

THE CRIMEAN MAFIA IN POLITICS
AND AN EX-PREMIER'S INSIGHT INTO
THE OCCUPATION

RUSSIA'S SEPARATIST
PROJECTS OUTSIDE UKRAINE

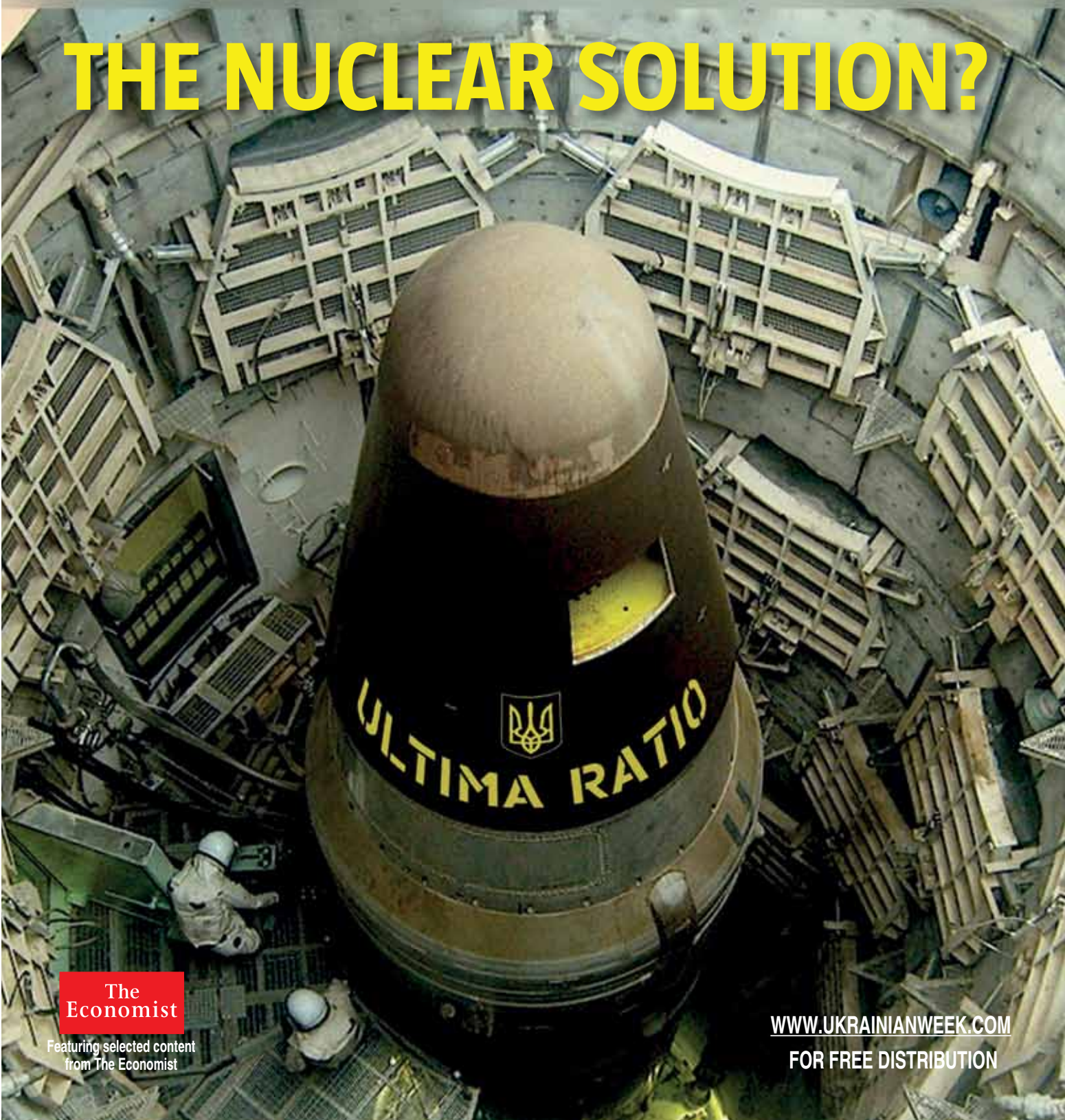
THE NAMELESS HUNDRED: PROTESTERS
MISSING SINCE FEBRUARY 18

i n t e r n a t i o n a l e d i t i o n

The Ukrainian Week

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THE NUCLEAR SOLUTION?



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BRIEFING

Yuriy Makarov on Easter, Death and Hope

4

FOCUS



Nuclear Reincarnation:
Does Ukraine need to restore its nuclear status?

6

International Lawyer Volodymyr Vasilenko:
"Ukraine had to give up its nukes to become a sovereign state and for world recognition of its independence"

8

POLITICS

The Crimean Mafia in Politics:
Russian aggression in Crimea reveals interesting aspects of how criminal groups are used in politics

12

Ex-premier of Crimea Serhiy Kunitsyn: "The only thing that forced the Crimean elite to support Moscow was the presence of 20,000 Russian troops"

14



Mufti Said Ismagilov:
"The status of Muslims here is far better than in Russia"

18

Boys from the Blackstuff:
The government in Kyiv has no obvious counters to Russian-inspired occupiers in the industrial east

20

Self-Determination for the Kremlin: Russia as the biggest provocateur and supporter of separatist projects in neighbouring countries over the past 25 years

22



NEIGHBOURS

Leonidas Donskis
on Russia's ordinary fascism



25



OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier: "Ukraine must protect itself. It should not become a victim of the clash of EU and Eurasian Union policies. Therefore, strong internal dialogue is important"

26

Lithuania's first Defence Minister Andrius Butkevicius: "You must rapidly set about creating your own army at the enemy's gunpoint"

28



Putin's Regiment in the EU: The Crimean "referendum" reveals Vladimir Putin's partners in the EU that can undermine it from within

32

SOCIETY



The Nameless Hundred: The Maidan's death toll may be higher than stated earlier. Eye-witnesses speak of the police and titushkas beating protesters to death, and black bags containing bodies on February 18

34

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ТИЖДЕНЬ

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Supported by Russian infiltrators, separatists launch a new wave of building occupations in eastern Ukraine. Sloviansk and Kramatorsk in Donetsk Oblast are the epicenters



The Supreme Council of Transnistria addresses Russia, UN and OSCE to recognize its independence. The ultimate goal of this, as announced by the local government, is to join Russia

The Verkhovna Rada recognizes Crimea as a partly occupied territory

Resurrection

There is a need for the symbol of resurrection precisely here and now – when everything has been played out, when the curtain is down and the audience is leaving, it suddenly turns out that there is still an epilogue and the most important thing is actually there. In fact, this is a true beginning

It is terrifying to be dying. Especially when you know you will certainly die. I have never tried and never had an opportunity. Even during the Maidan's most frightening days, I stayed on my couch. All right, I was not on the couch – I was in bed with a fever. Still, no bullets were swishing past my temples. But people close to me who have been to hell – some on multiple occasions – say that at critical moments, even with all the adrenalin flowing, they willed themselves to overcome their mortal fear as they stuck their heads out. The circumstances varied from trenches near Sarny in 1916, a bridgehead near Vyshhorod in 1943, a forest-grown territory near Kandahar in 1982 and, finally, the barricades on Instytutska Street two months ago. Death is unnatural and unacceptable to a human being.

When they say that death is a part of life, this is a biology textbook view. In the sense of evolution, it is true: if no room is made for new forms of life, the development of species will cease abruptly. No-one asks permis-

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Makarov**



THE EASTER HOLIDAY IS A SYMBOL OF VICTORY OVER DEATH. THAT IS WHY IT IS CELEBRATED BY BOTH FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS AND DYED-IN-THE-WOOL ATHEISTS

sion from an individual that must yield its place to more advanced progeny. It is expendable



in the gigantic reactor that creates new adaptive capabilities of protein matter. This is how it should be; this is the Creator's design.

If, however, we are speaking about people with consciousness and freedom of will, rather than speechless creatures, other laws apply. Individual evolution, i.e. the development of the soul, is no less important than social progress. Every personality matters and is in no way humus for

PACE Strips the Russian delegation of the right to vote and work in the administrative structures to punish it for its aggressive actions against Ukraine

Ukraine, US, EU and Russia meet in Geneva to discuss options for de-escalation of tension in eastern Ukraine. Parties to the talks report that Russia agrees to take some steps to that end but many experts remain critical about this prospect and the effectiveness of the talks

subsequent generations. The design is different here. Death is not a synonym of non-living. Death is the end of life which has already taken place. Thus, it is not a part of life but its negation, and the dream of immortality has been the core idea of culture since the dawn of human history.

But what about suicide? It does exist, and as far as we can tell, it has been practiced at all times. We will have to agree that this is a matter of individual choice, a malfunction of the programme or a disease. Again, there are testimonies of those who were fortunate (or unfortunate) to botch their sinful intention. Every year, the famous Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco attracts several dozen suicides who jump from 75-metre height into the water. Very few survive, and each one of them says that, in the four seconds that the fall lasted, he or she wished to "roll back" time and abandon the intention to jump, but it was too late. Human death is, after all, unnatural.

