by the Ukrainian government of manipulative technology during this year's parliamentary election was accompanied by steps for its legitimization in the eyes of the international community. In addition to the powerful informational trumpeting of the pro-government media, which constantly reminded everyone of the democratic nature and integrity of the election and the insignificant number of violations recorded at polling stations, an equally important manipulative function was played by those who gave positive assessments of the election on behalf of part of the corps of observers, who sympathize with the Yanukovych regime.

PRAISE TO THE LACK OF COMMON SENSE

These were mostly observers from CIS member-states and the representatives of little-known organizations in European countries, which throughout 28 October, prior to the closing of the polling stations, attested to the mass media, that the election were being conducted under ideal conditions, while the minor violations that they discovered, could not impact the result of the voting. Quite a few foreign guests even visited polling stations, accompanied by representatives of the Ukrainian government. More specifically, in Zakarpattia, observers from Slovakia, Russia, Israel and the USA personally met with the Head of the Oblast State Administration, Oleksandr Ledyda.

Ultimately, this category of observers was the fastest and most approving in their statements and conclusions. The Chinese mass media including the Xinhua News Agency, the "People's Daily" newspaper and International Chinese Radio were

among those who offered an interesting selection of flattering reviews on Ukrainian democracy. Russian observer and member of the Public Chamber of Russia, Sergei Markov, stated that the Ukrainian election "was successful, democratic and in line with a standard, that is even higher than in several countries of the European Union." At a briefing at the press centre of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine by an observer from the European Centre of Geopolitical Analysis, Daniël van der Stoep, from the Netherlands, stated that the campaign was honest and fair, and that its organization was even better than in several Western countries. In the view of the Israeli international mission, ICES, the parliamentary election in Ukraine is legitimate and complies with international standards of election law. Observers from the CIS and GUAM did not see any significant violations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine rushed ahead of the flattering rhetoric that was massively transmitted in the Ukrainian media. On election day, without waiting for the polling stations to officially close, Ukrainian diplomats held an international conference where Kostyantyn Hryshchenko greeted foreign observers (their list is not on the site of the MFA) with "the election that was once more conducted with integrity, transparency and in compliance with legislation" noting that "rumours of the demise of Ukrainian democracy were significantly exaggerated", and that the country's leadership had passed its democracy test.

Immediately after the announcement of exit poll results, Ukraine's Premier Mykola Azarov was quick to greet all in his party



fellows with the victory, and assure everyone that the international community recognized the transparency and integrity of the election. "The election was calm and normal in the view of all foreign observers, without any exceptions," he stated, though not a single official delegation of observers had given their assessment by that time. On the following day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine confidently declared that "most international observers gave the voting and the counting process a positive assessment."

Later, some Western diplomats reinforced this rosy mood of the celebration of Ukrainian democracy. The former president of PACE, the Deputy Head of the Pace parliamentary election observation mission, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (known for the cooperation with authoritarian regimes on post-Soviet territories during his presidency of the Council of Europe) declared that the issue of



Pawel Kowal, Head of the delegation of observers from the European Parliament, surprised his colleagues with a non-critical stand on the violations during the election

attention to the transparency and democratic nature of the election process, based simply on the observation of the actual course of the voting. Meanwhile, most violations prior to and after the voting were beyond their purview. Moreover, quite a few of them stopped working immediately after the closure of the polling stations and the start of vote-counting, having considered that they had completed their mission and thus allowing the government to use an entire arsenal of means to rig the results.

This is where the differences in the evaluation of the Ukrainian election stem from, even on the part of delegations from influential international institutions and states. Together with the above-mentioned conclusions of Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, who extravagantly complimented Ukrainian democracy, many European politicians were amazed by the declarations of the Head of the delegation of observers from the European Parliament, Pawel Kowal. On the Sunday press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, he expressed his expectations that the election in Ukraine could become an impulse for its European integration (and this in spite of the already known numerous violations by the party in power, that had been recorded during the election campaign, and the imprisonment of the opposition leaders). On 29 October, citing the preliminary data of observers, he declared that most MPs in

and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, PACE and NATO at a joint briefing of these five most influential observation missions, his position was seen as being extremely unclear compared to that of other delegations, which shocked many European MPs.

In his interview with *Dziennik Polski*, he noted that he had not received any signals regarding falsification in the Ukrainian election, mentioning only cases of the restriction of access to the mass media for the opposition and the absence of equal opportunities for all political forces, and remarked that for the post-Soviet space, the Ukrainian election was not the worst, although "a slight worsening" was seen compared to the post-Orange Revolution period. It appears that such a non-critical position of the head of the European Parliament's delegation was also caused by the transformation of the special mission of many Polish politicians and diplomats from the advocates of Ukraine into disguised defenders of the Yanukovich regime, advancing the idea of cooperation with him in European circles.

In a comment for *The Ukrainian Week*, Rebecca Harms attested to the lack of unity among the members of the EU delegation in determining the problems in the Ukrainian election process that were reported by other missions, which had conducted their observation for a longer period of time. These included voter bribing, carousels, the lack of transparency of vote-counting and many more. "It was a huge surprise to me, when four members of our delegation from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats made a statement to the press on 30 October in Brussels, in which they noted that everything was fine with the election, so let's get to work. In my view, this is a premature assessment. The counting of votes is still on-going, there are a lot of complaints, and they have to be reviewed. In no way is it possible to give a final evaluation right now. It is necessary to take into account all the complaints and shortcomings that we receive from observation missions and members of election commissions," she commented. ■

the parliamentary campaign in Ukraine being illegal would not be raised in PACE, since the majority of observers had evaluated election day as being "good" or "very good". He also expressed the view that the conviction of former Premier Yulia Tymoshenko should not influence the recognition of the legitimacy of the election.

A TRAP FOR OBSERVERS

Ukrainian government had counted far too much on the international observers, who came to Ukraine to keep an eye on the actual course of the vote, during which no appalling falsifications were found. The Party of Regions did not hesitate to use a variety of dirty technologies on the eve, and after the election, yet it tried to whitewash the entire campaign with just the actual election day that seemed to go relatively smoothly. Some inattentive Western guests found themselves in this trap, drawing international

*Party of Regions, Ukraine

QUITE A FEW POLISH POLITICIANS AND DIPLOMATS TRANSFORMED FROM ADVOCATES OF UKRAINE INTO DISGUISED DEFENDERS OF THE YANUKOVYCH REGIME, ADVANCING THE IDEA OF COOPERATION WITH HIM IN EUROPEAN CIRCLES

the European Parliament had not recorded significant violations of election legislation. Although he later confirmed the critical observations of his colleagues from the European Parliament, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions

AMERICA'S GLOBAL DISORDER

The United States is restricting its global role and reducing its exposure to global disorder for financial, political and strategic reasons. However, speculations of America's permanent decline are premature

Author:

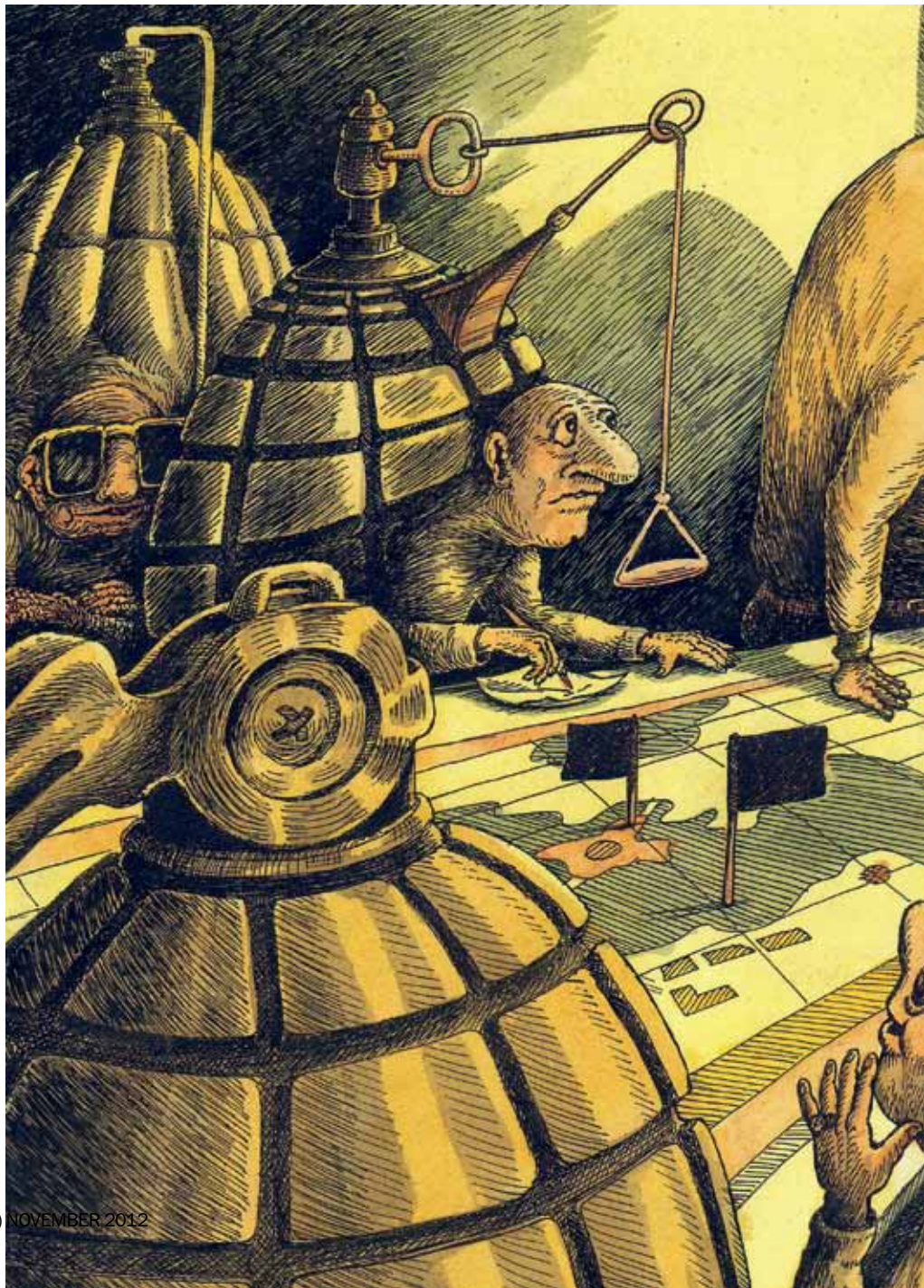
Janusz Bugajski,
Senior Associate in the Europe
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for Strategic and International
Studies in Washington D.C.

Geopolitical analysts have failed to define the post-Cold War era. No single phrase has encapsulated the dramatic shifts of power witnessed in the past two decades and which continue to generate confusion among observers and policymakers. Having been the central actor in this historic transformation, the United States is now restricting its global role and reducing its exposure to global disorder.

CHANGING POLARITIES

Twenty years ago the world was a predictable place, divided between the two major powers. While the U.S. had a belt of voluntary allies within its sphere of influence, the Soviet Union possessed a camp of coerced satellites. In between the two superpowers were a string of neutral or non-aligned countries that made little difference to the global "correlation of forces." The two major powers did not attempt to seize each other's allies, although the struggle for influence periodically resulted in proxy conflicts in the Third World.

The era of predictable "bipolarity" ended when the Soviet Union disintegrated and its European empire was liberated. For the next twenty years, the U.S. was the undisputed global power with seemingly limitless political and military capabilities. This phase has been described as the "unipolar moment"



and its zenith was reached after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. Washington launched two major military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and was seemingly invincible in achieving its goals in the "war against terror."

However, unipolarity turned out to be a briefer interlude than multipolarity. This was not because any single power emerged to counter the U.S., but because Washington could not continue two prolonged wars while maintaining its extensive military posture elsewhere. Although several regional powers raised their profile, no sin-

gle country was equipped to replace America's extensive global role.

Contrary to the aspirations of ambitious capitals such as Moscow and Beijing, the immediate future will not be neatly "multipolar," a concept that assumes the world is divided into regions in which legitimate "poles of power" dominate. Much more likely is a protracted struggle for regional zones of influence by larger states in the midst of resistance by smaller powers against outside dominance.

The U.S. will remain the single strongest power but not capable of

always acting unilaterally or deploying globally. Moreover, although global "bipolarity" is no longer feasible, "bipolar" or even "tripolar" conditions are now visible in different regions. For example, in Central Asia and in East Asia, China, Russia, and the U.S., are all competing for influence and the affected states are engaged in delicate balancing acts to maintain their independence.

The concept of "polarity" has several limitations. It assumes that a large country possesses sufficient attraction to become a magnetic force vis-a-vis its neighbours. Instead, an assertive government may cajole its neighbours to grudgingly recognize its temporary dominance, but this will generate little loyalty. Putin's planned Eurasia Union is an instructive example of the process of pressured polarity. "Polarity" underestimates the interests of smaller and medium sized countries, by placing them within the ambitions of larger regional powers. It can be used as a smokescreen for neo-imperial interference that places limits on the independence of numerous subordinated capitals. Relations between Russia and its former Soviet republics underscore this phenomenon.

"Non-polarity" does not automatically mean international chaos as the multipolar theorists claim. The idea of "chaos" assumes a life and death struggle between competing states. Although this could be the case in parts of Africa and the Middle East, in other regions the absence of hegemony could encourage countries to cooperate precisely in order to avoid chaos or dominance.

In reality, the self-appointed "polar" powers may themselves be the source of conflict, either with each other or by following a policy of "divide and rule." Instead of ensuring stability and security, the struggle for "multipolarity" can actually engender conflict, especially where two or more powers compete for predominance while smaller states resist their pressures or even deliberately provoke conflicts between them.

AMERICA DECLINING OR DISENGAGING?

In this polar arithmetic, America's global reach is declining for three core reasons: financial, political, »



and strategic. Following the global financial crisis and the rapidly climbing U.S. debt, defense spending is being reduced, including funding for “overseas contingencies.” For instance, the USD 702.8bn defense budget for 2012 is about USD 36bn below the estimated 2011 budget, a reduction of roughly 5%. The five-year projection is even more stringent, as the 2016 budget may be 13% below that of 2011.

Such cuts will most probably lead to a force structure that is at least 10% smaller than today. A reduced force could lead to inadequate responses to crises in multiple regions. For example, it would be difficult for the U.S. to deal with simultaneous threats in the Far East, South Asia, and the Middle East.

Politically, Washington's focus during the presidential race is on the resuscitation of the sluggish U.S. economy, where unemployment remains high and growth is almost static. Disputes also rage over whether urgent action is needed to cut budget deficits and reduce the USD16 trillion national debt. Foreign policy only figures marginally in the election campaign, with President Barack Obama claiming several significant successes, especially in killing Osama bin Laden and evacuating U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Republican challenger, Mitt Romney has been critical of the White House for allegedly neglecting Israeli security, maintaining warm relations with an aggressive Russia, and paying insufficient attention to European allies. He depicts Obama's foreign policy as weakening American influence around the world. Democrats assert that Romney does not understand the complexities of international politics and may be a replica of George W. Bush. His tough stance on Iran's nuclear weapons program is used to portray him as favoring another war in the Middle East. Nonetheless, international affairs will be a secondary issue during the campaign unless there is a serious crisis in a region where the U.S. has vital interests.

Strategically, Washington will be selective in its missions, while its priorities shift away from Europe. The “defense guidance” an-



nounced by the Pentagon in June envisions an American “pivot” toward East Asia and a reduction in U.S. forces stationed in Europe. America now defines itself increasingly as a Pacific rather than an Atlantic power and the Pentagon is evacuating two of its four brigades in Europe. This will extend the timeline during which military reinforcements can be rushed to Europe in the event of conflict. More of the burden for common defense will thereby be shifted toward the Allies at a time when the Europeans are cutting their own forces.

EU downsizing and U.S. relocation will also affect future conflict prevention and humanitarian operations in which Washington will not necessarily take the leading role. Analysts fear that without closer American engagement, local wars could take longer to resolve and civilian casualties are likely to be higher. With the EU reluctant to fight any wars, a future conflict in the Balkans, North Africa, or Eastern Europe may not precipitate any significant Western military intervention.

But despite its global downsizing, it is premature to speculate about America's permanent decline. Such prognostications assume that the U.S. will whither away similarly to previous empires and that others will rise to take its place. The current fascination with the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) countries is indica-

tive of this approach, but it is too simplistic.

Brazil has no significant strategic reach and is confined to South America. Russia faces a major social and political implosion especially if its energy revenues seriously decline and the middle class loses patience with Putin. India is wracked

AS A RESULT OF RESTRICTED RESOURCES AND A FOCUS ON REGIONS BEYOND EUROPE, WASHINGTON IS NOT INVESTING SIGNIFICANTLY IN DEVELOPING RELATIONS WITH THE EU AND IS NO LONGER PRODDING FOR UNION ENLARGEMENT AND NATO EXPANSION

by internal ethnic, religious, and regional divisions that could tear the country apart. And China is facing the challenges of political conflict precipitated by rapid economic advancement. None of these states are likely to replace the U.S. and in several instances they will compete for influence and undercut each other's capabilities.

Some capitals welcome Washington's selective withdrawal while attempting to forge a “counter-hegemonic” anti-American bloc. However, such a strategy is unlikely to lead to durable cooperation between such diverse countries as China, India, and Russia.



It will also be resisted by governments, which either aspire to be part of the West, look to the West for protection, or admire the liberal political model. Opposition to the U.S. is driven largely by political leaders fearful of losing power and international influence and who perceive domestic opposition as a Western plot. However, no encompassing ideology has emerged that can unite and mobilize diverse states with competing ambitions in overlapping regions.

MULTIPOLARITY AND MULTILATERALISM

The role of international institutions remains uncertain in an increasingly complex and unpredictable global disorder. Certainly, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will have a limited role as genuine security organizations and will continue to be blocked by veto-wielding members. One useful measure of institutional credibility is the effectiveness of trans-Atlanticism in dealing with conflicts.

Trans-Atlantic relations under Obama have not lived up to initial expectations. Rather than a comprehensive revival of the American-European relationship, many of the fundamental divisions have expanded. The White House does not view the EU as an ascending global power, while EU capitals criticize the U.S. for its neglect of Europe and its narrower international focus. Washington is frustrated with

the Union's perpetual internal problems, its persistent divisions in formulating a coherent foreign policy, its unwillingness to partner with the U.S. by assuming more onerous security burdens, and its faltering soft power capabilities.

As a result of restricted resources and a focus on regions beyond Europe, Washington is not investing significantly in developing relations with the EU and is no longer prodding for Union enlargement and NATO expansion. Washington's approach has been underscored in the economic arena by its focus on the Group of Twenty (G-20) format that includes rising powers rather than the narrower Group of Eight (G-8) forum, thus diminishing the prominence of European participants.

American politicians are convinced that EU leaders lack willpower, are increasingly inward looking, and take little foreign policy initiative. Washington is frustrated and disappointed by EU capitals unwilling to play a larger global role in supporting the U.S. and effectively deploying their substantial resources. The most telling example has been the war in Afghanistan where most EU

CHINA, RUSSIA, AND THE U.S. ARE ALL COMPETING FOR INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL AND EAST ASIA – AND THE AFFECTED STATES ARE ENGAGED IN BALANCING ACTS TO MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE

governments resisted any increase in military contributions especially in volatile combat areas.

NATO's Chicago Summit in May brought into sharp relief the growing problems faced by the Alliance. NATO is in danger of becoming a much-weakened organization after it withdraws its forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. Its longest war has not turned into a victory for security and democracy. Instead, the political outcome in Afghanistan remains uncertain and observers fear that the broader Central and South Asian regions will be destabilized when NATO evacuates. And it seems highly unlikely that the Alliance would be deployed in a similar capacity elsewhere in the future.

The world has become increasingly unpredictable, with escalating transnational threats and political upheavals, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a growing number of failing states, emerging powers with regional ambitions, and the spread of international terrorist organizations. And each of these unstable elements comes at a time when the Alliance itself is experiencing turmoil, evident in severe budget constraints, Europe's internal preoccupations, and America's shifting priorities.

The economic and fiscal crises on both sides of the Atlantic have undermined Alliance defense capabilities. But while the U.S. can afford to streamline its military and still remain effectively deployed in a few key regions, Europe's defense looks increasingly uncertain as budgets are reduced to cope with financial pressures. Several European capitals are imposing deep military cuts. For instance, the United Kingdom plans to be without aircraft carriers for a decade, Denmark has abandoned its submarines, and Holland has eliminated its tank forces.

The EU's crisis of leadership is also palpable on the world stage. The military mission in Libya was only a qualified success because a mere handful of Allies participated while American equipment and intelligence proved essential in the bombing operations. Facing a potential contraction of the Euro zone amidst conflicts between proponents of budgetary austerity and deficit spending, Europe is looking inwards not outwards and defense has become a secondary concern. Only five of 28 allies have achieved the established target of allocating 2% of GDP on defense. Shortfalls in funding will make it difficult for the Alliance to confront any serious security threats.

As a result of these factors, NATO has lost much of its military value to the U.S. as an inter-regional security organization. If the Europeans cannot invest sufficiently in their own defense, they will not be trusted in out-of-area operations and Washington will simply act unilaterally and with willing and capable allies. However, America's performance on the global stage will ultimately depend on its own economic revival and on the ability to forge constructive security relations with a diversity of regional players. ■

The Killing Fields

Despite the huge risks involved, the time has come for the West and the Arabs to intervene in Syria



PHOTO: AP

Is it because America and Europe have tired of their own wars that they have started to turn their back on other people's? The number of dead in Syria has passed 30,000. Some days over 250 bodies are added to the pile, which brings to mind Iraq at the insurgency's peak in 2006-07. Were the next few months to stretch into years, as now seems likely, Syria's great cities would be ground to rubble and the whole Middle East would choke on the dust.

To prevent this catastrophe, NATO needs to start making the humanitarian and strategic case for intervening in Syria. Grounding President Bashar Assad's air force could save many thousands of lives. Giving the rebels scope to organise and train could help bring the war to an end. Speeding the fall of Mr Assad might give Syria a chance to re-emerge as a nation at

peace with itself and its neighbours.

Nothing argues for intervention more forcefully than Mr Assad's brutal tactics. From the beginning, when his troops fired on peaceful demonstrators, he has used extreme violence. A combination of impunity and desperation has led him to graduate from heavy weapons to aircraft, helicopter gunships and now cluster bombs. The fury of the assault against civilians in Damascus and Aleppo, Syria's two main cities, explains why the death toll is now mounting fast. Such violence breeds implacable hatred, and so the rebels will fight on.

Mr Assad has also fomented sectarian conflict. By defining the rebels as terrorists backing Syria's Sunni majority, he hopes to bind minorities to his cause. Thugs from his Alawite sect have sown

division with an orgy of murder and rape. Sadly, as time passes, the sectarian lie is coming true. Long-bearded Salafists are fighting under the black banner of extremist Islam. Rebels have started to commit atrocities (see article). As tolerance wanes, so does the hope that Syria can emerge from Mr Assad's rule as a decent country.

And lastly, Mr Assad is destabilising the region. By enlisting the support of Russia and Iran, he has laid the ground for an interminable proxy war in which Turkey and some Gulf states back the rebels. His forces have traded potshots with Turkey. Refugees are pouring over Syria's borders. In Lebanon Hizbullah is being sucked in. Militant nationalism is growing among the Kurds (see article). And sectarian tension is rising in Iraq: the Shia-led government supplies Mr Assad, and rebellious Sunnis, including the rump of al-Qaeda, back his opponents.

Syria is facing a long, violent, sectarian civil war that will claim tens of thousands of lives, leave chemical and biological weapons unsecured and destabilise a region of paramount strategic importance. That is something the outside world has both a duty and an interest to prevent. But even if intervening now is the least bloody option, it will still be bloody.

In strictly military terms, the mission is feasible. NATO could enforce a no-fly zone over Syria. It is possible that the mere threat of destroying any airborne Syrian aircraft would keep Mr Assad's planes on the ground; but America's military planners might insist on destroying Mr Assad's air defences anyway (harder than last year's campaign against Libya, but still possible). The bigger worry, however, is what would follow the establishment of a no-fly zone.

Even if the aim is to protect Syrian civilians, intervention is a slippery slope. It would probably rap-

idly become a policy to overthrow Mr Assad. Nobody can say how long he would fight on. He would struggle without air power—especially if he lost the full use of his tanks and heavy artillery. Perhaps, sensing the hopelessness of their cause, his own officers might mount a coup. If not, the rebels would probably take many months to force him out. That would test the West's resolve, but it would be better than a war of attrition lasting years.

And nobody can be sure who would replace him. The rebels have promised to unite, but their squabbling has been exasperating. The men with guns, who are most likely to take power, represent lots of militias, some of which can muster only a few dozen fighters. That argues against giving the rebels advanced weapons—because missiles that can destroy airliners could end up in extreme Islamist hands. But a no-fly zone would give the rebels space to organise and train. The briefer the conflict, the greater the chance that the militias who toppled Mr Assad would be commanded by moderates who are sympathetic to the West and want to put Syria back together.

WAITING FOR OBAMA—OR ROMNEY

Today, few are prepared to speak up for intervention. That is partly because of its undeniable risks. But it is also because the Americans would have to lead the operation and, with an election to campaign for, Barack Obama has gone out of his way to avoid talking about Syria. Yet America has every interest in a more stable Middle East, in being seen to defend values that it holds to be universal and in denying Iran an important regional ally. Even now, Mr Obama should be working on plans for how he or a President Romney could intervene.

The chances that the West could get backing in the UN Security Council are slim, because Russia would stand in the way. But an American-led coalition could invoke the world's responsibility to protect citizens against their own abusive governments through a vote in the UN General Assembly—which would provide diplomatic, if not legal, cover. Most important is to win at least tacit Arab backing, especially from Egypt's president, Muham-

mad Morsi, who has called for Mr Assad's fall, though he has yet to accept the need for outside force. Most Arabs bear no love for Mr Assad—and are increasingly critical of Russia. So long as there is no invading ground force (and there won't be), they will probably fall into line.

We do not call lightly for the world to undertake such a risky operation. But the stability of the

SYRIA IS FACING A LONG CIVIL WAR THAT WILL CLAIM TENS OF THOUSANDS OF LIVES AND DESTABILISE A REGION OF PARAMOUNT STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Middle East and countless Syrian lives should not be hostage to Russian obstinacy. As the conflict drags on, month after bloody month, calls to act will mount—as in Kosovo 15 years ago. The sooner the world intervenes, the more lives can be saved, and the greater the chance that Syria can be made whole again. ■

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Business Lunch with another approach

Mille Miglia restaurant, Radisson Blu Hotel, Kyiv
22 Yaroslaviv Val Street, Kyiv 01034, Ukraine
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A War Against the People

In his exclusive interview for *The Ukrainian Week*, Yasser Abboud, a leader of the Free Syrian Army, talks about the struggle with the Assad regime

Interviewer:
Nataliya
Gumenyuk,
Irbid, Jordan

Yasser Abboud is the commander of field operations for the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and a leader of the FSA South. As he states, there are up to 8,000 people under his command controlling 70 percent of the territory around the city of Daraa, with a population of 1.2 million. Once Colonel of the Syrian Armed Forces, he defected in October 2011 after 25 years of service, including 17 years in Lebanon. I met him in Irbid, a Jordanian city near the Syrian border.

UW: How did your struggle begin?

The full-fledged armed resistance started in February 2012. We started with 2,000 people involved; now there are 8,000 people under my command. At least 85% of them are civilians from the Daraa region mainly, the rest are former military personnel. Our initial mission was to protect the villages, supply food – especially in winter – and help people to cross the Jordanian border.

UW: What made you defect from the Syrian Army?

I saw civilians being killed during peaceful protests, and how a sniper shot a person I knew while he was walking down the street. At first, the demonstrations in Syria didn't challenge the regime. They just wanted punishment for those who tortured the kids arrested for anti-government slogans. But they opened fire against people in the rally.

UW: You had been part of the system for 25 years, now you fight against it. Why did you and the people not stand up earlier?

Syrian society was as authoritarian as Cuba, North Korea or the Soviet Union. In schools and universities, we were taught about the supremacy of the Ba'ath party and always thinking about the benefits of stability. The war in Lebanon, the war with Israel, the Iran-Iraq war, the interventions in Kuwait, Iraq, and Lebanon – so many horrible things took place around us. The population was afraid of provoking chaos and disorder. After Hafiz al-Assad

died in 2000 and Bashar took power, we had hope. During the first three years of his term there were more rights given to the media and small business – but just during the first three years.

UW: Why did you wait for six months to defect from the army?

I hoped things would normalize. Back then, as a person who had been within the system for 25 years, I believed that somebody outside Syria was manipulating the masses. The members of the Syrian Parliament discussed an opportunity for al-Assad to visit Daraa and talk to the people. That could have been enough to solve the dispute. The regime decided that such a meeting would be harmful to the prestige of the president. At that moment I saw Al-Assad's only intention was to stay in power, even if people would be killed.

UW: Did you receive orders to shoot civilians or torture them? If so, who were your commanders?

A total of
100,000
people fight in the
the Free Syrian Army

During the demonstrations I had to follow the commands of Military Security, not the army. At that time there were still people from our area. At first we were supposed to only be present on the streets. Later, if there were groups of more than 3 people that didn't disperse after a warning, we had to open fire or even kill them. It is impossible to disobey in a time of crisis. It was the end of summer 2011 when I rejected the use of weapons and I was arrested. I spent one month and 27 days in a basement of the Security Service department in Daraa.

UW: Why did they release you?

One of the demands of Sheikh Ahmed Siyasanah was to free the military personnel from jail. He is a very influential person in the region, a religious leader, an old blind man whom everybody in Daraa trusts. At the beginning of the revolution, it was he who negotiated with the local authorities to release the arrested kids. The regime forced Sheikh Siyasanah to read a confession on state TV that the revolution is wrong and people should stop protesting and follow the government's orders. Because of this 'affirmation' by him we were allowed to go. Yet all the officers had been reduced in rank, had become soldiers and had to give up their weapons.

UW: How did you become a commander of the FSA South?

Of the defected military, I used to have the highest rank in Daraa – colonel. We started with a small group, and after some successful operations decided to unite our forces. In Syria, the military service is obligatory and lasts 2 years, so the majority of males know how to use a weapon. I was the one who had experience creating a structure and regulations.

UW: How are you financed? Do you receive foreign funding?