Easter is a symbol of victory over death. That is why it is celebrated by both faithful Christians and dyed-in-the-wool atheists. The story of Christ is enthralling in its own right. A journalist once asked me during an interview who my favourite literary character was. Surprisingly, I answered off the cuff: "Jesus Christ". My goodness! Frankly, I was as shocked as the interviewer. But it is true: the Gospel, even when not perceived as the Holy Scripture and considered to be a literary creation, is a stunningly powerful document. The truthfulness of the smallest psychological details; the particulars of everyday life that cannot be readily imagined; the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies, which are accepted without reservation, because real life is chock-full of them; the sometimes strange and foreign sense of humour; finally,

the fantastic drama that ends, as it should, in victorious catharsis... And you don't even want to ascertain what it actually is – an authentic chronicle of events or the fruit of collective creative labour in the course of the first four centuries of Christianity. After all, it doesn't matter: evidence is superfluous to believers, and as far as unbelievers are concerned, let them be enraptured by the magic a literary work. Both groups don't care that the history of religion previously saw gods that rose from the dead, because what matters to modern man is details. How did the protagonist go from being a Jewish boy in a provincial city in Galilee that no-one took any special interest in to being a prophet and a messiah? What was his path all the way to the fatal last walk up the hill beyond the wall of Jerusalem? How did he behave? What did he feel? Did he understand his fate? How did he explain it to his close ones? Did he hesitate or despair? This is not to mention the very foundation of Christ's teaching: prayer, commandments, their application to the situation at hand and personal examples.

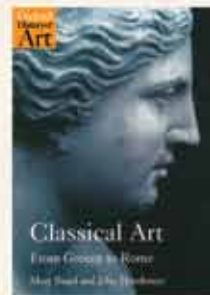
Not everyone will be a Christian; this is a matter of personal preference. But the magical persuasiveness of Christ's story cannot fail to affect either the Jews (even though they have the hardest time dealing with it as they consider Jesus to be merely a dissident), or Muslims, or Buddhists, or atheists and agnostics. There is a need for this symbol precisely here and now – when everything has been played out, when the curtain is down and the audience is leaving, it suddenly turns out that there is still an epilogue and the most important thing is actually there. In fact, this is a true beginning. I don't want to point out any trite analogies. Everyone will find his or her own. Let me just say: Christ is risen! ■



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Nuclear Reincarnation

Does Ukraine need to reclaim its nuclear status?



SATAN IN FLIGHT. SS-18 "Satan" missile, all of which is produced in Ukraine, is the core component of Russia's missile weapons

WHAT UKRAINE GAVE UP IN THE 1990S

Twenty-three years after the breakup of the USSR, the core of Russia's nuclear arsenal is still made up of the SS-18 missiles designed in Ukraine. As of 2014, the Russian Federation has some 680 Ukraine-made nuclear warheads on SS-18s, 600 nuclear warheads on SS-19s produced in Russia but with a control system made in Ukraine's Kharkiv and around 300 warheads on Russian Topol (SS-25) and Yars (SS-27) missiles which include components manufactured in Ukraine. All SS-19s must be decommissioned by the end of 2016. The production of strategic missiles in Russia cannot keep up with the ageing of its nuclear arsenal, so it tries to maintain control over Ukraine's missile-building complex at any cost.

In 1991, Ukraine inherited the third largest nuclear weapons arsenal in the world. It included 46 silo-launched SS-24 missiles carrying 460 nuclear warheads and 130 SS-19s carrying 780 warheads. Considering the parameters of these missiles, they were a threat to the USA but could hardly protect Ukraine from Russia. Moreover, Ukraine had, from Soviet times, 19 TU-160 strategic bombers and 600 air-launched cruise missiles. Its entire nuclear arsenal included some 5,000 warheads, but they were all controlled from Moscow. To compare, Russia now has around 14,000 nuclear warheads, including 1,500 to 1,600 of the strategic variety.

Ukraine did not and still does not have facilities to produce fuel-grade or weapons-grade enriched uranium. In the 1990s, this system would have required a huge investment – US \$3bn, or US \$10bn in current prices. It was precisely this national nuclear missile control system that Ukraine lacked in order to become a full-fledge nuclear state back in 1992. "The Russians began to actively work through their agents of influence, such as Dmytro Tabachnyk, inside Ukraine in order to force it to give up the entire missile industry as

soon as possible," a high-ranking official in Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service, who dealt with nuclear issues at the time, has told The Ukrainian Week on condition of anonymity. "The problem was that we were Russia's main competitor at the international market for weapons and missile and space technology. Against the backdrop of friendly talks, very serious efforts were being taken to undermine Ukraine's defence capacity and make it impossible for our state to maintain its nuclear status. All means were used, from secret financing of Ukrainian politicians, especially in the left-wing part of the spectrum, to bribery of officers and experts to economic pressure."

Ukraine's and Russia's military industries worked as one mechanism in Soviet times. These were the infamous "inseparable economic ties between brotherly peoples" that Moscow loved to talk about. The Kremlin terminated all military industrial contracts starting from 1 January 1992, causing an economic collapse in Ukraine. In particular, the missile and space industry, which employed over 200,000 people, was left without orders. Nearly half of Ukraine's electricity was produced by nuclear power stations that used Russian nuclear fuel, and suddenly Ukraine was unable to pay for it. In these conditions, the country faced a coordinated position of the USA, Great Britain and Russia, which demanded giving up nuclear weapons and missile technology and in exchange offered aid in overcoming the crisis. Finally, Ukraine's government agreed, but all it received was apparent security guarantees, an aid package, supplies of nuclear fuel in exchange for nuclear warheads, as well as access to the commercial markets for Ukraine's missiles.

At the moment, it seemed that Ukraine bought time by saving the missile and space industry from demise and the economy from collapse. Moreover, it kept 250kg of weapons-grade uranium, enough to make dozens of warheads if need be. However, in the course of nearly 20 years none of Ukraine's presidents and governments ever tackled the issue of strategic security. In 2010, Viktor Yanukovich gave up the weapons-grade ura-

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By giving up its nuclear weapons Ukraine managed to peacefully go through the stormy 1990s in the post-Soviet territory and leave the USSR quite painlessly. The control centre for strategic nuclear missiles located in Ukraine was in Russia. If Ukraine had kept them, it would have remained under Russia's umbrella and essentially refused to embrace true independence. This is not to mention the excessive financial burden of maintaining the missiles and the infrastructure. However, Russian military aggression has recently become a constant threat, while the Western powers are failing to fulfil the security guarantees they extended to Ukraine under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. The issue of nuclear or other similarly effective weapons with which to defend Ukraine's borders is again high on the agenda.

nium to the USA based on an agreement Americans previously made with Viktor Yushchenko in exchange for financing a centre of neutron research in the Kharkiv Physics and Technology Institute. According to information obtained by *The Ukrainian Week*, most of this money has been embezzled.

NO NUCLEAR ALTERNATIVE

There are three major varieties of nuclear weapons: land-launched, sea-launched and air-launched. Land-launched missiles are further divided into short-range (tactical, up to 500km), medium-range (1,000-5,000km) and long-range (upwards of 5,000km). According to the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) between the USSR and the USA, intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles were banned. Ukraine joined the treaty back in the 1990s.

Nuclear missiles are programmed to hit a certain set of targets within their range. All launch pads are joined together into one nuclear weapons management system, which issues launch commands.

Long-range missiles are usually called strategic, because their purpose is to destroy the strategic potential of an enemy, such as cities, military bases, etc. They typically carry several warheads each of which can manoeuvre on its own, deceive anti-missile defence systems and deliver nuclear charges within several dozen metres of the target.

The range of strategic missiles is limited from the bottom by the demands of the INF treaty, even though their control system can be programmed so that they would choose a trajectory to hit a target in the prohibited zone. Russia is already experimenting by launching strategic missiles with the range of 2,500km, which is approximately the distance from the Russian missile base in Verkhnyaya Salda (Urals) to Lviv or Odesa in Ukraine.

Nuclear weapons are means of universal destruction, which is both its strong and weak side. If an enemy is invading the country gradually, little by little, as Russia is doing in Ukraine now, nuclear weapons are useless. Let us look at the Russian aggression against

Ukraine from a position in which we have strategic nuclear weapons. Let us assume that Russia has seized Luhansk or Kherson. Will Ukraine press the button of mutual destruction that will wipe out, among other cities, Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv and Kharkiv? Of course, not. That is why strategic nuclear weapons are unfit for a local war like the one in which Ukraine has been drawn into.

AN ALTERNATIVE OPTION TO FILL THE VACUUM

Will tactical nuclear weapons help Ukraine? They more or less even out the chances of a small and large army, but there are many nuances. First, Ukraine would have to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The world community may accept the diplomatic step as such, but any attempts to restore nuclear status will be met with a very hostile reaction.

Ukraine is now supported by the entire world, but by taking this step it would place itself alongside North Korea or Iraq under Saddam Hussein. No-one will lift a finger to protect Ukraine from Russia's invasion, which will take place immediately after the effort to restore nuclear status becomes known. In this case, Ukraine can forget about European integration and cooperation with NATO.

Technologically, in order to restore tactical nuclear weapons Ukraine would need to produce a new missile carrier with a range of at least 500km, which is the distance between Chernihiv and Moscow, a control system and a weapons-grade uranium enrichment system. This programme would take three to five years to implement and many billions of dollars in financing.

As far as financing is concerned, ex-Minister of Environment Protection and Nuclear Safety Yuriy Kostenko, who held this office in the early and mid-1990s, said: "To create a system for developing enriched uranium and plutonium, we have working nuclear power plants, but to extract and further enrich these elements, we need brand-new production facilities. They will cost US \$50-100bn to build." Add to this the cost of constructing missiles and creating military units to service them.

The main blow in this case, however, will be the economic sanctions which the West will inevitably impose. If Ukraine manages to overcome all of this, then the question will arise: Why do we need nuclear weapons if we can keep Russia at bay even without them? Many experts say that withdrawing from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, spending many billions of dollars on weapons that are unlikely to ever be used and facing inevitable international isolation as a consequence simply does not make sense.