Daraa is one of the largest agricultural provinces in Syria, so we get basic things from our families. Of course, these are just little things. A lot of Syrians have relatives working abroad. My brother owned a jewellery shop in Romania, and used to send me

money until he was killed during a visit to Daraa. I have relatives in the Gulf. There are many Syrians there, as well in Saudi Arabia. Lots of them are millionaires or owners of big companies, so their financial support is substantial. There are also Syrians campaigning and collecting donations for the FSA there. Yet we do not receive money from any government.

When we defected, together with five or seven colleagues we undertook operations to steal some weapons from army storage. Some residents of Daraa owned guns at home, so we bought from them, but mainly on the black market. There was always an opportunity to smuggle weapons from Lebanon.

UW: What are your goals today?

We do not want to control Syria, but to free the country from the current regime. Now we want to get rid of Bashar and his close circle – the people in power responsible for the murders. We don't care if they are Sunni or Alawi. For instance, one of our main targets is a Sunni who comes from Daraa.

UW: Let's imagine Assad is gone. What's your next step?

I am very concerned about the division of our society. Our first priority is to protect people of all ethnic and religious groups – Alawi, Christians, Druze. It's hard to explain to somebody who has lost a close family member, a brother, a child, that everything is fine. The people are in grief and want revenge. There are those thinking that being an Alawi makes you a part of the regime. For me, all Syrians are equal. As an organized group, we have to maintain order until a new democratic government is established.

UW: Do you see a way to end the bloodshed without killing even more people?

Unfortunately not, and it is not our choice. Full-scale war is going on. Syria does not have a single powerful political party, and our parliament is a fiction. We cannot simply let Bashar escape to a safe place and let our most senior military leaders put away their guns like in Egypt.

An estimated
30,000-46,760
people have been
killed in the Syrian
civil war

The regime is not just Bashar. For 25 years I was part of it, including 17 years in Lebanon. It managed to control politics even there. I know from inside how strong and complicated the 'system' is. If just Bashar's family went away, the regime would remain in place.

UW: You insist that most Syrians are against the current government. Why then has the military command managed to remain in power for 18 months?

People in the country believe that Bashar will be overthrown after all. The Syrian government could not remain as strong as it is now without the support of Iran, Hezbollah and Russia. The world should realize that an unstable Syria is dangerous for the entire region. The current regimes in Tehran and Damascus are very close, for instance. As long as Bashar is in power or



The Syrian government could not remain as strong as it is now without the support of Iran, Hezbollah and Russia

Syria is weak, Iran can use our territory as if it were its own.

UW: What do you expect from the international community?

I do not expect anything anymore. If the international community wanted to interfere they would interfere, as in Egypt. At this point, there is no way to influence Assad. The big countries are interested in a soft transition of power in Syria, changing the system and imposing another instead. Today they are searching for the best Syrian group to cooperate with. They do not care about almost 200 people being killed every day—30,000 – 46,760 in total; they do not care about refugees crossing the border daily. The Syrians have been asking for help for the last year and a half without getting any response; now we don't see any sense in asking. ■

The Government Hushes Up a Crisis

While the Party of Regions has been campaigning, claiming stability as one of its achievements, an increasing number of independent analysts look at ongoing economic processes and warn that Ukraine's economy may sink into recession by the end of 2012

In the past several weeks, a number of Ukrainian and international research institutions have published negative forecasts for Ukraine's economic development. On 16 October, Austria's Erste Bank said in its analytical memo to investors that Ukraine's economy had gone into recession in the third quarter of 2012 as a result of sharply declining economic growth in July through August. Marian Zablotsky, an analyst with Erste Bank, says that national GDP dropped by one per cent in this period, year-on-year. Thus, Erste Bank cut its annual GDP growth forecast for 2012 down to zero per cent. Since July, when Ukraine's economy began to slide for the first time after the 2008-2009 crisis, analytic institutions have regularly reduced their GDP growth forecasts. The World Bank lowered its forecast to two per cent in July; Fitch Ratings said in October that it expected no more than 0.5% GDP growth in Ukraine after it posted 5.2% in 2011; the Institute for Economic Research and Political Consulting estimated this index at 1.3% in early October. Overall, the average expert estimate dropped from 3.2% in April to 2.3% in August 2012. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government based its 2012 State Budget on the premise of 3.9% growth and 7.9% inflation.

Negative trends in this area were first and foremost caused by a sharp decline in industry – by seven per cent in September as compared to September 2011 and by 1.2% in the first nine months of 2012. Despite some growth in the mining industry, machine construction saw the biggest decline –

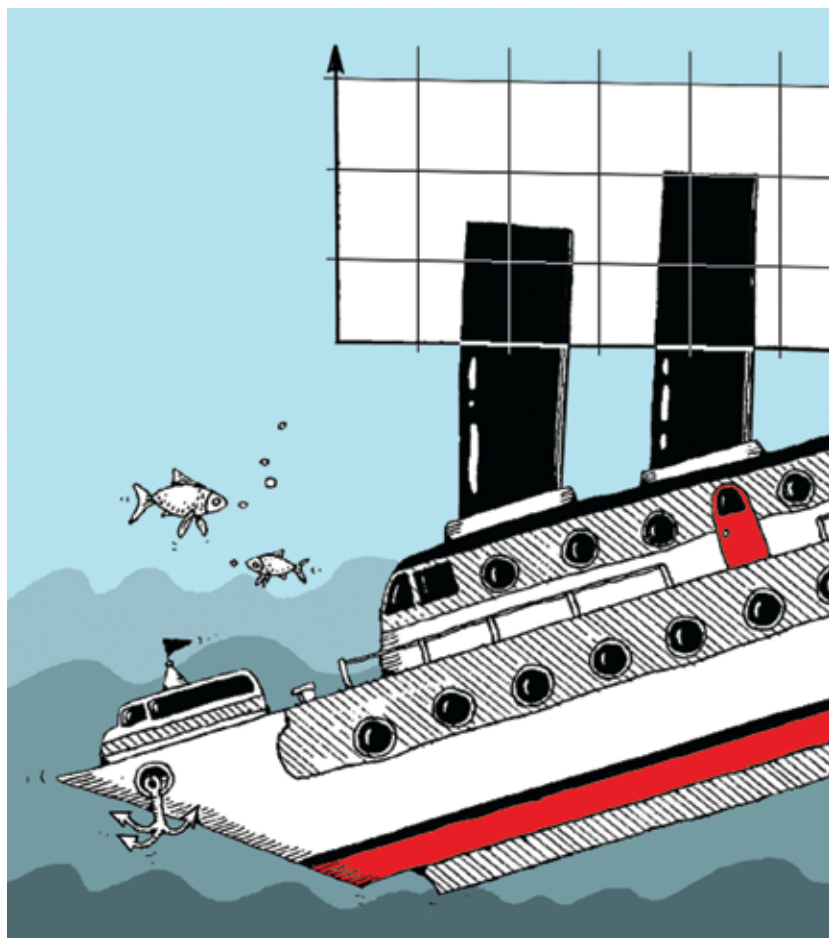
Author:
Maksym Buhriy

4.8% over nine months and 20.1% in September, as compared to the same period in 2011. The food processing industry is declining on virtually every food item. The processing industries have had a mixed experience: some branches are nearing a critical point, while others have increased output somewhat. However, in the case of the chemical industry, growth was due to Dmytro Firtash's ability to buy Russian gas at a much lower price than Ukraine does. Oil refining declined by 48.7% in January through September, leading to

more fuel imports. According to the Ministry of Energy, 500,000-600,000 tonnes of petrol are sold in Ukraine every month, of which a mere 100,000-150,000 tonnes come from the two oil refining plants still operating in Ukraine; Kremenchuk and Shebelynsk. All other oil refining facilities were forced to shut down when oil refining became an unprofitable business after Belarus began buying Russian raw materials at lower-than-export prices. Currently, nearly 80% of the fuel sold in Ukraine is imported.

Forecasts of
Ukraine's GDP
growth for 2012:

0.5%
(Fitch Ratings),
0.5-1%
(NANU Institute of Economics and Fore- casting) and
0%
(Erste Bank)



There was a 9.1% decline in the construction industry during the first nine months of 2012, year-on-year. A safe assumption would be that the industry posted a double-digit decline in September. Last year and in the first quarter of 2012, this sector received a boost from Euro 2012 projects, but in the last couple of months, even government-financed programmes, such as “affordable housing” are stagnating due to an almost complete lack of effective demand from Ukrainians.

Agricultural production fell by 4.6% in the first nine months of 2012, compared to the same period in 2011. Given that the harvest season began four weeks earlier than usual this year, the decline in September could also be in the double-digit region. Moreover, the output of core agribusinesses, which account for the lion's share of the entire agricultural sector, dropped by 7.8% in the first eight months, year-on-year.

The production crisis is a result of both an unfavourable global situation and the ineffective economic policies pursued by the Ukrainian government. Instead of stimulating business by making loans more accessible, the government is going all out to maintain

the hryvnia exchange rate prior to the election and is pursuing a strict monetary policy, thus stripping banks of liquidity. In its report on Ukraine, Fitch Ratings says that the real economy crediting growth

THE PRODUCTION CRISIS IS A RESULT OF BOTH AN UNFAVOURABLE GLOBAL SITUATION AND INEFFECTIVE ECONOMIC POLICIES PURSUED BY THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT

According to GfK Ukraine, Ukraine's consumer sentiment index fell by

4.8
points in September, while the devaluation expectation index grew by

7 points

rate has been influenced by both world macroeconomic trends and some administrative decisions taken by the National Bank of Ukraine, which are more of a tactical, short-term nature. Under such conditions, bank loans are essentially inaccessible to both businesses and average citizens. This is confirmed by the NBU's data which shows that the weighted average loan rate exceeded 20% in August. In its analytical report, Erste Bank stresses that this rate was 10 times higher than that of real GDP.

Real GDP would have plunged even further if not for the services sector. But even there, negative trends can be seen. For example, in Ukraine's transport sector, the main component of which is, in fact, the transit of Russian energy resources, freight transport shrank by 3.4% and gas pipeline transport by 17.9% in January through September, year-on-year.

In sharp contrast, retail trade has been growing by leaps and bounds. According to the State Statistics Committee, which also takes informal markets into account, the sector grew by 16% in January through September, year-on-year. This is a result of the populist social spending that the government made before the parliamentary election. The average nominal monthly salary increased by 16.3% in January through August, year-on-year. However, retail growth may also be viewed as a negative trend in Ukrainian conditions. As The Ukrainian Week noted previously, Ukrainians largely spend their income on food. When food production slumps with the simultaneous growth in retail sales at the same rate, this means that the

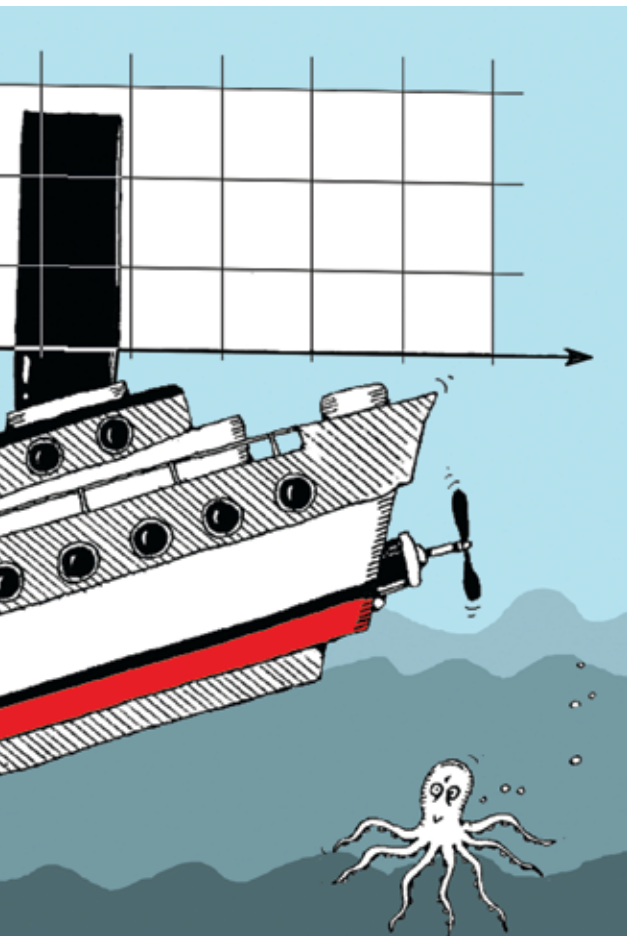
country is importing more. Foreign trade figures for September are yet to be published, but in January through August 2012, imports grew by 6.3% and exports by a mere 3%, year-on-year. Thus, the negative foreign trade balance increased by 23.7% year on year and is currently exceeds USD 10bn.

As already stated by The Ukrainian Week, the expectations of economic agents are an important indicator of a recession. Key recorded indexes are worsening. For example, Ukraine's investment attractiveness index, calculated by the European Business Association, was 2.4 out of 5 points in the third quarter of 2012, which is the lowest since 2008. A number of foreign investors say that the investment climate in the country is deteriorating for everyone except Ukrainian oligarchs.

According to GfK Ukraine, the consumer sentiment index fell by 4.8 points in September, while the devaluation expectation coefficient grew by seven points. According to the NBU, Ukrainians bought USD 1.8bn more foreign currency than they sold in September. Despite sky-high hryvnia deposit rates (20-30%) in commercial financial institutions, such deposits have grown by a mere 6.3% and foreign-currency deposits by 9.5% in 2012. Given the current economic trends in Ukraine, it is hard to find an analyst who would not expect the hryvnia's exchange rate to plunge immediately after the election.

Moreover, most experts are certain that Ukraine's economic performance is going to decline, plunging the country into a second recession in the past four years. “The dynamics of the GDP in the third and fourth quarters will be negative,” predicts Erste Bank. Ukrainian analysts also point out that business activity in Ukraine is at a very low level, while foreign demand for our products is constantly decreasing. Many companies also report a catastrophic shortage of working capital. Everything is just like on the eve of the 2008 crisis.

At the same time, independent economists do not see any real steps from the Azarov government that would address these negative trends. However, most experts are certain that the decline will not be nearly as severe as in 2009 when the GDP took a 15% plunge. ■



DRAWING BY HOR LUKANCHENKO

Big Business in Service

In countries the size of Ukraine, there is a correlation between economic breakthroughs and the extent to which big business potential has been adjusted to serve national interests

Author:
Oles
Oleksiyenko

It is important to eliminate oligarchy, yet the struggle against it should not become a war on big business. The priority should be to put big business in a framework that will make it useful for the benefit of the nation, while not damaging small and medium business (SMEs) as the foundation of Ukraine's stability and democratic development.

This is possible only under a number of conditions, a crucial one being the segregation of industries. Thus, SMEs should dominate in domestic market-oriented branches that do not require a significant concentration of production facilities and capital investment, while big business is vital to a slew of industries that are the cornerstone of economic growth.

These include sectors dominated by transnational corporations where big companies are mostly an important prerequisite for the promotion of Ukrainian goods in new markets. Without this, a compact economy like Ukraine's that depends heavily on foreign trade can hardly develop successfully.

A NECESSARY LINK

The experience of most countries that are comparable to Ukraine in size and have managed economic breakthroughs over the past 50 years proves that the effective involvement of big business in the process has been a crucial component of success. The governments of countries that had no big business "grew" it intentionally.