Instead, there is a completely legal alternative in creating a high-precision missile system with a medium or short range that will employ modern conventional warheads. One such type is the so-called thermobaric weapons, also known as vacuum bombs. They are as powerful as miniature nuclear bombs, but do not violate numerous international treaties or require an entire industry like that for obtaining weapons-grade uranium and producing plutonium. For example, the available Russian heavy thermobaric weapons have the explosive yield of some 44 tonnes of TNT. This kind of weapon cannot send the aggressor back to the Stone Age or turn someone into "nuclear ashes" but is a fairly serious deterrent to make any aggression pointless and very dangerous. Ukraine must make use of its scientific, technical and military potential which is sufficient today to create such cutting-age defence systems.

Ukraine, no doubt, needs to step up its cooperation with NATO with an option of soon joining the alliance. This will permit expanding NATO's nuclear umbrella to cover Ukraine. Moreover, the Budapest Memorandum is an important argument to clear the way of all obstacles. However, it should be understood that in conditions of increasing instability in the world caused by Russia's actions, Ukraine still needs to combine European Atlantic integration with the development of its own high-precision weapons. This will permit Ukraine to stay within the boundaries set by international treaties while at the same time safeguarding the country against any surprise events along its eastern and southern border. ■

Andrew Zhalko-Tytarenko is a theoretical physicist and author of nearly 90 publications. In 1993-95, he worked as the deputy head and then acting director general of Ukraine's National Space Agency. He participated in negotiations over Ukraine's nuclear and missile weapons. He is now an independent expert, a contributor to *The Diplomatic Courier* (USA), *Diplomat & International Canada* and a columnist with *The Thruster*, an American magazine that covers issues in modern space business. Zhalko-Tytarenko lives in Canada.

Volodymyr Vasylenko:

"Ukraine had to give up its nuclear weapons to become a sovereign state and have its independence recognized by the entire world"

The anamnesis of Ukraine's non-nuclear status

Interviewed by
Roman Malko



Professor Volodymyr Vasylenko knows first-hand about all the ups and downs Ukraine experienced after regaining its independence in 1991. He is the author of the first draft Declaration of State Sovereignty and the formula on Ukraine's intention to become a neutral, non-aligned and non-nuclear state in the future. He represented Ukraine in the EU and NATO at the time when the Budapest Memorandum was being prepared. He was also involved in working on Ukraine's nuclear disarmament and the respective talks. As an insider in the process, he knows all problems and risks associated with it.

U.W.: Why did the idea of Ukraine's nuclear disarmament surface, and when?

There were several reasons. First, many people in Ukraine, including MPs, were under the influence of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, so the overall sentiment was anti-nuclear. Second and more important, Ukraine was moving towards independence and the Verhovna Rada was developing the Declaration of Ukraine's State Sovereignty in May-July 1990. National democratic forces, represented in parliament by the People's Council (Narodna Rada, the parliamentary opposition in the Ukrainian Parliament in 1990-1994 – Ed.),

from the very start viewed the Declaration as an action plan for gradual restoration of Ukraine's independence and withdrawal from the Soviet Union.

When the Declaration was passed, Ukraine was part of the USSR, a nuclear power. Indirectly, Ukraine was a nuclear state, because nuclear weapons were deployed in its territory. The USSR was also the leading member of a military bloc, the Warsaw Pact. So by stating in the Declaration its intention to become a permanently neutral, non-aligned and non-nuclear state, Ukraine laid the political and legal foundations for withdrawing from the USSR. By inheriting nuclear

weapons and remaining a nuclear state, Ukraine would have tied itself inextricably to the Soviet military industrial complex, because nuclear weapons were designed and produced outside its borders. Control and service centres and testing grounds were also located outside Ukraine. If Ukraine had kept these weapons, it would have remained part of this system, which would have spelled political, economic and military dependence on Russia.

Moreover, back in 1990, when the Eastern Bloc fell apart and the USSR began to disintegrate, US Secretary of State James Baker announced the criteria which the United States and the West in general were going to look at in recognizing newly independent states: building society and the state on democratic principles, developing the economy on market principles, respect for human and minority rights, no territorial claims and no nuclear weapons in possession. That is why it was vital for Ukraine to solve the issue of nuclear disarmament, especially considering the sad experience of the 1920s when the West did not recognize Ukraine and it became a target of Bolshevik aggression, eventually losing its independence.

In other words, for Ukraine to become a sovereign state and have its independence recognized by the entire world, it had to give up its nuclear weapons.

U.W.: Was there any pressure from the US or other states in this question?

There was no pressure at the stage when the Declaration was developed. It was a purely Ukrainian intellectual and mental development of strategic nature aimed at creating grounds for Ukraine's withdrawal from the Soviet Union. Interestingly, Belarus was monitoring the events in our Supreme Soviet and its MPs essentially copied the final version of the statement on the neutral, non-aligned and non-nuclear status from our document into their own declaration of state sovereignty. This "unanimity" led to a discussion among Western experts, as they tried to decipher the intentions of the Soviets in various ways.

The true goal of this formula on Ukraine's future status of a neutral, non-aligned and non-nuclear state remained a mystery also to the majority of Ukrainian MPs. The highly emotional perception of the nuclear threat caused by the Chernobyl disaster prompted 272 MPs to vote in favour (49 against), while entire Section 9 "External and internal security" of the Declaration was supported by a mere 238 MPs (100 against).

A short while later, on 20 August 1991, an abortive putsch took place in Moscow, and Ukraine proclaimed its independence four days later, on 24 August. The situation changed drastically, so there was no longer any need to realize the intention to become a non-aligned and neutral state. However, there was still the need to obtain non-nuclear status.

U.W.: Just to be independent from Russia?

First, not to depend on Russia and, second, to be recognized by the West. In September 1991, I completed a detailed analytical document about non-nuclear status for Ukraine in which I argued that we had to give up nuclear weapons. This approach was accepted by Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine's first president, not without the influence of Anton Butenko, who was then his counsellor for international issues. Despite some active opposition to non-nuclear status in parliament, the majority of MPs supported the president. On numerous occasions, the Verkhovna Rada issued statements and passed decisions confirming Ukraine's readiness for nuclear disarmament but on condition of security guarantees. The first such statement after Ukraine regained its independence was made by parliament on 24 September 1991.

Russia was among the countries that insisted with extra vigour that Ukraine had to give up its nuclear arms and publicly declared their stance. However, it did not, in fact, want Ukraine to move quickly along slow disarmament path and hampered the process, aware that this would make the West angry and put Ukraine in international isolation and blockade. Every time the Verkhovna Rada debated this issue, there

were some provocations – territorial claims or something like that. And then parliament was in uproar: If Russia is hostile to us, how can we give up nuclear weapons? International pressure came after Ukraine became independent and was recognized by all European states and influential world powers. The pressure was huge. I experienced it in 1992-94 as Ukraine's ambassador to the Benelux countries and representative to NATO and the EU. Nuclear powers did not want to lose their monopolistic right to nuclear weapons. At the same time, they were concerned about international security, because proliferation of nuclear arms is indeed a dangerous thing. On 3 April 1992, we started intensive negotiations.

U.W.: Was there a chance to keep part of the nuclear weapons or, at least, stretch the disarmament process over a longer period?

I don't think Ukraine would have benefited from this. The issue was a colossal irritant and grounds for accusations against Ukraine and all kinds of provocations. Moreover, let me emphasize once again, we did not have the



UKRAINE SHOULD HAVE DEMANDED NATO MEMBERSHIP IN EXCHANGE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

specialists, resources, knowledge and technology to service nuclear weapons and do maintenance works. If nuclear warheads are not serviced in a timely manner and are neglected, they become a source of increased danger.

U.W.: What if we had refused to give up nuclear weapons after all? Ukraine could have said it had acted in haste, but then changed its mind and decided the timing was not right.

We would have faced sanctions then. Of course, the USA would not have waged war against Ukraine, but it would have arranged political, economic and diplomatic isolation. There is no doubt about that. We would have been left one-on-one against Russia which would have taken advantage of the situation to establish its military and political con- ➤



PHOTO AP

trol in Ukraine. We would have had a kind of quasi-independence.

U.W.: Did Ukraine have enough money to afford keeping nuclear weapons at the time?

That is another question mark. The economic situation was very bad at the time. The then President Kravchuk allowed Premier Leonid Kuchma to sign an agreement with Russia recognizing corporate debt as Ukraine's state debt. This coincided in time with a huge spike in energy prices which led to colossal inflation and devaluation of coupons, which served as a replacement for money.

Thus, there were tremendous economic difficulties, but most importantly, there were issues with servicing nuclear weapons. Some experts said that we could change the control codes for nuclear missiles. They said they could do it. I am not an expert in this field and don't know how feasible and safe it was. Two camps were fighting in Ukraine at the time. One wanted Ukraine to keep nuclear weapons no matter what, and the other wanted non-nuclear status. I am absolutely convinced that we made the right strategic choice. However, we should have adequately developed the state and its armed forces.

U.W.: Was there a possibility to give up strategic weapons but keep the tactical ones at least for a while?

This is still a mystery to the public at large. I did not deal with

Presidents Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin and Leonid Kravchuk in the Kremlin on 14 January 1994 during a formal ceremony celebrating an agreement between the USA and Russia to stop aiming long-range missiles at each other

this issue, but tactical nuclear weapons were taken out of Ukraine very rapidly. No-one can tell who gave the orders and what agreements existed with Moscow. I believe a Russian special operation took place there. We did not need strategic nuclear weapons. Aimed at the USA, they were useless to us and a strong irritant to America.

On 26 February 1993, I received a phone call from the American embassy with a request to meet an important person from Washington who was passing through Brussels. That person was Strobe Talbott. He said: "I am going to be appointed Deputy Secretary of State. I will be dealing with Eastern Europe and, among others, Ukraine, but I know nothing about your country. Could you please bring me up to date?" We



THE STATES THAT GUARANTEED SECURITY, INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INVIOABILITY TO UKRAINE HAVE FAILED TO MEET THEIR COMMITMENTS

had a very long talk. He was especially interested in nuclear disarmament issues. I told Talbott that obtaining non-nuclear status was our idea, so there was no need to put pressure on us – we would do it. But we needed to have security guarantees – that was the most important thing. So the Americans

could think about that. The Russians were not interested in quickly completing negotiations with us. If the US wanted a result, it had to join the negotiations as the third party.

U.W.: So, initially, it was only about negotiations with Russia?

Right. We talked to the Russians, and the Verkhovna Rada wanted certain guarantees to be provided to Ukraine. And then, after my talk with Talbott, Americans indeed joined the negotiations and we made some progress. Britain also joined in. The Budapest Memorandum was signed, as is known, by four states: Britain, USA, Russia and Ukraine. France and China issued separate statements to the effect that they respected the territorial integrity and state borders of Ukraine. The memorandum and, even more so, the statements are not very meaningful. They do not spell out a specific mechanism for helping Ukraine and protecting its borders and territorial integrity. A positive side was that it recognized as unacceptable not only military aggression but also economic pressure aimed at stripping Ukraine of its independence or violating its territorial integrity. Another plus is that point six of the memorandum says that its parties must hold consultations in case Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence are in danger.

Ukraine's attempts to enforce this point were unsuccessful. In 2003, when Russia provoked a conflict over Ukraine's island of Tuzla, the nuclear powers that had extended security guarantees to us refused to hold any consultations. Now, during the current Russian aggression and after Russia's annexation of part of Ukraine's territory, only the USA and Great Britain agreed to hold consultations.

U.W.: How can you explain the imperfections of the Budapest Memorandum? What was the reason: the weakness of Ukrainian diplomats, the pressure from partners or, perhaps, haste?

No, there was no haste. Ukraine declared its intention to become a non-nuclear state back in 1990. After declaring independence, we confirmed that Kyiv

would stick to this intention and started negotiations in 1992. True, the Western states were hurrying things up. They wanted this to happen as soon as possible, but the Budapest Memorandum was signed on 5 December 1994, so there was plenty of time.

In my opinion, the Ukrainian leadership was somewhat ill-prepared. It lacked strategic thinking to some extent and had rosy hopes for good neighbourly relations with Russia. Kyiv was still ill at ease in the international arena among players with tremendous diplomatic experience. There was a feeling that they believed these promises and guarantees. If such serious players took on commitments, it all had to be more or less normal. However, we should have defended our position more vigorously and pragmatically during the negotiations.

In particular, I wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that security guarantees had to be normative, organizational and material. These were the three types of guarantees that needed to be specified, particularly by way of demanding an invitation to NATO and solving issues having to do with the operation of our nuclear power plants and the energy sector in general. It would then have held together well and had a certain effect. But there was no talk of NATO membership at the time, even though we should have asked for it in exchange for nuclear disarmament. We would have given up nuclear arms and come under NATO's umbrella. This decision, I believe, would have ensured the interests of both the West and Ukraine. It would, however, have gone against Russia's interests. If it had happened, we would not have had much trouble with Russia. Remember how Russia blackmailed the Poles, the Czechs and the Baltic peoples: "Don't join NATO." However, as soon as they joined the alliance, it all calmed down. And today I am sure that as soon as Ukraine becomes a NATO member, the Russians will have a fit of hysterics, but our relations will go back to normal after a while, because they will understand that there is no way they can subjugate Ukraine now.

U.W.: Don't you think that Ukraine is the only state that has

fulfilled the Budapest Memorandum as of today?

It is true.

U.W.: In other words, the USA and Britain – to say nothing of Russia – owe us now...

Well, we are not even talking about Russia in this context. It has never intended to respect our sovereignty, territorial integrity, etc. By formally signing treaties with us, Moscow proceeded from an assumption that Ukraine was part of the Russian Federation rather than a separate state. It has believed all along that Ukraine's independence is a temporary anomaly and that sooner or later Ukraine will return to Russia and become part of "one and indivisible" entity.

U.W.: Were there any secret deals? Say, between the USA and Russia?

I don't think so. Both the Americans and the Russians were, by and large, interested in Ukraine's nuclear disarmament and did not conceal the fact. Ukraine's leadership had the mindset back then that we would agree to non-nuclear status for the sake of international recognition and establishment of normal relations with the West.

U.W.: A topic that is actively being debated now is revising the memorandum and restoring Ukraine's nuclear status. How real is this?

From a legal standpoint, this is possible. The argument here is that the states that guaranteed security, independence and territorial inviolability to Ukraine have failed to meet their commitments. Hence, we can withdraw from the Budapest Memorandum and try to ensure our security by restoring nuclear status, especially if this step is supported by Ukrainian citizens.

However, this framing of the issue will evoke an absolutely negative reaction from the West, and we will find ourselves in international isolation. Moreover, we do not have the material resources now to start this process. It is more realistic to reform the country, restore the efficiency of our national security sector and raise the issue of granting Ukraine the NATO Membership Action Plan. ■



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Crimean Mafia in Politics

Russian aggression in Crimea reveals interesting aspects of how criminal groups are in politics

ARMED AND DANGEROUS:
Crimea's self-defence



Author:
Ihor Losev

It is not without reason that the Russian separatist movement on Crimean land was led by Sergey Aksyonov, known as Goblin from the crime-ridden

1990s. The leader of Russkoye Yedinstvo (Russian Unity), a political party that gained 3 out of 100 seats in the Crimean parliament in the 2010 election,

Aksyonov was appointed as “premier” of the occupied Ukrainian peninsula by Moscow during the Crimean crisis. Thanks to his old contacts with the criminal locals, he headed the Crimean self-defence that acted under the close eye of the Russian special services and collaborated with the Russian military when they occupied Crimea, slightly reinforced by the “Cossacks” imported from Kuban and Don in Russia and Terek in Chechnya.

The role of criminal gangs in politics in Ukraine has had little spotlight so far. Some recent researches mostly focus on their impact on the domestic policy through the phenomenon of mafia, and far less so on their role in geopolitics and international conflicts. Meanwhile, the red totalitarian regime already had its own tradition of close cooperation with criminals who were regarded as lesser evil and “socially closer elements” compared to political prisoners in the USSR.

This is why criminals in Soviet concentration camps had many more privileges than political inmates. It was them that GULAG chiefs used to terrorize political prisoners. After 1945, this well-tested machine of criminal management based on criminal inmates willing to collaborate with the prison administration in GULAGs was undermined by the newly-arrived members of OUN-UPA, Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Russian writer and dissident, once wrote in his most prominent novel that the GULAG administration was afraid of just two categories of inmates – Banderites and Chechens.

After the USSR collapsed, some parts of the one-time empire, including Transnistria in Moldova, and South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, saw attempts to use the criminal world

to service of the Kremlin's political interests. Crimea was no exception. In the early 1990s, it had some of the highest crime rates in the entire Ukraine, with the Donbas as the only rival by the scale of crime.

One of the most notorious figures of that epoch was Yevgeniy Podanayev, a Sevastopol mafia boss who solved any issues with the rival gangs with machine guns. At times, Crimea would see actual battles following the tactics of army units. Podanayev was one of the first mafia bosses who tried to convert his physical power and cash into political activity. To that end, he established the Christian Liberal Party of Crimea. That didn't go well, though, as both himself, and the party leaders were killed shortly after.

Two other notorious gangs, including Salem (the gang borrowed its name from the Salem cigarette brand popular in the 1990s) and Bashmaki (after Viktor Bashmakov, one of its founders and leaders), eagerly cooperated with pro-Russian organizations and Russian special services. All this led the local mafia into politics as the criminals saw pro-Moscow politics as a good business and source of cash. Ukrainian law enforcers and central authorities in Kyiv overlooked the special role of the Crimean mafia which, guided by its own instincts and instructions from the Kremlin, put its people in Crimea's central and regional parliament, councils, executive authorities and law enforcement agencies in Crimea.

The mafia eagerly used Crimean paramilitary groups, such as "Cossacks", throwing them at Crimean Tatars, pro-Ukrainian rallies and political opponents. Under Yuriy Meshkov as Crimea's president (the post was introduced in 1994 and abolished in 1995) criminal gangs were not as politicized as they are today. Meanwhile, after financing various pro-Russian groups for a long time, Moscow apparently grew disillusioned with this cash-hungry yet ineffective instrument, eventually betting on specific people who could be handed out weapons and given a task. That is exactly

what it did in February-March 2014 in Crimea.

When the Crimean Police Headquarters was headed by Hennadiy Moskal, currently the deputy head of the Verkhovna Rada committee against organized crime and corruption, the thugs were under huge pressure. His successor of Donetsk origin, Anatoliy Mohyliov, let them revive and enjoy impunity. Russian occupiers used the thugs as cover-up and political infantry – they performed the dirtiest acts against Ukrainian activists and military units in Crimea. The latest events revealed that organized criminal gangs can serve as an important element of political strategies.

The thugs proved to easily switch from purely criminal activity to ideological and political banditism and terror against the opponents of their masters, using political slogans convenient for their masters and acting within the outlined ideological framework. The line between politics and criminal activities here is fairly obscure. Just like in "Nobody knew where Benya ended and police started," wrote Isaak Babel, Odesa-born writer, about Benya Krik, a well-known bandit of that time, in his *Odesa Stories*.

The thugs do all the dirty work for the Russian military and administration. It is for this reason that Putin had long referred to Russia's aggressive actions in Crimea as those of "local groups". He did not mention who armed, trained and commanded the thugs, though.