They realized that only large companies have the necessary resource potential and, consequently, the ability to generate expensive hi-tech innovations such



as new airplanes and cars, space shuttles, cruise ships, and modern communications devices. It is easier for such companies to survive the initial pressure when implementing long-term innovation projects and cover their costs with accumulated reserves and revenues from other branches of their operations, while small businesses – despite their flexibility – are forced to reject projects that take too much time and money, and have limited capacities in competing for foreign markets.

Another important factor is that large companies fall under various ownership models—from fully government-owned, to partly government-owned or fully privately owned. Therefore, the methods by which the government influences and channels their operations in line with national interests must be varied as well.

Under normal circumstances, the bigger the share of private capital, the more efficient the business. Therefore, most big corporations prefer this form of ownership to any other, while the government retains its impact through legislation and a range of “carrot and stick” economic instruments.

CARROTS AND STICKS

A government that has sufficient political will and is truly independent of individual oligarchs in decision making can create an effective system of restraints and counterarguments to get the most use out of big companies while minimizing risk.

Governments have a range of incentives to encourage big businesses to develop in innovative sectors and industries that fit national interests the most, such as government loans, tax cuts, accelerated de-

of the Public

In countries where industrialization took place later and massive businesses gained dominating positions in the economy, such as the USA, Germany and Japan, the government solved the problem of adjusting them to national interests through active interference



PPP GDP per capita in countries with business separated from the government, 2011

Germany –
\$40,280
Japan –
\$36,000
South Korea –
\$31,770

Great Four including Sumitomo, Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Yasuda – controlled the economy, as well as the domestic and foreign policy of Japan through their own political parties.

After Japan's defeat in the war, the US occupational administration implemented a series of reforms. One was the elimination of 16 zaibatsu clans and the forced rearrangement of another 26. As a result, the tycoon families that owned them lost control over the nation's economy and politics.

In the 1950s, the zaibatsu tycoons were replaced by keiretsu, a new type of powerful business entity based on cross-ownership of companies by a group through shares, rather than family domination. Such companies relied on this sort of cooperation (the need partly lingering from their earlier operation as part of one structure) for stability and efficiency in their struggle to survive and win over the world market.

The keiretsu system laid the ground for long-term planning and investment into innovative projects. These corporations used their re-

ADJUSTING BIG BUSINESS TO NATIONAL INTERESTS WAS A PREREQUISITE TO THE POST-WAR ECONOMIC WONDERS IN GERMANY AND JAPAN

preciation, targeted subsidies and subventions, profitable public contracts, and other instruments. The list of restraints includes harsher tax burdens, special regulations, forced splits or even nationalization. These can deter big companies from acting in a way that damages the national interest, blocks competition or leads to stagnation.

In European countries such as the UK and France, whose economies historically are not highly monopolized or concentrated in the hands of big businesses, the fairly influential and powerful medium-sized businesses have been handling the task of matching business groups to national priorities quite well.

In countries where industrialization took place later and massive businesses gained dominating positions in the economy, such as the USA, Germany and Japan, the gov-

ernment solved the problem of adjusting them to national interests through active interference. In Germany and Japan, that was one of the crucial prerequisites for the economic leaps that brought them the most rapid economic and welfare growth in the world.

Giant companies, such as Volkswagen, Audi, Grundig, Siemens, and others played a crucial role in the rise of the post-war German Federal Republic, making it the second largest exporter of industrial products for quite a long time, and facilitating the concentration and increase of its technological potential. At the same time, the government's economic policy kept them from abusing their dominant positions in the domestic market.

AWAY WITH CLANS

In pre-WWII Japan, big zaibatsu family-run conglomerates – the

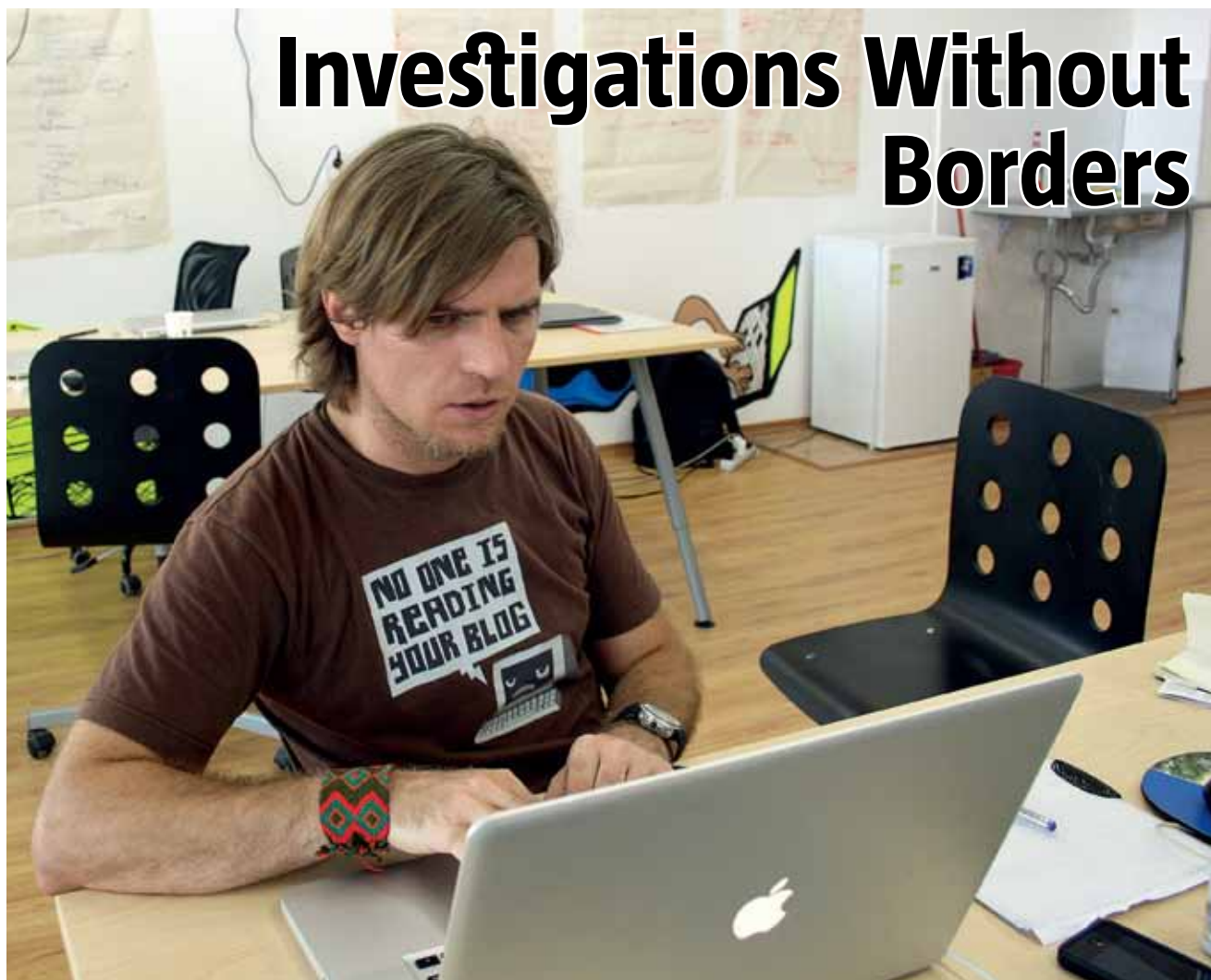
sources much more efficiently compared to the pre-war zaibatsu. Moreover, widespread horizontal and vertical ties within keiretsu structures played an important role in the protection of the Japanese economy – still weak at that point – from being swallowed up by foreign capital.

Meanwhile, the Japanese government regulated the economic activity of these business entities by determining the priorities for economic development and encouraging them to invest into specific industries. This role was delegated to the Bank of Japan and the Economic Planning Agency, but the Ministry of Foreign Trade played the most important role, facilitating the import of new technologies in industries determined to be priorities, and ensuring that businesses could get affordable loans for growth. ■

PPP GDP per capital in countries with oligarch-controlled economies, 2011

Russia –
\$17 750
Mexico –
\$17 700
Ukraine –
\$7650

Investigations Without Borders



Paul Radu: “Once we get rid of offshore companies, we can break most of the world’s corruption scams”

Interviewer:
Nataliya
Gumenyuk

Paul Radu is the executive director of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). It has been investigating organized crime, corruption and money laundering in Eastern Europe for five years. The office of one of the projects in Bucharest looks like that of Millennium from the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, while the reporters bring Stieg Larsson’s dream to life by investigating the world’s most serious cases. Their network includes investigative journalists from Albania to Russia, from Latvia to Georgia. The project is the only one of its kind in the world. Although several countries have their own investigative journalism centres, OCCRP is the only international project focusing on the discovery of corruption and

international crimes. It was through cooperation with OCCRP that Azerbaijani journalist Khatidjha Ismailova discovered the offshore companies owned by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. While compiling a database of shell company owners, reporters found that the company that renovated the Olympic stadium for Euro 2012 was officially owned by a yoga instructor from Cyprus. Without the support of their colleagues in Bucharest and Sarajevo, Cairo reporters would never have managed to investigate the foreign assets of Egypt’s richest oligarch and the right-hand man of President Hosni Mubarak.

UW: Which of your investigations were most significant? What makes OCCRP’s job so important?

– We managed to investigate important deals involving politicians and criminal groups from all over the world. To reveal organized crime or corruption on the government level, you have to know everything that’s going on inside the country. A reporter working just within his own country can hardly figure out a complicated corruption or criminal scheme today, because such things have no borders. It’s so easy for dealers from Ukraine and Romania, or Moldova and Russia to arrange a scam, while local journalists will hardly interact with each other in the same way. It’s even harder for Romanian police to investigate cases with Ukrainian officers because that is already a matter of politics. Earlier, big media, such as The New York Times, AP or Re-

uters, would be sending their correspondents to do an investigation in several countries at once. But foreign journalists cannot understand a society that is completely foreign to them. Clearly, the language barrier is one cause. Foreign reporters have no access to serious information – I mean data allowing them to trace how cash flows out of the country. And the power of reporting without borders is in the sharing of information among those who know all about the situation in their home countries.

UW: Who initiated OCCRP?

– It was our joint idea with Drew Sullivan, an American journalist. He has been working in Sarajevo for a while now, and set up the Centre for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia. We met by accident and realized that we were working on the same thing. I was working on a similar investigation on human trafficking for the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting. The concept of investigative reporting without borders came from Charles Lewis, the founder of the Washington-based Centre for Public Integrity. He created the first international consortium of investigative reporters attempting to gather the best reporters from all over the world – a super team to do international investigations. I was lucky to be one of them. But we worked on the materials only when we had money for a project, no matter what it was – tobacco or illegal tuna fishing. The consortium coordinated from Washington was not that effective when it was about some big regional or local thing. Moreover, we are now working on an on-going basis, not just when we have the money. If a journalist from say, Ukraine, needs help finding some information about a firm registered in Cyprus, we ask people from our network for it. Our real collaboration is based on the common goal, not money.

UW: Which of your projects would have been impossible without this sort of cooperation?

First of all, we could not have created the databases of proxies operating in Eastern Europe. Proxies are people registered as company owners to hide the real owners. There are several types of proxies in our region. Some of the so-called executives have no idea that their

names are on the documents – their passports were stolen. Others sold their identities for a few hundred bucks or a bottle of vodka, allowing someone to make copies of their IDs. We are mostly interested in people who earn money in this business, working on the market and pretending to own dozens of companies all over the world. Without our transnational network we could not have carried out a single investigation about offshore companies. We are constantly updating this database. For instance, if a number of companies are registered in Belize, we look at them and put them on our record. That's real "business without borders". But doing the research without reliable people who can analyse all of the complicated documentation of local companies in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Serbia or Hungary would be totally impossible. In some coun-

cartels launder money in American banks.

UW: Which of your investigations concerned Ukraine?

–The story of Lana Zamba, the yoga instructor from Cyprus, registered as the owner of one of the biggest companies that built Euro 2012 objects. We found her while working on our offshore project. It is cases like this that feed corruption at top levels. Once we get rid of offshore companies, we can break most of the world's corruption scams. And the links are much deeper than they seem to be. Lana Zamba is involved in Ukrainian companies and the Magnitsky case in Russia.

UW: Where is it safer to hide money now?

There are too many places. In the US, for instance, especially Delaware and Nevada. Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France, and Spain often come up in scandals about banks hiding money. There was this HBS case – it was accepting money from Mexican drug cartels. Another big bank Wachovia also dealt with dirty money. We're talking hundreds of billions of dollars. Latvia is a good place for money laundering in our region.

UW: Why Latvia?

– It wants to create an image of an Eastern European Switzerland; convince all others that doing business there is as comfortable and easy; and they know how to keep bank privacy. The only thing the Latvians missed is that the lack of transparency has brought quite a few crooks to their country. Moreover, many Russian oligarchs have transferred their business to Latvia. They can influence politics there, and money has no smell, as you know.

UW: Why do European countries and the USA tolerate scams on their territories?

– We asked Delaware State officials why they allow money laundering. We have proof that many Eastern European companies use their banks. Local authorities told us that they were not going to change a great system because of a few rotten apples. But in fact, offshore companies fill half of the state's budget. Look at Cyprus, Gibraltar – these countries have lim-

TO REVEAL ORGANIZED CRIME OR CORRUPTION ON THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL, YOU HAVE TO KNOW EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON INSIDE THE COUNTRY

tries, the police can solve such cases. They operate under their own jurisdictions. Even when reporters have access to an opened case, it makes little sense if the criminal network covers all of Eastern Europe and may reach as far as Vanuatu and the U.S. Once, Moldovan journalists helped us find the accounts of some companies in Latvia, Russia, Romania and Delaware State.

UW: Many claim that offshore zones are legal even if they are not really a good thing. A person cannot be arrested simply for using offshore accounts.

– The lack of transparency is the problem. Why would an owner hide his name if his business is perfectly legal? Offshore zones are mostly for criminals and politicians who don't want their voters to know about it. They may say that offshore business is the only way to evade excessive taxes. But that's a moral issue. Most banks in the world have to know the names of their clients. How do you find out whose money it is if the documents list the name of a counterfeit owner? It is through schemes like this that Mexican oil

ited resources, but they earn their money on those who store their money in their treasuries. Even the UK does.

UW: What are your most successful investigations?

– One of the latest investigations was related to gold mining in Azerbaijan. A consortium was set up to develop so-called gold fields. The Azerbaijani government owned a share in it. The rest was owned by a few little-known companies. One was registered in the UK but the tracks led to Panama. Our Azerbaijani colleague Khatidjha Ismailova conducted the investigation. Earlier, the Investigation Dashboard showed us that the family of President Ilham Aliyev was running its own business through companies registered in Panama. This time, we decided to take a closer look, researched the materials, and found that there are three companies in Panama owned by Aliyev's wife and daughters. They are linked to the development of these gold fields. Later, Khatidjha received documents signed by Ilham Aliyev himself transferring the territory to the consortium – hence, to his own family.