Today, those in Crimea who are a burden for the occupiers face pressure and unbearable everyday life made so by the thugs from the Crimean self-defence. They threaten Crimean Tatars with a new deportation, take over people's property and kidnap people. The Russian government finds it very convenient to act with the hands of these allegedly "uncontrolled" armed people from behind the stage. If the Kremlin wishes to have an ethnic cleansing in Crimea tomorrow, it will probably do so through the paid thugs. The statements of Crimea's self-proclaimed premier Aksyonov about confiscation of Ukrainian property in

Crimea reveal strong and firmly entrenched criminal instincts. The transition period that will last until 2016, as announced by the occupiers, is likely to turn into a triumph and powerfulness of the Crimean mafia. Without it, the Kremlin's operation in Crimea would hardly have been as successful.

Russia has used the joint force of Crimean pro-Moscow movements and organized criminal gangs that are hard to distinguish from one another. One thing is clear though: Crimea will now see a surge of crime rates. This will hardly facilitate its economic and tourist development. The local self-defence will become a legal form of banditism, and alternative groups self-organized by the locals will probably

THUGS SWITCH EASILY FROM CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES TO IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL TERROR AGAINST OPPONENTS

be the only option for protection from it. The autonomous Crimea will grow ever more into a "pirate republic" like Transnistria, South Ossetia or Abkhazia.

Meanwhile, the rest of Ukraine must draw its conclusions from the Crimean crisis: organized mafia often picks up political "viruses". In fact, what Ukraine under Yanukovich was moving to was very much like the current Crimea, only on a greater scale. The good thing is that Ukraine's huge territory will make it more difficult to turn it into a criminal reserve where thugs mix with bureaucrats the way they did in Crimea.

Peaceful coexistence of the state and organized mafia that legalizes itself and stops short of becoming a component to the state administration apparatus, leads its society to a disaster sooner or later.

Maidan 2013-2014 has saved Ukraine from that. Crimea has no such savior. It has fallen victim to the state where the criminal-tycoon system has long legalized itself, entrenched itself firmly, and layered itself over anti-democratic and antihuman traditions that dominated it for ages. ■

Crimea has fallen victim to the state where the criminal-tycoon system has long legalized itself, entrenched itself firmly, and layered itself over anti-democratic and antihuman traditions that dominated it for ages

Serhiy Kunitsyn:

"The only thing that forced Crimean elite to support Moscow was the presence of 20,000 Russian troops"

Ex-premier of Crimea speaks about a fatal four-day procrastination following Russia's invasion, attempts to bribe Crimean Tatars and reasons why the leaders of Crimea's enforcement authorities defected to the Russians

Interviewed
by Bohdan Butkevych

Serhiy Kunitsyn is one of the most respected Crimean politicians since Ukraine regained its independence. He was Crimean prime minister for six years and had several stints as the representative of Ukraine's president to Crimea. However, his last trip there was a failure as Ukraine lost Crimea precisely at that time. He resigned and is now in open conflict with the current leadership of the country over the recent events in the autonomous republic. Kunitsyn is a native of Crimea, so the recent developments have a very personal dimension for him. In the middle of the interview, he received a phone call and learned that his son, who had gone to Simferopol to visit his mother, was arrested by Sergey Aksyonov's men and seized by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB). *The Ukrainian Week* talks to Serhiy about how the Crimean crisis unfolded.

U.W.: Many people believe that the peninsula found itself under occupation primarily due to the procrastination of Ukraine's leadership. You were appointed Permanent Representative of the President to Crimea but voluntarily resigned a short while later. However, instead of accepting your resignation, the acting president fired you for "failing to adequately fulfil of-

fice duties". Could you please evaluate the actions of the central government and your own?

Higher bosses always try to scapegoat their subordinates to cover up their own incompetence. I was not keen to go to Crimea but eventually went there in large part due to Vitaliy Klitschko who personally asked me to sort out the situation. One week before these events, I was defending a thesis in Simferopol when a group of MPs from the Crimea's Supreme Council approached me. Understanding that the Maidan had won and there was going to be a leadership reshuffle in the republic, they suggested collecting signatures in Crimea's parliament to have me, rather than some non-local figure like Anatoliy Mohyliov [representative of the Donetsk wing of the then government appointed as Crimean prime minister by ex-president Viktor Yanukovich]. Incidentally, Mohyliov himself said that he was ready to peacefully hand over his office to me. Guided by party considerations, Oleksandr Turchynov and [Yulia Tymoshenko's] Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party initially wanted to dispatch Andriy Senchenko to Crimea, using a party quota, but he is very unwelcome there. In response, I noted that after the rally on 26 February at which the Crimean Tatars were able to stave off the separatist scenario, they were the force that had the right to decide who Crimea wanted to see as its new leader.

They said that they did not like any candidate other than me. Believe me, the question is not about my person but about the fact that I had the means of communication that were vital in that situation. However, while political bargaining continued, we lost the four most important days. When I landed in Simferopol, the airport was already seized by snipers. The same was true of the building of the president's representative – it was first taken by Aksyonov's self-



defence and then by Russian troops wielding submachine guns. I had to spend the night in a different place every time and did not stay in any place for more than two hours, because I was being tracked by the FSB. They would immediately begin to surround the place and block it. For example, I came to the office of the Crimean union of Afghan war veterans, where we decided to stand as a shield between the Russian and Ukrainian troops, and half an hour later the building was blocked and Aksyonov's [self-proclaimed premier of Crimea] bands led by the "green men" began to storm it. The Afghan war veterans made a corridor and let me with the State Security Service [SBU] men leave the premises, even though our car was struck with stones and splashed with paint. But this was a perfect picture for Russian TV channels – to show how much Ukraine's representative to Crimea is hated. Objectively, I was the last bulwark of the legitimate Ukrainian government there at the time.

Even though precious time had been lost, I managed to hold working meetings with everyone I could reach: the heads of power structures, the Mejlis, ambassa-

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dors and officials. The circle was narrowing with each passing day, and eventually I was squeezed out, because I was like a thorn in Aksyonov's side. People told me all the time: "Serhiy Volodymyrovych, we respect you, but such is the turn that events have taken. You should leave, because we cannot guarantee anything." At one point, I was even asked: "What property do you have in Crimea?" I said I had none, and then that person said to me: "Guys may go and set stores and plants on fire, so no-one will be able to safeguard yours." I left only when I realized that I would simply be captured and then traded in exchange for someone, such as separatists from south-eastern Ukraine or Russian saboteurs arrested by the SBU.

Eventually, I resigned, because I felt I was partly to blame for the loss of the territory, the navy and the land combat units. At this moment, I am the only one who has apologized to the soldiers in Crimea for the inadequate actions of the central government. I wonder why the current leadership of Ukraine has still not done so.

U.W.: However, Mr. Senchenko says that you, in fact, communicated very little, including with law enforcement agencies, which is why they defected to the aggressor so quickly. Meanwhile, he talked to the Crimean Berkut unit. You are also being blamed for appointing Ihor Avrutsky as the head of the Crimean police.

Indeed, Mr. Senchenko has been telling a lot of stories. You can meet with anyone; what matters, though, is whether the other side accepts you or not. My first step after the arrival was to bring together the leaders of the law enforcement authorities. Everyone came – the police, the army, the military and the SBU. It immediately became clear that any coordination had been lost among them: they got together on their own and discussed the situation, but there was no-one in charge who would give commands. Valeriy Radchenko, head of the police in Crimea, and Oleksandr Honcharov, head of the Sevastopol police, immedi-

ately submitted their resignations despite my appeals to stay in office at least for a couple more days in order to fix the situation. They said they did not want to participate in chaos. There was also direct treason: Petro Zyma, head of the SBU in Sevastopol and a protégé of [ex-SBU chief] Oleksandr Yakyimenko, now heads the SBU-FSB in Crimea.

I personally invited Mr. Avrutsky from Feodosiia. I knew him from the time when he headed the local UBOZ (Directorate for Fighting Organized Crime) and I was the prime minister of Crimea. However, the police headquarters was seized the next day, and everything came tumbling down.

I spent two days in the building of the SBU, but it was then also seized. Finally, all law-enforcement agencies were taken, and I simply lost access to special communications channels. Personally, I know very well the leaders of both Alfa and Berkut special task units in Crimea. I am sure that if I had come four days earlier, I would have been able to convince them to defend the country in exchange for amnesty. Only those who actually committed crimes must be held responsible. The situation with this Crimean unit is very ambiguous. It consists primarily of Ukrainians, members of the former Iziaslav [Khmelnytskyi Oblast, Western Ukraine] brigade of the special-task troops commanded by the GRU [Main Intelligence Directorate]. As far as I know, more than 100 of its 150 members have not defected to the Russians and instead moved to Ukraine. When I met with them, they told me: "Serhiy Volodymyrovych, you can see for yourself that they are saying everywhere that we are killers and that all of us need to be lustrated." They were completely demoralized, locked up the bases and decided that they would let no-one in but would shoot everyone.

We were late with the Berkut unit – they had already sworn allegiance to Russia and received the first Russian passports. In contrast, the internal troops in Crimea became a source of joy: half of them were moved to Ukraine, and no-one of those



PHOTO: ANDRIY LOMAKIN

who stayed behind swore allegiance to the aggressor. Remember that they were singled by the Maidan and have no reasons to love the new government.

In general, the majority of law-enforcement officers who stayed in Crimea did so only because they had apartments and families there and not because they are traitors. I am sure that if we had been able to drive out those two units of Russian *spetsnaz* from the buildings of Crimea's parliament and government, the Russians might have refrained from further action. How did they seize those buildings? They made the first move and waited to see the reaction. When there was no reaction, they made the next move. Interestingly, the military said from day one: We have enough forces and weapons to counteract the aggressor but no-one gives the go-ahead. I have a suspicion that there was a command, on the contrary, not to open fire, even after the formal permission to use weapons.

U.W.: This may be the most painful question. Why were there no commands? Was there indeed a fear to provoke the Russians into a full-blown invasion also in eastern Ukraine? Or was it an attempt to buy time and prepare?

Mr. Turchynov prefers to explain his actions precisely in this way. But as a military man, I can tell you that if Russia really wanted to do so, it could have advanced into the territory of mainland Ukraine despite our units that stood their ground in Crimea. In early March, Russia concentrated over 200,000 troops along the border. They would have wiped off Crimean troops from air and sea within half an hour. Let me repeat that the most important wasted moment was when the Alfa force could have been used to drive the Russian *spetsnaz* out of government buildings, while the marines from Feodosiia and Kerch could have blocked the Kerch ferry crossing. However, none of current leaders of Ukraine seems to have served in the army, so they fail to understand how crucial it is to make decisions quickly in a battle, while acting

The most important wasted moment was when the Alfa force could have been used to drive the Russian *spetsnaz* out of government buildings, while the marines from Feodosiia and Kerch could have blocked the Kerch ferry crossing. However, none of current leaders of Ukraine seems to have served in the army, so they fail to understand how crucial it is to make decisions quickly in a battle, while acting "in order to avoid anything unpleasant" is a way to defeat



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Similarly, I fail to understand why draft laws on the Russian language and on restoring to Crimea the powers it had in 1992 were not passed in the first reading and why there was no edict establishing a free economic zone on the peninsula.

THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF UKRAINIAN CITIZENS IN CRIMEA, SO OUR FIRST GOAL IS TO GUARANTEE THEIR SAFETY AND RESPECT FOR ALL THEIR RIGHTS

After all, these would give Ukraine the moral right to say that it has not abandoned Crimea and is doing something, while making no final decisions at the same time. Nothing of the kind has been done. In the same way, I suggested setting up the Crimea Situation Headquarters

somewhere on the border with the autonomy, for example, in Kalanchak [Kherson Oblast], and dispatch there a representative of the president and Crimean law-enforcement officers who have not switched to the Russians to coordinate refugees and so on.

Moreover, neither Mustafa Dzhemilev nor yours truly have been invited to a meeting of the National Security and Defence Council even once in 20 days. What can I say about the military men and their family who were essentially abandoned for the sake of lofty ideas? Why weren't the ships moved out of Lake Donuzlav where they were later pursued like chickens in a hen house? Why were ships sent back as soon they left Sevastopol? There were plans of a defensive operation, but the military-political leadership did not approve them. Thankfully, they at least blocked access to the Isthmus of Perekop for paratroopers.



PHOTO: UNIAN

U.W.: Why did the Crimean elite, which was so discontent with the constant rule of non-natives, such as people from Donetsk, so easily “surrender” to the Russians? It will lose all its influence now...

Crimean elites were simply crushed after Vasyl Dzharty came to Crimea in 2011. Viktor Yanukovich said at the time: I am giving you the office of the Speaker. Let this man, Konstantynov, hold it, but he will not be deciding anything. I will be calling the shots myself.

I was fired from the office of the president's representative, because I tried to tell Yanukovich that Dzharty had brought over 200 non-natives to Crimean administration in the course of two months and that Crimean elite would not accept this. Yanukovich said he saw what I meant but then fired me two months later when I was in hospital after a surgery.

However, it needs to be understood that the Crimean elite

itself did not put up much resistance and submitted to the Donetsk elite. It is all true, but I am absolutely sure that if there had been no Russian troops, they would not have surrendered to Moscow. Let's not forget about the Tuzla incident: it was the first test of Crimea. Back then, the Kremlin went away with nothing; the “Russian” Crimea did not support Russian actions in any way. It would have been the same now, which is why Russia resorted to military aggression. It grasped that it was its last chance. Crimea is different; it is Russian in terms of ethnicity but not in terms of mentality. The only thing that forced the Crimean elite to support Moscow is the presence of 20,000 Russian troops.

I know for certain that when Crimea's Supreme Council held its momentous session in late February 2014 to fire Mohyliov, at one point Russian soldiers with submachine guns accompanied MPs even to the bathroom. In view of this fear and the fact that the Crimean elite as an integral body was crushed several years ago, we have this result – no-one on the peninsula has the guts to put up resistance. Moreover, each of these people had something to lose. As far as influence is concerned, puppets like Konstantynov do not need anything except having their multi-million debts paid off. Aksyonov was simply exploited, and now that he has become useless, he will be thrown away. Even now, during Dmitri Medvedev's [Russia's prime minister] visit, they were not even seated in the presidium. This is very telling; they will soon be removed. Moreover, according to my sources, they didn't even know that government buildings would be seized. It came as a shock to them.

U.W.: What about the Crimean Tatars? In conditions when Ukraine is not taking any real steps to support these people, how effective will Russia be in its attempts to buy their sympathy?

The Crimean Tatars have two elites. The first, old elite, is made up of those who still remember the 1944 deportation and live in

that reference system. They are essentially Asian in their worldview. However, there is an entire stratum of Europeanized modern Tatars who have lived in Crimea for 20-30 years, built their businesses and turned into the main pro-Ukrainian force there. Unfortunately, the Crimean Tatar people has always been perceived as such that constantly rebels and demands something. The policy on the Crimean Tatars reflected this perception. And the Tatars are perfectly aware of this, just as they know that Crimea is their land and they have nowhere else to go. In its turn, Russia is doing everything to bribe them, both morally and financially. And so it appears that Russia is giving them everything, if only in word, while Ukraine is giving them nothing.

U.W.: What should Ukraine do to eventually reclaim Crimea?

It should adopt a state programme on Crimea and appoint a vice prime minister who would cover all the structures of the government apparatus in these issues. These should naturally include the power structures, such as the Interior Ministry, the National Security and Defence Council and the Ministry of Defence. Ukraine should by all means appeal to international courts and actively work in the UN and OSCE. Most important, it should not forget that there are hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens in Crimea, so our first goal is to guarantee their safety and respect for all their rights, including the right to vote in the 25 May presidential election. Ukraine should open its missions there. Those who decide to move to Ukraine should in no case feel like orphans – Ukraine needs to adopt a refugee accommodation programme. The most important thing is to show that continental Ukraine is better off than Crimea.

Ukraine should go for the option of Crimea's complete demilitarization by both sides and establishing dual Russian-Ukrainian control over this territory for the time being. This will make it possible to reclaim everything. Now, the situation looks like a complete defeat, which it should not. We must change it. ■

Self-Preservation for Crimean Muslims

Said Ismagilov, the Mufti of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine Ummah: “The status of Muslims here is far better than in Russia”



Interviewed
by
Hanna Trehub

“If people who love Ukraine and speak for dignity, liberty and equal rights are called Banderites, then Ukrainian Muslims and particularly Crimean Tatars can, with some humour, be called Islamo-Banderites”, notes Mufti Said Ismagilov. He speaks to The Ukrainian Week about the current situation, the problems faced by his fellow-Muslims in Crimea under Russian occupation and the position of Islam in unrecognised republics.

U.W.: Which Muslim spiritual directorates and Muslim groups are present in Crimea? How are they related to political organisations and unions of Crimean Tatars?

– Only the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Crimea (DUMC) as the successor of the Crimean Khanate traditions and entities officially existed in Crimea until 2010. Later,

under the influence of preachers from different movements, for the most part acting unofficially, others started to emerge, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Islamic Liberation). The goal of the classic version of Hizb ut-Tahrir was to unite Muslim countries into an Islamic State or caliphate, ruled by Islamic law. However, current adherents of the movement understand that this is impossible in non-Muslim countries, so they preach Islam there and call for aid to build a caliphate in Muslim countries. In Crimea, there are supporters of the old Hizb ut-Tahrir as well as its new followers. However, no one says frankly that they are followers of this teaching. It was never registered as an organization.

Later, Crimea saw Salafi groups and movements emerge. They are dissimilar and diverse, professing conservative views brought from the Arabian Peninsula, which are widespread and popular in those

countries. Their followers feel that they should only listen to their religious leaders. The Salafi adherents keep themselves separately from others and are not in the friendliest relations with other Muslims. They are very few and not radical in Crimea.

But the biggest problem for Crimean Muslims came through the Habashi movement, spread in Ukraine and Lebanon only. Its representatives preach in Crimea, where they have gained a fairly good following and registered several communities in the Yevpatoria and Saky regions. In 2010, in spite of warnings from the DUMC and the Ukrainian Council of Muftis, on the day prior to its dissolution, the State Committee for Religious Affairs of Ukraine registered the Spiritual Centre of Muslims in Crimea. So today, there are two Spiritual Directorates, which are legally completely independent of one another and have equal rights. For Muslims in Crimea, this is somewhat of a tragedy, because they had previously been united in terms of religion despite the existence of different Muslim groups.

U.W.: What is the situation with religious freedom, particularly Islam, on occupied and unrecognised territories, such as Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and so on? What are the problems faced by Muslims there?

– The situations are different in these regions and generally depend on their local spiritual leaders. If they are sufficiently respected and support the maintenance of national religious traditions, the local situation is better. There are very few Muslims in some occupied areas, such as Transnistria. Crimean Tatars live there but do not have their own mosques or Muftis. In

Abkhazia only the name Islam remains. The people there consider themselves to be Muslims, but this is an extremely secular form for their identification with the religion. In Abkhazia, Muslims fail to follow the most basic religious Islamic principles, they have hardly any relevant spiritual buildings and no one preaches openly.