Another example comes from Egypt. Last year, my colleague Drew Sullivan and I held a media training in Cairo. Beforehand, we got the list of all the companies owned by Egyptian citizens in Switzerland and the UK. Thousands of names, hundreds of pages. Personally, I never heard all those names. I handed the data over to Cairo reporters. They were surprised to see the name of Hussein Salem among those who owned companies in Switzerland: “Hussein Salem is a very well-known figure; he's the right-hand man of Mubarak and the founding father of Sharm-el-Sheikh resorts.” Our Cairo reporters began to dig deeper and found that in addition to those in Switzerland, Salem also owned companies in Panama and Spain. That was in May 2011. The next month, he was arrested in Spain. The investigation got a lot of attention. But that didn't end the case. Six months later, we met with those reporters in Amman. Our Egyptian colleague told us that Hussein Salem owned a few companies in Romania. Yet, it took a lot of time to confirm that Egypt's major oligarch – arrested at that point – owned a huge luxury shop-

ping mall in Bucharest. We launched an investigation, found out which Romanian businessmen owned the business jointly with the Egyptian oligarch, and even found a photo of Romania's ex-prime minister cutting the ribbon at the shopping mall opening ceremony. And that was not all. I continued to research the documents of Salem's Panama companies and found that his son and daughter charged with money fraud and corruption transferred their companies to three Azerbaijani citizens the day before they were arrested. Later, Khatidjha continued the research in Baku. She noticed some names and told me that those people were well-known in Azerbaijan. They own shopping malls, car factories and more plants. Then we found out that one of these people was close to Aliyev, Azerbaijan's president. He was arrested in Spain but he remained out of jail somehow, and now he is on the In-



MANY POLITICIANS MAY BE IDEOLOGICAL OPPONENTS, YET WHEN IT COMES TO BUSINESS, ALL DIFFERENCES FADE

terpol wanted list. Still, we proved the links between these companies. The main thing was that we showed how millions of dollars were taken out of Egypt. Several conversations and documents revealed deals in Spain and Switzerland that involved influential people in Egypt, Romania and Azerbaijan.

UW: What have you discovered in your native country of Romania?

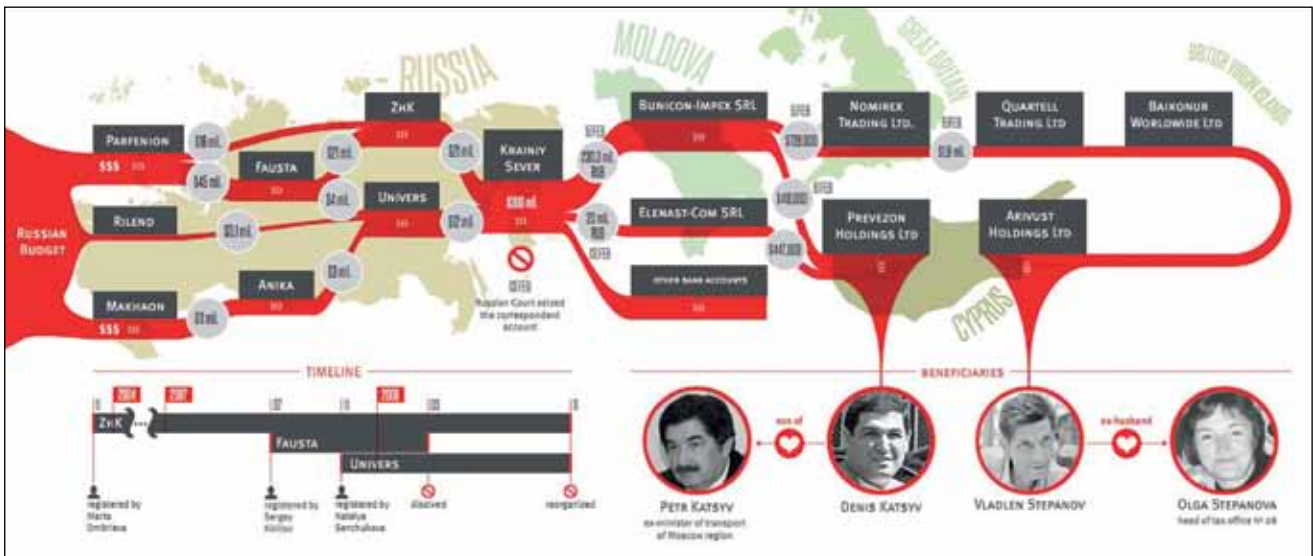
– There was an interesting case related to the assets of Prime Minister Victor Ponta. It turned out that he was linked to a business group related to President Traian Băsescu. Romania's president and prime minister are enemies and diehard political opponents. But, if you look closer, they turn out to have common business interests. Sometimes, the impression is that there is some ideological difference between the politicians – left or right – but when it comes to business, all differences fade. Everyone earns money, regardless of their political preferences. There are wealthy people in Romania who support all parties financially because they seek preferences regardless of which party comes to power. This lays the founda-

tion for corruption. These business owners will get the most profitable public contracts. In fact, the most important thing in the work of a reporter is to note the links between politics and big business. They have to dig deeper and notice all the threads, especially at the regional and international scales. We expect machinations between Russia and Ukraine. When we started to work on the proxy database, it turned out that they spread to Serbia, Romania, Moldova, and up to Switzerland. It's huge money, and it goes right to the people who rule these countries.

UW: Are these influential people trying to exert pressure or sue you?

– OCCPR is the only organization in Eastern Europe insured against libel suits. We received letters from oligarchs for several years before they realized that we have the best lawyers in London and money to pay for their legal support. This insurance covers publishers whose reporters prepare the investigation under our project framework provided that the article is published after we edit it. We work under strict fact check rules. At first, our reporters were annoyed about the amount of time the editing takes. They got annoyed when, after they spent months working on the article, the editor asked them, how can you prove that the person you mention is 24 years old? All the material we get from reporters should come with references to documents, quotes from interviews, audio or video files accompanying every single fact mentioned. For instance, when a reporter writes that Mr. A works at company B, he should send us a copy of the document to confirm this. The next sentence says that Mr. B is linked to company D. Again, we want a reference document. And that's true for each line. Sometimes, even I got annoyed by how scrupulous our fact checkers were. But it won't work any other way. That's what makes our materials so unique and valuable.

UW: How much effect does your work have? Whenever allegations that a French president, for instance, is involved in financial fraud surfaces on the cover of a tabloid, the main thing is that it will draw the attention of the police. Here, however, investigations often remain in



newspapers even if the crimes of top officials are much more serious.

— Important investigations tackle people in power. They control law enforcement authorities that decide whether they should open a criminal case or not. Therefore, it's not easy to have an impact on public opinion in Eastern Europe. Once the publication goes international, such as with the offshore network in Eastern Europe, it is harder to hush it up. Dozens of companies were closed down in New Zealand after our investigations revealed that Latvian banks were using companies there. Mostly, they operated in Eastern Europe. If one country fails to do act because of its corrupt police, impact is still possible — even if indirect. There is another level of influence. Google is our biggest help. When we publish materials on the website, we always give the right index of names, trial protocols and the documents for the search system to offer the right records. If someone is offered a stake in a joint business, it makes sense to do some research on the potential partner and check what the Internet has to say about this person. And the first entry says that he is a crook. Of course, you shouldn't trust the first article you see, but our materials contain references to documents confirming that the potential partner used to own a business with criminals. That is how we can limit opportunities for crooks. We are often asked to remove some names from articles printed years before. People beg us to do that.

Otherwise, their business and reputation are ruined. Scandalous revelations are fine, but we appreciate the long-term effect most of all.

UW: You are working on a project to investigate media owners in Eastern Europe. Why do you think this is important?

— A lot of media in Eastern Europe have ended up in the hands of people who have political and financial interests. This is the best way to blackmail political and business competitors. Moreover, media in Romania and all over Eastern Europe are owned by people who have faced criminal charges, including financial fraud. Some wealthy people bought TV studios after criminal cases had been opened against them. It was a good instrument of pressure on the court and protection from their opponents. In fact, that is one of the reasons why our region barely has any media that offer good quality journalism. So, we want to list the 50 most influential media tycoons in Eastern Europe, check their connections with companies in Cyprus and Panama, and examine their offshore accounts. And we would like to find out their real owners since many politicians prefer to keep their connection to the media a secret to make them appear independent.

UW: Who is funding OCCRP?

— Our biggest donors are Open Society and USAID. However, we have a small staff. Most journalists are paid by the publications where they work.

MONEY WITH POLITICAL FLAVOUR: OCCRP investigative reporters found the scheme to launder EUR 5.4bn paid as tax by the fund of the killed attorney Sergei Magnitsky and stolen from the Russian budget

UW: There is plenty of discussion on whether it is appropriate to work for money from the West. Critics say that a good quality publication should be a commercial success.

— Our work speaks for itself. Yes, we get foreign funding, but read our reports. If you're honest and publish documents and evidence openly, any charges are invalid. Still, we are forced to live on grants. We run another Romanian project and could easily get financial support from local business owners. But if our investigation tackles our donors, it will fuel a conflict of interests. In fact, you can't earn much on these kinds of investigations that sometimes take years to complete. Their main value is their significance for society. A perfect scenario would be for people to support us. For example, there is a website in California; whenever the local authorities in

INVESTIGATIONS ARE COSTLY AND TIME-CONSUMING BUT THEIR MAIN VALUE IS THE SIGNIFICANCE FOR SOCIETY

San Francisco raise bus fares, the website's reporters appeal to the public, asking people to fund their investigation if they want to know why the price is going up. People are ready to pay: some donate \$5, others give more. But that's already possible there. I don't think we'll have anything similar in Eastern Europe, but that could be a model for the future. ■

In Russia's Shadow

Andreas Kappeler talks about why Ukraine is still a blank space on Western Europe's mental map

It takes more than just a few decades – centuries sometimes – to shape the international image of a country or a nation. Ukraine is no exception in this sense, but a typical model. The image of modern Ukrainians in the West has largely been shaped by the stereotypes of previous epochs layered over new perspectives. Austrian historian Andreas Kappeler talks to *The Ukrainian Week* about the historical era that brought Ukraine onto the European mental map, how its international image has transformed, and what Ukrainians should do to improve their image in the world.

UW: When did Ukraine appear on the mental map of Europe?

Ukraine appeared in the 17th century largely due to the Cossack revolution led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky. Before that, there were Beauplan's maps that launched the name Ukraine into scientific and political circulation, preceded by extremely interesting reports on the life of Zaporizhian Cossacks by Austrian diplomat Erich Lassota von Steblau, published only in 1866. With the 1648 revolution, Ukraine appeared on the mental map of Western Europeans, and it stayed there until the end of the 18th century. There were detailed maps of Ukraine; it was described and mentioned in the travel reports of Western European diplomats and traders, as well as the press.

On this map, Ukraine and Cossacks were almost identical. Ukraine was marked as the land of Cossacks. Its image was not only topographic on the map – it had a political meaning presenting Cossacks as people who valued freedom above all. Ukraine was treated as a political player on the map of the continent, and the image survived for almost 150 years in the European mind. The last testimony of this period was Johann Christian von Engel's *History of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Cossacks*, published in 1796.

Interviewer:
Oleksandr
Pahiria

UW: How did perceptions of Ukraine change after it was annexed to the Russian and Austrian empires in the late 18th century?

Ukrainians lost their reputation as a political force after the decline of their sovereignty. In the late 18th century, Ukrainians appeared in several Western European works as primitive savage and peasant people with interesting folk traditions. The most well known text of that period is Johann Gottfried Herder's utopian vision of Ukraine which portrayed Ukrainians as wild and uncivilized people who had the potential to become a civilized nation like the Greeks. That was quite a new view of Ukrainians, emerging on the verge of the 18th and 19th centuries, as a non-civilized people of half-European and half-Asian composition. Actually, they were explored as part of Oriental studies. In 1845, German writer Friedrich von Bodenstedt published a collection

were acknowledged as one of Austria's nine nationalities with their own schools, language, Greek-Catholic Church, and so on. However, the perception of Ruthenians in Vienna was not really different from that oriental discourse. They were seen as poor people living in an underdeveloped country with interesting folklore. They had a very low position in the hierarchy of peoples in the Habsburg monarchy.

UW: How did the short period of statehood revival and national liberation struggle in 1917-1921 affect the perception of Ukraine in the West?

During the First World War, the interest in Ukraine suddenly rose, because Germany and Austria-Hungary tried to use it as an instrument in their war against Russia. There was a short period of German and Austro-Hungarian occupation of Ukraine in 1918, when politicians and advisors gained some knowledge of the country, especially as a grain provider. And indeed, it had to deliver a lot of grain to Germany and Austria. Then the German and Austrian empires collapsed. Central and Western Europeans lost their interest in Ukraine. Newspapers mainly focused on the struggle between the whites and the reds in the context of the Russian civil war. Western politicians and diplomats thought that Ukraine had no chance of defending its statehood and did not support it.

In the interwar period, Ukraine once again disappeared from the mental map of Western Europe, although to a lesser extent than in the 19th century. This was due to several immigrant centres that were active in Central and Western Europe, including the Ukrainian Free University in Prague and Ukrainian Scientific Institute in Berlin. However, their scientific and publishing activities were hardly noticeable in Europe.

ONLY IN 1991, THE WEST SLOWLY BEGAN TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT UKRAINE COULD EXIST APART FROM RUSSIA

of Ukrainian folk songs *Poetic Ukraine* (*Die poetische Ukraine*), and he was a specialist on peoples of Asia and the Caucasus! Ukrainians who lived in the territories that were part of the Russian Empire were then seen in this oriental context. Then, complete oblivion followed. By the middle of the 19th century, Ukraine disappeared from the mental and geographic map of Western Europeans.

Ukrainians who lived in the Austrian, and later Austro-Hungarian Empire, were always seen as Rusyns (Ruthenians – Ed.). They had great advantages compared to Ukrainians who lived in the Russian Empire, since they



The only event that caught the attention of Europeans was the assassination of Symon Petlura by Sholom Schwartzbard in 1926. That was the time when the image of Ukrainians as anti-Semites appeared and grew stronger – it has persisted to this day.

UW: How did the Second World War change the attitude towards Ukraine in the West?

Just like during the First World War, Ukrainians were used as a political instrument of Germany against Russia in 1939-1945. The Third Reich had plans to use Ukrainians in its destruction of the USSR but Hitler opposed the idea of an independent Ukraine. Before and during the Second World War, numerous works were published to justify these projects. The fact that Ukrainians were used as a political instrument by the Nazis was detrimental to the image of Ukraine in the long run. Ukrainians as a nation were of no interest to the broad public, except for a few outsiders.

UW: How did the stereotype of Ukrainians as nationalists and anti-Semites emerge in the West? What role did the legacy of the Second World War play in the process of its establishment?

There were some events that preceded this stereotype. The terrible anti-Jewish pogroms during the Khmelnytsky's uprising were often brought up in the Jewish memory; another element was the anti-Jewish pogroms by Ukrainian otamans in 1919, which became widely known in the West after the assassination of Petlura by Schwartzbard. However, the Second World War was far more important in that matter. Again, there was some truth to this image, including the collaboration of Ukrainian forces with German occupiers and participation in the extermination of Jews and Poles. This stereotype is still greatly damaging to the image of Ukrainians abroad.

However, there is another dimension: the Holocaust is a central factor for the European consciousness. Meanwhile, Western Europeans often do not realize that Stalinism was at least as important for Ukrainians, and coming to grips with the suffering of Central and Eastern European nations under Stalin's rule should become another main element of European consciousness.

UW: Did Soviet Ukraine exist on the mental map of Europe in the time of the USSR?

The West may have recognized it as a separate entity in a short period during the 1920s, but not after the 1930s. From then on, Ukraine disappeared from the mental map again, being seen as part of the USSR, which was regarded as a new form of Russia. Western Europe did not differentiate Soviet people into Russians and Ukrainians – to them, all of them were Russians.