In this context, what could happen to the Muslims of Crimea, occupied by Russia? They will strive to maintain their autonomy, particularly their religion, as much as possible. Prior to the current Russian occupation, Crimean Tatars had extensive opportunities to develop their spiritual lives. Mosques have been built in every village or town that has Muslim residents. Several madrasahs and primary religious education institutions have been opened for both men and women; historic places of worship that are more than a hundred years old, have been restored. Even the Koran has been published in the Crimean Tatar language. In addition, Crimean Muslims have defended their right to build mosques in Simferopol, which they fought for in court against the local authorities and the leadership of Crimea, for many years. The design has already been approved and Turkey has promised to invest in this construction. No one knows what will happen to these plans now.

U.W.: Russia will probably use every means possible to impose its own order on Crimea's spiritual life. What is the situation with Islam in Russia itself, particularly in the North Caucasus?

– In my view, the status of Muslims here is far better than in Russia. There were terrorist acts there for an extended period, which were blamed on Islamic radicals. This was the official rhetoric of state institutions there, which contended that the Nevsky Express bombings of 2007 and 2009, were an assassination attempt on Ildus Faizov, former mufti and leader of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate in Tatarstan, a republic in Russia; the 2012 murder of his deputy Valiulla Yakupov in Tatarstan, as well as the explosions at the Volgograd railway station were committed by Muslims from the Caucasus and Russians, who had recently converted to Islam. The current Russian Islamophobia is no secret. Muslims from the Cau-

casus and Central Asia are viewed with hostility, particularly in Moscow. The Russia is the site of ethnic pogroms, destruction and murder, based on ethnic religion. Something similar has never happened in Ukraine.

The spiritual life of Muslims in Russia is very closely controlled by the state. Some of the Muslim leaders there say that it is better to refrain from expressing themselves, talking or preaching openly there. To do so, is to court danger. They have to observe the ruling official ideology. This is the case throughout Russia. In the North Caucasus, the situation is even more complicated, because there are virtually constant skirmishes between so-called Caucasian militants and Russian law enforcers. The official explanation for this intense control is the threat of expanding extremism.

There have been bans on Muslim religious literature, which for some reason is considered to be extremist, even when it is classic books from the Middle Ages. One such book is a popular translation of the Koran into Russian by Elmir Quliyev. This is complete nonsense, as would be the banning of the Bible or the Torah. The Muslims of the Russian-occupied Crimea certainly have something to think about, because no one knows whether the same fate awaits them.

U.W.: With the Russian occupation, what changes pose a threat to Crimean Tatars as Muslims? What could the Kremlin try to do, using spiritual persons that it controls in Crimea?

– Last week, the Mufti of Crimea, Emirali Albayev, met with a delegation of the Russian Council of Muftis, chaired by Sheikh Ravil Gainutdin, a respected and liberal leader of Russian Muslims. This meeting took place on the initiative of the Crimean side. The impression emerges that the supporters of Islam in Crimea are beginning a dialogue with their most authoritative fellow-Muslim in Russia, in order to discuss their status and situation. I feel that the Crimean side will demand that Muslim religious communities in Russia do not interfere in its matters. There will possibly be negotiations with other Islamic spiritual leaders, in order to assure mutual respect and agreement that Crimean Tatars will preserve their traditional religious differences in

Crimea. Russian Islam is not uniform. The Muslims of North Caucasus are Sufis, as well as Hanafi Muslims, who are in conflict on some issues. This is why, to a certain extent, the actions of the Crimean Mufti are a preventative measure.

U.W.: Who, of the Muslims in Russia, if any, do you at least nominally see as allies for Crimean Tatars? And what reaction in the global Islamic world could the Russian occupation of Crimea possibly evoke?

– I don't know who in Russia could be an ally for Crimean Tatars. I am concerned about this, because in the last few months, the propaganda in Russia was directed against Crimean Tatars after they openly declared their support for the EuroMaidan. They were shown in Russia as undisguised opponents of the Kremlin and the pro-Russian choice of Crimea.

The only friends of the Crimean Tatars in the world are the Turks. Mustafa Dzhemilev has made several visits to Turkey in recent times, where he spoke to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. During the visits, they addressed guarantees for Crimean Tatars and the monitoring of the situation in Crimea by Turkey. The diasporas in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Romania and other countries are also assisting where they can. In addition, literally a couple of days ago, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (the largest international governmental organisation in the world), expressed its concerns regarding the fate of Muslims in Crimea.

U.W.: We are getting information from Crimea, that there is a significant percentage of Chechens among the Russian occupation military forces. Is it fair to say that even all those who support Ramzan Kadyrov, also support Putin's imperial ambitions?

– The presence of a Chechen military contingent in Crimea can be easily explained: they know how to control Muslims, because this is what they are doing in North Caucasus and can successfully react to conflicts with Tatars in the interests of Russia. If such a conflict were to emerge, there would definitely be victims. Crimean Tatars do not need this, because they are trying to save themselves on their own territory. ■

"The journalists of such TV channels as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya did everything possible to show the conflict on the peninsula as one between Ukraine and Russia or with the international community, not with Muslims – Crimean Tatars. This was done because there are always extremist movements looking for unstable zones, in order to start military and other radical actions under the guise of help for their fellow-Muslims. For Crimean Tatars, this is particularly dangerous and unnecessary, because they will be the first ones to suffer. Whatever the circumstances, they do not want to leave Crimea."

Boys From the Blackstuff

The government in Kyiv has no obvious counters to Russian-inspired occupations in the industrial east

At a strangely stilted press conference six weeks ago, just after the annexation of Crimea, Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, was asked if Russia would fight a war with Ukraine. "I want you to understand me clearly," he answered. "If we make that decision, it will only be to protect Ukrainian citizens. And let us see if [Ukrainian] troops try to shoot their own people, with us behind them—not in the front, but behind."

Intended to reassure Russians, his words carried a sinister double meaning: Russia was prepared to use Ukrainian civilians as human shields. Now it is doing so. In the past week it has engineered a situation in which the Ukrainian government must either appear entirely ineffectual or risk attacking some of its own citizens and, in so doing, provide a pretext for further Russian action—even, perhaps, invasion.

On April 6th armed men seized the administration buildings in Donetsk and Kharkiv, as well as the security-service buildings in Luhansk—the three capitals of Ukraine's eastern provinces. Baricades went up and local enthusiasts gathered on them, but without massive public support. On April 12th, in an apparently co-ordinated way, the crisis moved to a new phase. Police and security-service buildings fell to rebels in towns all across the region, many of them situated on road and rail links that would have strategic value in the event of a Russian invasion. These smaller, poorer towns where the family of the deposed president, Viktor Yanukovich, has strong influence were an easier target than the cities.

Unidentified, well-equipped soldiers led many of the occupations. They were followed by local armed separatists and ordinary civilians. Many police officers switched sides. Russian television channels, disconnected a few



Unidentified, well-equipped soldiers led many of the occupations. They were followed by local armed separatists and ordinary civilians

weeks ago because of their ceaseless propaganda, have been turned back on. Passing through a checkpoint set up by pro-Russian rebels in Sloviansk, 100km from Donetsk, a man on the barricades says cheerfully that the situation unfolding is "just like Crimea".

ALIEN INVASION

Russia denies that the "little green men" who co-ordinated the occupation of Crimea, some of whom have now been seen in Donbas, are its soldiers. But last year Russia's defence ministry boasted about the creation of a "special operations" unit comprising personnel who could act as "illegals" in neighbouring countries, and many think this has now been seen in action. Ukrainian security forces say they have intercepted a telephone conversation between pro-Russian forces and their Russian minders in military intelligence.

The occupations have shown how little authority Ukraine's government has in the east. Yulia Tymoshenko, a former prime minister and presidential candidate, urged the government (which she effectively controls) not to use force. One reason is her lack of confidence in Ukraine's security services. A botched operation would enrage the public and give Russian forces a pretext to move deeper into Ukraine. Another reason is the presidential elections scheduled for May 25th, which Ms. Tymoshenko still hopes to win, despite trailing behind Petro Poroshenko, a billionaire who supported the February revolution.

The acting president, Oleksandr Turchynov, pledged large-scale anti-terrorist operations, issued ultimatums and set deadlines—but to little effect so far. On April 15th government forces freed a small airport at Kramatorsk which had apparently been

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taken by militants, but which does not seem to have been defended. "It looks a bit farcical," says Fyodor Lukyanov, the editor of *Russia in Global Affairs*, a journal. "The militants are pretending that they are taking control of things and Ukrainian forces are pretending they are freeing them."

The farce could yet turn bloody. As *The Economist* went to press, armoured personnel carriers containing Ukrainian troops who had surrendered to pro-Russian crowds were entering Sloviansk. In a telephone call to Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, on April 15th Mr. Putin described Ukraine's operation as a serious escalation. Ukraine, he said, was on the brink of a civil war. This was what he said about Crimea to justify annexing it, citing NATO's action in Kosovo—which at the time Russia deplored—as a precedent. Mr. Putin would not need a genuine conflict, such as that in Kosovo, to make a move; but there are enough pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian feelings on the ground to spark one.

Though Mr. Putin may yet move militarily against Ukraine, perhaps under the guise of a peacekeeping mission, perhaps even to recognise independence for the south and east, he seems unlikely to want to annex any more of the country. The bribes that would be needed to ensure the acquiescence of a good chunk of the population would cost a great deal. In Crimea Russia has pledged to bring salaries and pensions up to Russian levels; to do the same for Donetsk would cost twice as much. Subsidising the region's coal mines, as the government in Kyiv has done for years, would be another burden on the Russian economy. Much better simply to gain influence on the government in Kyiv by turning the east into a constant source of trouble which keeps Ukraine chaotic, dysfunctional and unpalatable to the West. "Bringing the troops across the border would be seen as a failure of the Kremlin's game," says Mr. Lukyanov.