For the broad public in the West, Ukraine had not existed until the early 1980s. Only in 1991, the public slowly began to acknowl-

UKRAINE IS OFTEN MENTIONED IN NEWSPAPERS, ALTHOUGH MOSTLY IN THE CONTEXT OF GAS CONFLICTS WITH RUSSIA, THE TYMOSHENKO CASE AND ITS BACKSLIDE ON DEMOCRACY

edge that the Soviet Union might disappear as a state. Western politicians did not think it would until the very end. When it collapsed, people realized that it was not just Russia. But the broader public did not see Ukrainians as a separate nation then, unlike Lithuanians who had their state in the interwar »

period, or Georgians whose culture, language and traditions were totally different from those in Russia. Even after Ukraine declared independence in August 1991 - as all republics did - the West still thought that a new federation of Soviet republics would emerge. Then, people slowly became aware that Ukraine could exist apart from Russia. This process continues until today.

UW: What are the key elements of Ukraine's image in the world today?

In my opinion, Ukraine does not yet have a firm place on the mental map of Europe. The West lacks knowledge of the country, language, culture, traditions, and history. There have been many examples of this, especially in the early years of Ukraine's independence. I remember one time when the then President Kravchuk visited Helmut Kohl. When Kravchuk started his speech, the Germans provided a translator for Russian only. This was a typical situation: nobody thought that Kravchuk could speak any language other than Russian. This lack of knowledge is still present, even if less widespread than in the 1990s. But Ukraine was absent from the European mental map for 200 years. It takes a lot of time for the broad public to get to know the facts of its existence as a national independent state. Today, Ukraine is often mentioned in newspapers, although mostly in the context of gas conflicts with Russia, the Tymoshenko case and its backslide on democracy. There are important non-political aspects, too, such as the nation's football team, Olympic athletes and fantastic Klitschko brothers in boxing. Before 1991, all this was Soviet. Now, it is Ukrainian, and this probably has a much bigger impact on public opinion than politics. Now, the evolution has begun and it is irreversible. More and more Western Europeans - the broad public, I mean - are learning about Ukraine. Recognition is a difficult process that takes much time. It takes consistent efforts from Ukrainians and Ukraine, as well as people interested in Ukraine, like me, to build its image abroad.

UW: Why is Ukraine still a blank spot for Europeans?

Since the second half of the 19th century Ukraine has been in the shadow of Russia, not just politically - that is a very important aspect of the Western perception of Ukraine.

Many Ukrainian scientists and intellectuals are perceived as Russians. In Germany, only Russian Don and Volga Cossacks are known, but not Zaporizhian Cossacks. European historians even used to write about Kyiv Rus as part of the history of Russia. This image sits extremely deeply and firmly in the minds of most Western Europeans.

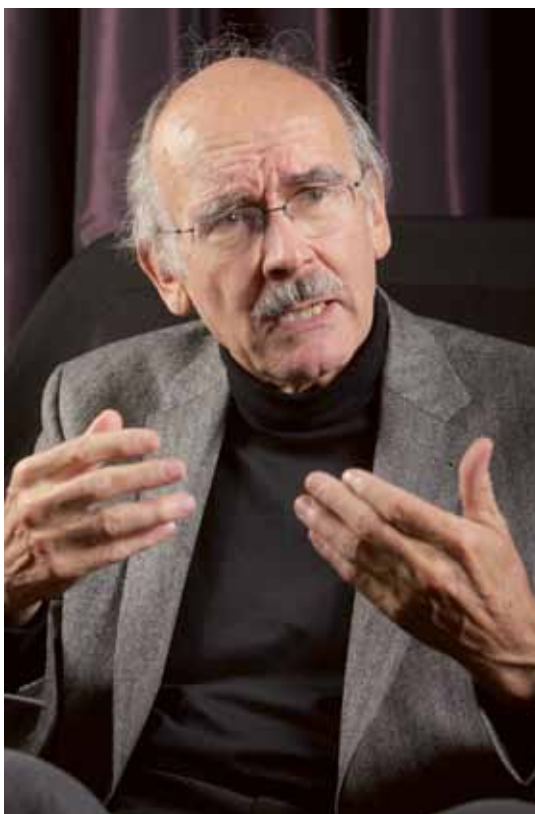
The impact of the Cold War and the iron curtain is still very

strong in their minds. There is one example to prove it: Bratislava is just 60 kilometres away from Vienna, but to Austrians it is as distant as Zurich, which is 800 kilometres away, in terms of mental perception. Countries may be in the EU and NATO and still these old mental borderlines persist that many people are reluctant to cross. It is even more difficult with Ukraine, which is a grey zone of sorts between Russia and the West.

Another great obstacle for the appearance of Ukraine on European mental map is the lack of any personalities or events that were associated with Ukraine and could serve as components of Ukraine's image. Not a single Ukrainian composer or writer has been accepted into the pantheon of European culture. Taras Shevchenko, for instance, was never widely known in the West. Nikolai Gogol was never regarded as a Ukrainian writer. Oleksandr Dovzhenko was known as a Russian director. There are virtually no building blocks with which to create a recognizable image of Ukraine. The Orange Revolution with its two leaders, Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, had the potential to fill this gap offering personalities that were known worldwide. However, one has disappeared from politics completely; the other one is in prison, seen as a martyr or victim, which is hardly the best foundation for image building.

UW: How can we change the way Europe and other countries view Ukraine?

Tourism, cultural and academic exchange programmes, international sports events such as Euro 2012, and deeper diplomatic, economic, research and cultural contacts - especially in the younger generation - may contribute to this greatly. Take one example: the number of dissertations written on Ukrainian history in German-speaking countries was zero in the 1960s-1970s, and three per cent in the 1980s. This has grown to 10% currently. This is a great trend. Ukrainian language and history are presented in European universities on a better scale now. It would also be very helpful to have special institutions abroad to promote your culture. ■



BIO

Andreas Kappeler was born in Zurich in 1943. He majored in Slavic Studies and History at the universities of Zurich and Vienna in 1962-1969, and got his PhD at the University of Zurich in 1969 followed by a scholarship in Moscow and Leningrad in 1970. In 1971-1979, Dr. Kappeler worked at the University of Zurich and completed his habilitation. In 1982-1998, he worked as Professor of Eastern European History at the University of Cologne. Dr. Kappeler has been foreign member of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine since 1996, and Professor at the University of Vienna since 1998. In 2000-2009, he supervised the Doctoral Programme Austrian Galicia and Its Multicultural Heritage. Andreas Kappeler wrote a number of books, including *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History*; *Mazepintsy, Malorossy, Khokhly: Ukrainians in the Ethnic Hierarchy of the Russian Empire*, and *Kleine Geschichte der Ukraine (A Short History of Ukraine)*

The Life of the Rebels

The absence of elementary living conditions and a regular supply system in the UPA was offset by active assistance from the local population

Despite certain romanticism, service in the UPA was an arduous, perilous and risky experience requiring survival and fighting in Spartan conditions in which there was not enough time or opportunity to meet personal needs. "It was a horrible experience to have an army without a state. We didn't have anything and went barefoot and without clothes," former insurgent Dmytro Purkha recalls. Moreover, the fighters often faced danger and death, pushing elementary needs to the background.

Author:
Oleksandr
Pahiria

THE LOCAL POPULATION AS THE DONOR

The foundation of the military activity and longevity of the Ukrainian insurgent movement was the economic system based on self-organization and self-provision. "Everything had to be found somewhere: firearms, uniforms, food, etc.," Ivan Yakymchuk, former UPA member from Kalush County, says. An organized guerilla formation would not have been able to exist for any extended period of time without this system and social support.

The most "favourable" conditions for building insurgent units

and developing the infrastructure in the controlled territory were during the Nazi occupation as there was more freedom in terms of everyday living and economic transactions. Low-level procurers were *stanychni* – a kind of secret elders in villages. They monitored the procurement and storage of foodstuffs, clothes, uniforms, firearms, medications and household items and clandestinely transported them to insurgents.

The UPA had its most widely developed infrastructure in Volyn (in the second half of 1943 through the first half of 1944), in Zakerzon-

LUNCHTIME: Sometimes, UPA fighters would seize cattle from retreating Nazi troops and stored the meat and fat in barrels as a contingency reserve. Often, captured cattle and foodstuffs were distributed among peasants.



nia (territories west of the Curzon Line inhabited by Ukrainians, in 1944-47) and in the Carpathians (from 1944 until, in some places, 1947-49). With the arrival of the Soviets and NKVD-MGB repressions in the core territories of insurgent activity, the supply system with a network of stanychni in villages and storage places, which had been developed under the Nazi occupation, was destroyed. This was a hard blow to the economic component of the Ukrainian independence movement and caused its leaders to change their tactics. When the UPA rebuilt its economic system and began operating in smaller units, the local population was the main donor as locals actively supported the Ukrainian national liberation movement. They saw the UPA as the force protecting them against the violence of invaders and they linked it to their dreams of reviving an independent Ukrainian state.

In most cases, people voluntarily provided the insurgents with food, clothes, footwear, medication, shelter, and so on. The “forest men” were normally strictly forbidden to demand anything from peasants when they were quartered in villages. “Our procurement people would approach a peasant and tell him that, look, we need help. Then five or so men would get together and give a pig to the UPA. This was absolutely voluntary; no-one from the UPA took anything by force then. People gave us everything, because everyone knew that if Ukraine existed, people would have everything,” Volodymyr Domansky, former insurgent from Volyn, says. “They gave us everything: fried and baked food, cakes, bread, etc. Girls made gloves, socks and handkerchiefs with inscriptions ‘From Halia’, ‘To our dear insurgents’, ‘To our dear friends’, ‘To fighters for Ukraine’,” Petro Kasinchuk from Ternopil Oblast recollected.

There is documentary evidence showing that commanders and workers of the UPA’s economic departments issued special lists which clearly stated the fighters’ needs, thus putting a certain obligation on peasants. However, the majority of the Ukrainian population viewed providing food to “their own

men” as a more pleasant burden than feeding the invaders. Moreover, local young men were members of UPA units. Sometimes relatives would go to the forest themselves to bring food to the insurgents. However, as the enemy approached, such contacts became very dangerous and were strictly banned. During raids to unexplored terrain, such as in Right-Bank Ukraine where there was no developed underground and economic network, the insurgents would come to peasants themselves and ask for food.

TROPHIES

In addition to internal resources, which were often inaccessible during difficult long raids, the UPA replenished its stock of foodstuffs, firearms and ammunition by capturing spoils of war. In particular, UPA fighters seized from the Nazis and their allies cattle (previously commandeered from peasants) and echelons with food, as well as firearms, uniforms, equipment, medications, etc. For example, Yevstakhiy Dobrovolsky, a fighter in the Rena battalion led by Vasyl Mizerny in Zakerzonnia, says that his company procured food on its own, particularly by seizing cattle from retreating Nazi troops in the summer and autumn of 1944 and storing the meat and fat in barrels. “It was a contingency reserve in case people were relocated to Poland and we were left without them. Then we would use this reserve.” Often, captured cattle and foodstuffs were distributed among peasants.

In the Soviet period, UPA companies attacked collective and state farms, storage facilities and local stores to replenish their stocks. The UPA men usually ate field rations. Sometimes, primarily in villages, they were able to enjoy hot dishes. Under the Nazis, large insurgent units had field kitchens and cooks on the staff, while smaller units used cauldrons seized from the enemy. However, with the arrival of the Soviets this “luxury” was quickly abandoned. In conditions of heavy battles and persecutions by the Soviet punitive troops, the insurgents often had to starve, sometimes going for several weeks without a source of food.



INSURGENT REPUBLICS AS UPA SUPPLIERS

The “insurgent republics” in Volyn served as the economic bases of the insurgents for several months in 1943. They included several dozen villages controlled by the UPA command. Barracks for fighters, first-aid posts, infirmaries, baths, meat-processing plants, bakeries, sawmills, water mills and various workshops were set up in these areas. The involvement rate of the local population

AS AN ORGANIZED GUERILLA FORMATION, THE UPA WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED FOR AS LONG AS IT DID WITHOUT THE SYSTEM OF FOOD SUPPLY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IT HAD

was seen by the insurgents as quite significant. Dmytro “Maly” Supinsky, who worked in a sewing workshop in the headquarters of the UPA-South, says: “There virtually no people there who did not work in the UPA. My sister worked there for two years, and my grandmother worked and healed people there. There was no-one who would not provide aid to the insurgent army... Under the Nazi government, the Germans did not come to us, they did not show up. Ukrainian flags and tridents hung

outside. Everything was Ukrainian, and the government was Ukrainian.”

Uniforms were most often captured as booty. Under the Nazi occupation, the insurgents used the uniforms of the Wehrmacht and the police, the Hungarian and Polish armies and the Red Army, remodeling some elements in a Ukrainian style. Many fighters wore civilian clothes. In 1943, the UPA organized the production of its own uniforms in the territories under its control. Uniforms were made by women and girls working at home, while special workshops were set up in “insurgent republics” which also produced footwear and white camouflage coats.

A NEAT AND CLEAN ARMY?

Another important component of everyday living was hygiene and medical provisions. Away from hearth and home, the insurgents had to satisfy their everyday hygienic needs in the depth of forests, in marshes, along rivers and so on. There was simply no time for such things when units were engaged in permanent battles and moved about all the time.

In the warm season, the insurgents usually bathed in small and big rivers. Under the Nazi occupation, they sometimes went to village baths or washed near wells. But such opportunities presented themselves very rarely under the Soviets. UPA fighters most often did their laundry themselves in bodies of water. Sometimes they would give the job to women in villages or to medical departments in UPA units.

In some cases, companies and detachments (to say nothing of the “insurgent republics”) had their own barbers, but more often than not the fighters clipped each other's hair and shaved themselves on their own. “No-one wore beards. The army was neat and clean,” Dobrovolsky says.

Medical aid was provided in UPA units by orderlies (primarily workers of the Ukrainian Red Cross), doctors and medical attendants (a large percentage of these were Jews). Severely wounded fighters were taken to underground hospitals. Stanychni and special “green” UPA companies, such as in the Kolky Republic in Volyn, were charged with collecting medications, bandages and herbs, as well

as producing alcohol. At the same time, the insurgents were forced to take crash courses on first aid in conditions of armed struggle. As a result, “every soldier became a medical attendant.”

MOMENTS OF PEACE

During breaks between battles, the insurgents held tactical and other training exercises and cleaned their clothes and weapons. The daily schedule was strictly planned: getting up, praying, morning exercises, washing, breakfast, military training, etc. Heavy regular battles and night raids left insurgents with virtually no time for leisure activity. They especially lacked time for sleep and rest under Bolshevik persecution after the war. A natural consequence of this situation was when insurgents slept on the march.

Singing songs while quartered or on the march or raid was something close to recreation. Some units had music instru-

SINGING WHILE QUARTERED OR ON THE MARCH WAS SOMETHING CLOSE TO RECREATION – SOME UNITS HAD MUSIC INSTRUMENTS TO PLAY DURING CALM BREAKS BETWEEN BATTLES

ments to play during calm between battles; there were even entire choirs and brass bands. Between battles, raids and trainings, insurgents studied the press and leaflets, sometimes read fiction and history books and trained in sports. They sometimes played cards, chess or draughts and listened to radio programmes on the quiet. “Insurgent republics” even had special drama circles which staged plays for peasants and guerillas to liven up everyday life.

Fighters were normally not allowed to take any holidays for fear that they would be identified by occupation authorities or reported by enemy agents. UPA commanders allowed insurgents to leave the unit for longer periods of time and more often under the Nazi occupation. When the Soviets came, trips to civilian settlements became too dangerous.

Unlike underground fighters, UPA men made virtually no use of *kryivkas* – hiding places. However, when they began fighting against the communists, the underground war began to predominate and disassembled large UPA units switched to underground guerilla activities. At that point, the insurgents had to hide from the persecutions in *kryivkas*, especially in winter-time. However, they stayed away from the mould and dampness of underground shelters longer than any other participants of the Ukrainian liberation movement. “Forest was my *kryivka*,” Dobrovolsky claims.

The relationships with the fair sex are a separate topic. Says Petro “Klen” Hrynychshyn, fighter from the Chornomorets company which was active in the Lviv region: “When a courier would arrive, the company stand there with everyone staring at those girls.” The command tried to regulate personal relationships by putting strict bans on sexual intercourse (considering that sexually transmitted diseases were widespread in the wartime) and imposed punishments up to the death penalty.

Any violence against women was penalized. “We had an order strictly forbidding us to hurt any of the girls. There was great discipline in this matter. There were no drinking parties or carousing. We treated women with the utmost gallantry. There was great respect for women,” Petro Martyniuk, UPA fighter from Volyn, remembers.

Chaplains from the Greek Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church (sometimes both) were attached to detachments. They conducted key services on holidays (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Intercession, etc.) and workdays. They blessed those going into battle, led morning and evening prayers and prayed for the dead.

The punishments given to the insurgents for disciplinary violations ranged from moral education, standing guard, flogging with rods and carrying burdens on one's shoulders for small infractions up to the death penalty for grave crimes, such as treason, desertion and, surprisingly, consumption of vodka. ■

The Art of Resistance

The theme of Ukrainian insurgency as a component of mass culture

Author:
Rostyslav
Semkiv

When yet another film or book made in Ukraine or elsewhere promotes a historically or culturally misleading portrait of Ukrainians, indignation is not enough. Attempts to forge history should be prevented at all levels, from academic to daily life. One widespread belief in Ukraine – almost superstitious at times – is that withstanding powerful informational influence and pressure – foreign or domestic – is next to impossible. However, this sort of pressure often tends to make beliefs only stronger – as it does with the history of UPA, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Millions of Ukrainians believe that the rebels were heroes. This conviction can spread or stay within the circle of those who have it now, but it will not fade away. The theme of Ukrainian insurgents has extended beyond historical monographs and little-known novels growing into a component of mass culture and collective consciousness – and a new style of resistance.

THE UNBREAKABLE OPPOSITION

Mass culture is based on very simple things – essentially opposites, such as good and bad or native and strange. A teenager who folds the Ukrainian flag around his shoulders at a football match will never think of it as strange. Insurgent history has similarly become native to many of those who previously could not have thought it would. Now, it is the perfectly visible, no longer hushed past with its original and well-known images and rituals. Russian-speaking tourists eagerly say “Long live Ukraine!” when



they enter Kryivka – a bunker or shelter in English – a popular UPA-themed restaurant in Lviv. This shows that they simply accept the rules when they are in this separate territory, even if it is strange to them. Their Facebook photos with fake machine guns from this restaurant confirm the status of the UPA as a fighting party in

the Second World War better than any speech does.

Modern mass culture grows from oppositions and attempts to make them simple. It presents the most important things as a game – and Kryivka is a perfect example. However, it does not lose the opposition of good and bad or native and foreign. Their action is smoothed out, sharp-



ILLUSTRATION BY ANDRIY YERMOLENKO

ness blurred, yet every Ukrainian citizen or a visiting tourist understands them as soon as they see them, even if they hide this understanding behind courteous grins. Meanwhile, even in the game, its participants come to see the poles and lines of the resistance clearly. These visions turn into firm beliefs that are subsequently difficult to change. In this aspect, mass culture has no equals.

Apart from the political impulse to focus on gaining and developing an independent state that is Ukrainian in form and spirit, UPA insurgents have left an extensive legacy of photographs, stories, songs and poems. Some of these songs have grown more popular than those considered to be the nation's favourites. Even the words used to describe the Second World War have changed: *kryivka* and *bunker* for an underground shelter have ousted the soviet army's *blindazh* and *ziemlianka*. Music projects, such as Taras Chubai's Plach Yeremii, Andriy Kuzmenko's Skriabin, Sashko Polozhynsky's Tartak, Andriy Pidluzhnyi's Nichlava and Orest Liuty's (whose surname means "enraged" in English – his real name is Antin Mukharsky) Tender Ukrainization, have been a major contribution to the establishment of a positive image of insurgents, especially among young people. Tender Ukrainization was especially interesting in terms of its creative revision of the boring old chanson and the accent on the UPA's equally anti-Bolshevik and anti-Nazi struggle, as well as its multiethnic and egalitarian nature.

REVENGE IN WORDS

The circulation of the rebel theme in mass culture could make it look anecdotic if it did not at the same time appear in a more up-market dimension. Literature is an artistic manifesto of historical memory, essentially encouraging people to picture themselves in a given time and situation. Aware of this mission, Ukrainian writers who focus on the history of the national resistance present it in a tragic manner, ranging from Borys Kharchuk who was the

first person to write openly about the insurgency campaign in his "Cherry Nights" published in 1985, to the high-profile "Sweet Darusia" by Maria Matios released in 2004, where the description of the UPA's campaign is generously flavoured with folklore and biblical elements. She was obviously trying to leave a strong impression on the readers as she created the worst image of the enemy in her prose of resentment. In "The Museum of Abandoned Secrets", Oksana Zabuzhko gave a more realistic and general portrait of NKVD agents, yet punished them publicly and demonstratively in her text – the revenge found them at least in modern times, if had not during the war.

Mass culture offers black and white stereotypes, lacking deeper psychological insight. It appears that both writers use its techniques to make sure that their tragic stories reach out to the widest audience possible. And they actually succeed in this. Although this satisfies the broader demand, part of the audience still seeks a more subtle and intellectual description of the struggle that does not involve the hero – traitor opposition. That time was much more complicated, and there were far more roles than a hero and a traitor.

HISTORICAL JUSTICE

Glorified in elite literature and brought to the fore by the pressure and pace of mass literature, UPA's heroic exploits will undoubtedly stay in the memory of modern Ukrainians. As numerous facts of its struggle were revealed in the 1990s and huge layers of information are still found and delved into today, the history of the national resistance is no longer a sacral knowledge passed down secretly from the older to the younger generation in families. Today, it is a full-fledged component of civil identity. In the second decade of Ukrainian independence, episodes of this struggle began to circulate in the mass culture, thus reaching beyond just the borders of Halychyna and Volyn, the heartland of the action, to become recognizable nationwide. ■

WELL-KNOWN EXAMPLES

Our Partisans (Nashi Partyzany), a collective recording by Plach Yeremii and Skriabin, was released in 2000. It is a compilation of 11 covers of insurgent songs, including "Hey Hu, Hey Ha"; "We Are Going Forward" ("My Ydem Vpered"); and "By the Lviv Castle" ("Tam, pid Lvivskym Zamkom"). The record was the first spark of the insurgency theme on a mass scale in Ukraine.

Sweet Darusia (Solodka Darusia) is an expressionist novel by Maria Matios, and the first Ukrainian best-seller published in 2004, giving a retrospect of a tragedy that evolved in a Bukovyna village during the insurgent struggle against the NKVD.

The Company of Heroes (Zalizna Sotnia) is a 2004 film directed by Oles Yanchuk based on memoirs of Yuriy Borets.

In the Whirlwind of Struggle

(U Vryi Borotby) is arguably the best film ever made about the UPA. Despite its simple plot, the film is a captivating revival of the historical epoch.

Don't Tell Anyone (Ne Kazhuchy Nikomu) is a song recorded by Tartak and Andriy Pidluzhnyi in 2006. The video for the song is dedicated to the uneven fight between an UPA unit and German soldiers in 1943 near the Zahoriv Monastery in Volyn.

Kryivka is an UPA bunker themed restaurant opened in Lviv in 2007. Visited by nearly 100,000 people annually, it is one of the biggest outlets for UPA souvenirs.

The Museum of Abandoned Secrets (Muzey Pokynutykh Sekretiv), a novel by Oksana Zabuzhko, was published in 2009. A monumental saga that started in wartime where one of the key storylines is about the underground activities of OUN, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, and the UPA's struggle against the NKVD.

Tender Ukrainization (Lahidna

Ukrayinizatsia) is a project by Antin Mukharsky launched in 2012 as a compilation of Ukrainian-language sarcastic covers of the biggest hits in Russian chanson, a genre of music dedicated to prison life.

The Tango of Death (Tanho Smerti)

is a brand new novel by Yuriy Vynnychuk that intertwines pre-war and wartime Lviv and the 1980s. Intellectually intriguing and historically thorough, it is one of the best portraits of the psychological atmosphere and everyday culture of that time.

*LONG LIVE THE HEROES!

Animal Planet

Anticommunist socialist George Orwell and his gift to Ukrainians

Author: Bohdan Tsiupyn

In 1947, American soldiers in the western occupation zone of Germany stopped a cargo of several thousand newly printed copies of a book in a language they did not understand, with an evil looking pig holding a whip on the cover. The name of the author was George Orwell written in Latin letters.

Apparently, someone had tried to explain to them that the books were for hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees in displaced persons camps. At one point, their estimated number in the western zone was 118,625. However, the American soldiers decided that Ukrainians had something to do with Communists and handed the books over to Soviet repatriation committees.

They interpreted the books titled *Animal Farm* as propaganda and confiscated them. Part of the cargo was saved, though. It was the first translation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* into a foreign language. Later, the novel – Orwell called it a fairy tale – brought him worldwide recognition.

SATIRE ON STALINISM

The chekists were right. For the Kremlin, it was a dangerous book that harshly criticized Stalinism. Ukrainians asked Orwell to write a personal preface for the refugees who had personally witnessed and survived many dirty Communist propaganda campaigns.

In addition, Orwell covered part of the cost of publication at Prometheus, a Ukrainian publishing house in Germany. "I have been asked to write a preface to the Ukrainian translation of *Animal Farm*. I am aware that I write for readers about whom I know nothing, but also that they too have probably never had the slightest opportunity to know anything about me. In this preface they will most likely expect me to say something of how *Animal Farm* origi-



nated but first I would like to say something about myself and the experiences by which I arrived at my political position."

This was one of the rare occasions when George Orwell described his childhood and explained the shaping of his worldview. Such, Such Were the Joys, an essay published in 1953 after he died, was probably the only similar confession he ever wrote.

LESSONS OF COLONIALISM

Eric Arthur Blair known by his pen name George Orwell was born into a British family in India in 1903. He was destined to become a member of the privileged establishment of the British Empire. Instead, he grew into an independent free-thinker.

Young Eric was probably smart enough to note how his parents, who were not very well-off, tried to fit into the unspoken sahib rules in colonial lands. Kids like him were

often told that the aboriginals were wild people and that they should stay away from them, though they could be hired and trained as servants.

After the Blair family returned to England, Eric went to Eton, the most prestigious and expensive school in the UK, where he studied between 1917 and 1921. He grew more opposed to social and racial barriers after he tried to enter the British colonial police service in Burma. There, he faced what many Englishmen turned a blind eye to: colonized nations not wishing to obey the colonizers, even if the foreigners were well-educated and built modern railways with the hands of the aboriginals. Orwell quit the service and on his return to Europe, headed off to study the poverty in the working class areas of London and mazes of Paris.

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Being sharply critical of social unfairness, George Orwell was one of the first people in the West who faced the threat of totalitarianism in its fascist, Nazi and later Soviet-Communist forms. When the Civil War broke out in Spain, Orwell and his wife volunteered to fight on the side of the Republicans.

His *Homage to Catalonia*, published in 1938, was a documentary record of the six months he spent fighting. It was in Spain that he witnessed and experienced Stalinism: "Through a series of accidents I joined not the International Brigade like the majority of foreigners, but the POUM militia – i.e. the Spanish Trotskyists. So in the middle of 1937, when the Communists gained control (or partial control) of the Spanish Government and began to hunt down the Trotskyists, we both found ourselves amongst the victims. We were very lucky to get out of Spain alive, and not even to have been arrested once. Many of our friends were shot, and others spent a long time in prison or simply disap-

peared. These man-hunts in Spain went on at the same time as the great purges in the USSR and were a sort of supplement to them."

In an essay review of Mein Kampf written in 1943, George Orwell was virtually the first person to compare Stalin to Hitler. According to Andrea Chalupa, an American researcher of his biography and writing, many people found it hard to believe this at that time. Therefore, *Animal Farm*, written in 1944 as an allegorical novel hinting at Stalin's usurpation of the Russian Revolution and betrayal of socialist ideals, was initially almost impossible to publish. In 1945, Secker and Warburg took the risk and published *Animal Farm*, paying Orwell just GBP100 for a small circulation, which was immediately sold out.

MR. JONES' LEGACY

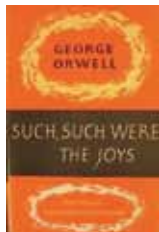
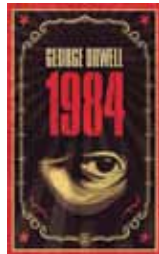
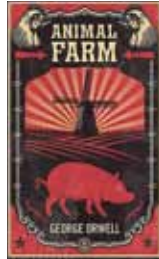
The uprising of animals in Orwell's dystopia takes place on Mr. Jones' farm. Some assume that Orwell's choice of the name Mr. Jones was no coincidence, but a reminder of Gareth Jones, the first Western reporter to tell the truth about the horror of the Famine in Ukraine and Stalin's repressions in the USSR.

Orwell later admitted that he had never been to the USSR himself, and his knowledge of how the Communist system operated there was based on Gareth Jones' reports and his own experience in Spain. Later he wrote that this whole experience had been a valuable lesson for him as a demonstration of how easy it is to manage the opinion of educated people in democratic countries through totalitarian propaganda.

In *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell mentioned one of the agents of the Soviet special services who turned out to have been involved in the assassination of Gareth Jones. He was murdered in 1935 in China, far away from his homeland in Wales, under circumstances that to this day, raise many questions.

George Orwell knew what the Kremlin bosses and their assistants in the most remote corners of the world were capable of. He tried in vain to reveal to his compatriots the threat of Moscow's greedy expansionism, hidden behind propaganda manipulations. "It was of the utmost importance to me that people in Western Europe should see

THE BEST-KNOWN NOVELS



the Soviet regime for what it really was. Since 1930 I had seen little evidence that the USSR was progressing towards anything that one could truly call Socialism. On the contrary, I was struck by clear signs of its transformation into a hierarchical society, in which the rulers have no more reason to give up their power than any other ruling class. Moreover, the workers and intelligentsia in a country like England cannot understand that the USSR of today is altogether different from what it was in 1917. It is partly that they do not want to understand (i.e. they want to believe that, somewhere, a really Socialist country does actually exist)."

Orwell's voice remained almost solitary and was barely heard for several years after the Second World War. In the early 1950s, however, those who had previously swept away his warnings, began to use *Animal Farm* in their informational campaigns against the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

THE BIRTH OF A TYRANT

Ukrainian writer Mykola Kostomarov has a short story, parts of which could be considered to be quotes from *Animal Farm*: "Brothers oxen, sisters and wives cows! Honourable cattle, which deserve a better fate than what you now have at the will of someone unknown, who made us the slaves of human tyrants! You have been drinking from the bucket of misfortune for such a long time that none of you can remember when it started, and you have no chance of drinking it to the end!"

Kostomarov's parable read as a warning: a revolution, the participants of which do not know how to use its fruits will remain nothing but an uprising that ends quickly and tragically for many rebels. In Kostomarov's short story, the animals rose against their human masters, but Orwell went farther. He showed that not just enemies, but even those who start revolutions may eventually become tyrants. ■



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Tender Ukrainization

Antin Mukharsky is a TV host, theatre actor, artist, leader of the Union of Free Artists and father of four. Bright, funny, observant and enthusiastic, he currently performs as Orest Lyuty - the last name translating as "outraged" in English - in a band called Lahidna Ukrainizatsia or Tender Ukrainianization. The band plays satirical covers of some of the most notorious Russian pop and prison chansons that flood the media and minds of Ukraine.

I've had this Tender Ukrainization project in mind for years. The idea first came to me in my youth, when I was in the army. I worked on it from time to time, then dropped it, then returned to it again. The final straw was the notorious language bill and the Party of Regions' Olena Bondarenko who said that Ukrainian music had to fight and compete on its own, with no help. That's when I decided to create my own project as a rival to prison chanson, ugly pop music and other "accomplishments" of our big northern brother. I completed all the songs on the album in just two weeks or so. We didn't expect the project to become a success. We uploaded the first video and a month later, were invited to play gigs. The stuff we play turned out to be extremely popular - a trend-setter of sorts.



Interviewer:
Bohdan Butkevych

Cultural expansion is one of the key tools of influence and struggle in the modern world.

Ukraine is in a position whereby most of its territory is under the influence of Russian mass culture. Over the past century, Ukrainian culture was barely integrated into the world cultural process, unlike Soviet culture, for instance, replayed and promoted abroad

Events

1 – 18 November

ART KYIV contemporary 2012

Art Arsenal (12, vul. Lavrska, Kyiv)

The 7th contemporary art festival will take the format of a forum, as opposed to the usual format of a fair this year. 30 leading galleries of the world will be presenting the work of contemporary artists from Ukraine, Austria, Italy, Germany, France and Russia. The special projects include *Symposium of Modern Art Biryuchiy 012*, Volodymyr Naumets. *Lucidity*, and the *Cleaning* video project by Polina Kanis, last year's winner of the Kandinsky Prize, the most prestigious contemporary art prize in Russia.



16 November, 7 p.m.

ArtPole November Party

StereoPlaza (17, vul. Kikvidze, Kyiv)

ArtPole is once more gathering the best friends of the festival in order to gladden the guests with the latest portion of vibrant music and make an autumn evening pleasant and cosy. One of the first to take to the stage will be the founders of the world music style, Transglobal Underground from Britain. The unique *Khmeleva Project* will be presented by the ethno-house group, DakhaBrakha, together with their colleagues from the avant-garde Port Mone trio. The special guest of this evening, Hudaki Village Band will share its emotional melodies with the audience.

30 October – 18 November

A Hundred wilcons of Lviv

The Green Sofa Gallery (7, vul. Virmenska, Lviv)

The purpose of the joint exhibition of young Lviv artists, Olha Kravchenko, Uliana Nyshchuk-Borysiak and OŃtap Lozynsky, is to open the eyes of the viewer to the mysterious essence of the city of Lviv, which lives in old legends and tales. One hundred fragments from these stories are depicted on canvas and are kinds of windows, revealing the mysteries of medieval Lviv. The source of their creativity is the iconographic image, which helps to paint the sacral space of the city in great detail and portray its ancient atmosphere.





by the modern Russia. Soviet writers and artists were pretty well-known – as representatives of the Russian Empire. By contrast, Ukrainian art – young, unknown and neglected by the government – is now forced to work ten times harder to gain at least some success compared to a similar product in countries that realize the importance of culture.

The modern world is made to suit the tastes and preferences of the booboisie and the nouveau riche. And it's fake, not real. A representative of that class is a fake that has no essence of his/her own. Such an individual is forced to mask this personal shallowness under someone else's ideology, culture or worldview. But when you talk to him/her, you can immediately see that this is fiction, in spite of his/her apparent humanity. This is why the role of artists is to help people tell the difference between what is real and what is fake. But the booboisie will do anything to hide its shallowness behind brand labels, cars and cash. Thus, they create glamour and show business as a way to fool others. I have this project; it's called Zhlob Art, which translates as booboisie art. It's called on to replace the irritation with booboisie domination in Ukrainian culture with mockery. Whoever is able to irritate you can also control you, while mockery and laughter is the best means of resistance.

Most Ukrainian artists are in deep shit but in their thoughts, they walk around Paris or New York in a nice white suit. This is a kind of eternal syndrome of a 20-year old, thinking that everything is nonsense and that everything can be changed by simply moving one finger. Ten years pass, and nothing has changed. The artist is still sipping his cognac or coffee and prattling about the same things, while the crooks he thought would fail and disappear because they are so bad, are in control. They tell him what to do because they have the tools to manipulate him.

I always knew that I wanted to be an independent artist. If you fail to fulfill your mission, you accumulate this negative potential from an internal conflict with yourself. Still, 90-95% of people live that way. They keep lying to themselves and blaming their failures on someone or something else – parents, circumstances, and God knows what else. But in truth, they are really smothering their real calling. Instead, they become the slaves of the world. ■

24 November, 7 p.m.

Brazil Bossa Nova Quartet

Bernadazzi Restaurant and Club (15, vul. Bunina, Odesa)

The Brazil Bossa Nova Quartet will bring hot, intoxicating, but at the same time refined and tender bossa nova to Ukraine. Ark Ovrutski on double bass and guitar, who is well-known to the Ukrainian audience, together with Helio Alves on piano, Duduka da Fonseca on percussion, and vocalist Maucha Adnet, will

demonstrate the highest class of the "new style". This is the literal translation of "bossa nova" – a mixture of the traditional rhythms of the Brazilian samba and classic American jazz.



30 October – 28 November

KievFotoCom 2012

Ra Gallery, Soviart contemporary art centre; Ivan Kavaleridze Workshop Museum (32, vul. B. Khmelnytskoho; 22-a Andriyivskiy Uzviz; 21, Andriyivskiy Uzviz, Kyiv)

Conversation is the subject of this year's international photograph festival that will present photographers from Mexico, Poland, Ukraine and France, all original and versatile. For example, the subject of the photo research of Eric Vassoler from France, is expressed in the laconic title "Be young and shut up!", while Ukrainian artists, Valeria Trubina and Yuriy Boyko, focus on the theme of universal identification, aimed at a dialogue with the audience.

Until 30 November

Nightmare Art

Museum of Dreams (55, vul. Chyhorina, Kyiv)

From now on, dreams can be seen not only when you sleep. The Nightmare Art exhibition-performance allows you to see your dreams in reality and cross the boundary between fiction and reality. The subject of the art research was the nightmare and its most diverse manifestations. Armed with a special instrument for the study of horrors, visitors to the exhibition can find their own hidden associations and reflections in the game created by the museum. This is an amazing opportunity to meet and overcome your fears face-to-face.





Mission: Discover Polissia

Thrill seekers head to Zhytomyr and Rivne forests – a terra incognita for most Ukrainians

Article and
photos by
**Olena
Maksymenko**

"Excuse me, when is the bus to the village leaving?" "What? A bus?! There aren't any buses, there's only a logging truck. It goes there on workdays." "How do we get to town then?" "Take a school bus." "Does anyone in the village own a car? We'd pay someone to give us a ride!" "Ha-ha-ha!" This is Polissia, Zhytomyr Oblast. Just 200 kilometres away from Zhytomyr city itself – and we are in a different dimension. Here people live with their own special dialect, anthropological type and a totally different view of the world. Pristine nature dictates the laws of life here and the locals are still in close connection to it, just like they

have been for hundreds of years. "Have you heard of our uncle Semen...?" cue the legends about werewolves and witches that go along with authentic songs that you will never hear from a folk band in a city club.

Leather bags nailed to wooden fences are used as mailboxes. Shabby local shops sell horilka, bread and mayonnaise. Batteries for a camera are simply an inaccessible luxury. On our way, we see abandoned houses where everything has remained intact ever since the hosts left their homes: frozen wall clock hands, dust-covered clothes in a closet, schoolbooks and letters turning more and more yellow with time, and family pictures and icons

staring at us from the walls (**photo 2**). Apparently, the lonely hosts passed away and the house has been slowly dying without them.

We follow the map to find the best place to host an international festival. There are virtually no forms of transport or roads here. Hospitable locals take us through the forest, which is the only way to get to the spot. All around us are ancient woodlands.

THE MOST VALUABLE PIECES

Wild Polissia has lured thrill seekers, researchers of folk music and culture and adventurers for years, yet it is a terra incognita for average tourists. It is full of historical and cultural sites but

POLISSIA RELICS

Wild honey harvesting is one of the most respected crafts in Polissia today. Surprisingly, the local tradition hardly changed over centuries: wild honey is still gathered using techniques that trace back to the times of Kyiv Rus.

The old noble family of Levkovski still lives 5 km from the Ukrainian-Belarus frontier in Voznychi, a village in Zhytomyr Oblast. It came to settle here from Levkovychi, their ancestral village, in the 18th century. Having survived wars, a revolution, exiles and soviet terror, the family remembers its noble roots. Its members often marry with members of "brotherly" noble families. Since virtually all people in the village have Levkovski as their last name, they call each other by nicknames.

the nature and people are its most valuable pieces to see. Sadly, what urban guests view as exotic, the locals see as a tragedy: unemployment is huge, young people are leaving in droves, weeds overgrow desolate gardens, and the villages are slowly dying (**photo 4**), taking the huge and not yet chronicled cultural layer with them. Alcohol addiction aggravates the situation – people who could work have no jobs and fill their free time with booze.

Polissia's tourist potential is equal to that of the Carpathians in Western Ukraine or the Crimea. Skilful promotion of the region could kill two birds with one stone: decrease unemployment and reveal new destinations for the fans of summer vacationing. It has it all - medieval churches, Stone Age villages with archaeological finds for the fans of pre-historic times, spots where Kyiv Rus princes had once ruled, and shelters of the OUN-UPA, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

Extreme tourists can go kayaking down the local rivers (**photo 1**) while those who prefer quiet and serene rest can rent a house

in a pine tree forest on the bank of the Somyne or Verbytske lakes near the village called Vysotsk. These lakes are smaller than the Shatsk Lakes in North-Western Ukraine but they are known for the healing qualities of their water and the contrasting view of the snow-white sand shores adjacent to the water – hot on the surface and freezing cold down below closer to the springs - they look black due to their peat bottoms.

NGOs and charity funds are doing their best to reveal Polissia to the public. They arrange press tours, pilgrimages to holy places, kayaking on the rivers, workshops for authentic arts and crafts and they bring books and popular writers to local school libraries. The Our Land charity foundation has recently arranged a local history tour to show people the best tourist destination in the Horyn river basin. Flowing into the River Prypiat, Horyn is a source of many sad legends about beautiful girls named Horynia or Horynka. One escaped captivity by stabbing a khan who wanted her as his mistress; another one poured tears over the death of her mother and unanswered love; yet another girl ran from an old unwanted fiancée to her godmother named Prypiat to find shelter... As the legends go, they all turned to the river.

As Horyn gently carries our kayaks on its yellow back, the landscapes leave us breathless. Steep banks dotted with swallow nests flow into wild bushes and welcoming sand beaches. "Going to Belarus after Lukashenka, are you?" local kids and fishermen call out jokingly from the banks. Otters with crayfish in their teeth pop out from beneath the kayaks. The locals say that the forests here abound with wildlife including foxes, wolves, deer and many more.



FOLLOWING THE PRINCES

"The idea of this project came up a while ago," says Natalia Pozniak-Khomenko, Chief Editor of the Our Land publication, member of the Our Land charity foundation and the tour coordinator. "I used to go to many festivals and worked with Chervona Ruta and Taras Bulba¹. Then, there were festivals of authentic culture where every town and city wanted to show its deep historical roots. Only Dubrovytsia has slumbered the years away... In 1986, it became the third Chornobyl zone. There is no construction of enterprises or industry here. But the radiation is gone and the environment has cleaned itself. We have fantastic lakes and rivers here, and a far-reaching history. This place, for instance (Berezhnytsia village – Ed.), is over a thousand years old!"

Dubrovytsia is a town where the Olshanskis, a Lithuanian princely family, had once lived. Prince Yuriy Olshanski was known as a talented warrior from his battles with the Tartars and a donator who funded the construction of many churches. His two daughters were equally famous. His eldest daughter Anastasia (her last name after marriage was Zaslavska) had a brilliant education at that time and arranged the translation of the Peresopnytsia Gospels into the "language of the people". Ukrainian presidents still make their oaths on it today. Her younger sister Uliania Olshanska lived less than 16 years, but was canonized for her virtues. She is guardian saint of Polissia.

Kurash, a village in Dubrovytsia County, used to be a house for hunters built in the middle of a thick forest where the nobles came to hunt and rest. It is best known for its wooden church and the relics of an old Rus town discovered nearby.

FROM THE DULEBES TO UKRAINIAN INSURGENT FIGHTERS

All fans of handmade things and accessories must go to Krupove, a village known as the centre of

¹Named after one of the most popular Ukrainian hit songs by Volodymyr Ivasiuk, Chervona Ruta is a music festival that started in Chernivtsi in 1989, launching the careers of many well-known Ukrainian performers and bands. Taras Bulba is a folk rock festival in Dubno, Rivne Oblast.



Polissia tapestry. It is now home to a generation of artists including four women who have preserved the unique technology of weaving with linen and embroidery on it. The birth and development of this art are on display at the local museum. "There is a woman called Uliana Kot in Krupove," Natalia says. "We've recorded 1,050 folk songs from her. Now 75, she preserves the old melodies, the real authentic singing."

The John the Baptist Catholic church (photo 3) in Dubrovytsia is a masterpiece of temple architecture. However, the local parish hardly counts 50 people and the church, which is an architectural monument on a national scale, is severely neglected as no funds are allocated to fix it. Still, it looks the most impressive in town: maybe it is the open space typical of Roman Catholic architecture, or its special energy, or the stucco faces of the saints looking right into the heart...

Other local attractions include the 1,350-year old oak tree and the Lukovski crosses lost in the forests where, according to rumours, miracles happen and people come for cures from illnesses and grievances.

Vysotsk is a village where ancient Dulebe and Drevlian tribes had once lived. In more recent history, it was one of the OUN-UPA's hot spots.

Solitary sheep trot across the streets and the air has the smell of the warm sun from childhood years. Virtually every village and yard here has its secrets and wonders. Polissia looks like the world on the other side of the mirror – flamboyant and diverse – where one can wander from one story into another that the people, trees and stones will readily share till the end of time. ■

INFO

Geographically, Polissia reaches into four states, including Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Russia. Chronicles from the 14-16th centuries mention the name for the first time. According to most researchers, Polissia is the territory of the River Prypiat basin and the adjacent forest line. Ukrainian Polissia is divided into the Left-Bank and Right-Bank parts, covering parts of Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv, Rivne, Volyn and Sumy Oblasts.

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