Alexander Dugin, one of Russia's most vocal imperial nationalists and anti-American ideologues, agrees that an occupation of south-eastern Ukraine would

not be in Russia's interest. He argues that the Maidan revolution in Kyiv was an American plot to drag Ukraine into the European Union and NATO. Having failed to make this happen, Mr. Dugin says, America is now trying to provoke violent clashes to justify putting NATO military bases in Ukraine.

As Russia's plans depend on a new federal structure for Ukraine which gives increased power to the areas over which it holds sway, it might seem odd that the most recent flare up of separat-

ism in the east began just after Arseniy Yatseniuk, Ukraine's acting prime-minister, confirmed that the government intended to decentralise power and engage with local elites there. Rinat Akhmetov, who controls a great deal of industry in the Donetsk region and is Ukraine's richest oligarch, volunteered himself as a mediator. Those might seem to be the sort of moves towards federalisation that Russia would seek to encourage.

But they are also developments designed to build bridges between the government in Kyiv and the businessmen and politicians in the south and east, and Russia wants none of that. Pro-Russian forces are stirring up anti-oligarch sentiment because Russia knows that they might back the central government rather than see separatism ascendant. What is more, for Russia to endorse the government's effort would be to recognise its legitimacy and that of the revolution which swept it to power, both of which the Kremlin rejects (it refers to Ukraine's government as a "junta"). Thus a proposal by Mr. Turchynov to hold a national referendum on federalisation was almost ignored by Russia.

Rather than allowing the government in Kyiv to delegate power to the regions, the Kremlin needs the eastern regions to grab power for themselves, creating parallel government structures that undermine the central government's legitimacy. That is why Mr. Putin wants a representative from southern and eastern Ukraine at international talks on the crisis—a proposal Ukraine, Europe and America reject.

Russia's short-term objective is to sabotage the elections. "National elections cannot take place without Donetsk," says Maksim Shevchenko, a journalist close to the Kremlin. Its long-term aim is to stop Ukraine ever moving towards Europe. Given that the February revolution was powered by aspirations to do just that, this would provoke unrest in Kyiv and in western Ukraine. That is not a problem for Mr. Putin. Russia wants to turn Ukraine back into a buffer state, with a level of disorder it can turn up or down. In the end, Ukraine may end up barely a state at all. ■



Self-Determination for the Kremlin

For a quarter of a century now, Russia has the dubious distinction of being the biggest provocateur and supporter of separatist projects in the neighbouring countries, which mars its prospects

Author:
Oleksandr
Kramar

There are dozens of disputed territories and a number of unrecognized states in the world. Most of them are independent countries that have sprung up in the place of former colonial empires. There are relatively few of such entities in the territory of the OSCE members, but nearly all of them emerged with Russia's active support in the post-Soviet states of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe.

EUROPEAN (IN)SECURITY

After the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was signed in Helsinki in 1975, its participants, including the USSR, USA, Canada, Turkey and

most European states, agreed to "regard as inviolable all one another's frontiers as well as the frontiers of all States in Europe and ... refrain now and in the future from assaulting these frontiers" and to "respect the territorial integrity of each of the participating States".

The withdrawal of union republics from the USSR and Yugoslavia in the early 1990s did not contradict the OSCE principles, because they had a constitutional right to do so, while some of them, such as Ukraine and Belarus, were distinct entities and co-founders of the UN. They increased the membership of the organization, which adopted the name OSCE on 1 January 1995.

Since the signing of the Helsinki Accords and until now, six self-proclaimed states have appeared in the OSCE territory. Five of them (Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and the Republic of Crimea) have sprung up in post-Soviet territory. The sixth one is Kosovo, but it is a unique case fundamentally different from the previous five. Kosovo was separated from Serbia in order to stop the genocide against the local Albanian population by the Slobodan Milošević regime.

OPPOSITE EFFECT

From the very beginning, self-proclaimed post-Soviet republics



emerged as a tool with which Russia blackmailed the "mother countries" to keep them in its orbit. The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupation of the adjacent Azerbaijani territories drove Yerevan into total dependence on Russia. (It recently abandoned an association with the EU at the final stretch of negotiations.) At the same time, Russia obtained a seemingly unailing tool with which to blackmail Azerbaijan. For a long time, Russia successfully utilized its occupation of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia to put pressure on, respectively, Moldova and Georgia in foreign policy issues, such as EU and NATO integration.

At the same time, the factor of break-away republics was used in all these cases to make the population of the Caucasian states and Moldova believe that their pro-Russian orientation would help bring these regions back. However, the experience of Moldova, where Russia-oriented communists led by Vladimir Voronin were in power for a long time, proved these hopes to be vain. As the elites and the population in Georgia and Moldova gradually became aware of this tactic, it helped bring to power forces that put the European prospect above the illusion of recovering territorial integrity in exchange for loyalty to Moscow.

DUBIOUS "PEACEKEEPING"

Russia has claimed in all cases that its military presence and support for separatists is dictated by the need to protect Russian population and Russian-speaking "compatriots". However, most of the territory of all self-proclaimed republics did not have a Russian majority at the moment of occupation. If necessary, this "issue" was resolved by way of ethnic cleansing under the cover of Russian troops.

Prior to the war in Abkhazia in the early 1990s, the republic's total population of 525,000 included 93,000 Abkhaz. They were in the majority only in Gudauta District, a mountainous area adjacent to the Russian Federation. The Russians and Armenians dominated both in the economy and administration of Abkhazia. For example, a mere 12.5% of the residents of Sukhumi, the capital city, were Abkhaz in 1989. Their presence seemed to be nothing more than the necessary cover for the real masters of the situation in the republic – the Russian and Armenian business and administrative elites that exploited the recreational resources of this subtropical region. However, the Georgians, which made up the real majority (up to 240,000), stood in their way. In flat, densely-populated southern and central regions, they were in the absolute or relative majority: 94% in Gali District, 53% in Gulripshi District, 46.2% in Ochamchire District and 44% in Sukhumi District. The problem was resolved strictly along the lines of ethnic cleansing, and the Georgians were forced into mass emigration from their own ancient lands. Abkhazia's population dropped from 525,000 to 216,000, while the number of Georgians fell from 240,000 to 46,000. In some areas, they completely disappeared after being subjected to terror. For example, a mere 400 out of 63,000 Georgians remained in Sukhumi and Sukhumi District as of 2003. In this area, where the Georgians were once in the majority, the dominant population group is not the Abkhaz but the Russified Armenians (61.4%). A similar situation is in Gulripshi District: the Georgians were in the absolute ma-

jority there in 1989, but their numbers dropped from 29,000 to a mere 2,700 by 2003. In Gagra, 1,200 out of 21,600 Georgians remain. In Gudauta District, the Georgian population decreased from 7,700 to 600. Similar ethnic cleansing took place in South Ossetia, especially after the war in August 2008.

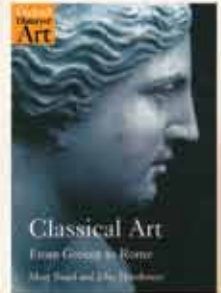
Nor does Transnistria have a Russian majority. According to the latest census, its population (over 500,000) is nearly equally split among three ethnic groups: 177,000 (31.9%) Moldovans, 168,000 (30.4%) Russians and 160,000 (28.8%) Ukrainians. The self-proclaimed republic is divided into fairly distinct areas. The largely Russian Tiraspol-Bendery urban agglomeration is home to over half of the total population and two-thirds of the Russians but occupies just five% of Transnistria's territory. The largely Moldovan south occupies more than one third of the republic's territory, while the predominantly Ukrainian north takes up another third.

The situation in the Crimea is similar. In general, the Russians were indeed in the majority (58.3%, according to the 2001 census). Of course, the proportion of the Crimean Tatars has greatly increased since that time thanks to both a higher rate of natural increase and return from exile. This means that the relative proportion of the Russians, Ukrainians and other ethnic groups has gone down. But even the 2001 census data per raion shows that in the administrative raions covering 68% of the Crimea's territory, less than 50% of the population are Russians. In five northern and western raions (34% of the total area), the Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars are in the majority. The Russians form the absolute majority (60-80%) only in large cities (Simferopol, Sevastopol, Kerch, Yevpatoria and Saky) and along the southern coast (see Diversity in the Crimea). Is the Crimean peninsula under threat of ethnic cleansing like that in Abkhazia? It is still an open question.



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Moreover, by pulling territories with a potentially significant pro-Russian majority out of the electoral field, the Kremlin single-handedly undermined the prospects of Russia-leaning forces. For example, Moldova has a balance of pro-Russian and pro-European camps that is similar to Ukraine. If the entire population of Transnistria participated in elections, it would boost the communists' result by at least 10%, tipping the scales in their favour. Instead, due to the Kremlin's support for separatists in Tiraspol, this factor has been inactive in Moldovan politics.

Moscow's support for Yerevan forced the authoritarian Azerbaijan, which is much closer to Putin's Russia in terms of political culture than Armenia is, to look to the West and consistently avoid Russia's restoration projects in post-Soviet territory. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan with its rapidly growing population (currently 9.6mn), large energy resources and transit potential between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea has much greater potential than Armenia with its 3mn population, dependence on remittances from the diaspora and absence of resources or transit potential.

Military aggression against Georgia in 2008 followed by Russia's official recognition of its breakaway regions forced Tbilisi to leave the CIS and buried the slightest prospects of coming to power for any Georgian political project truly loyal to Russia, while also establishing the Euro-Atlantic and European vector in Georgia's foreign policy.

By annexing Crimea and Sevastopol after their independence was proclaimed at an obviously rigged-up "referendum", Moscow triggered a similar effect in Ukraine where pro-Russian forces no longer stand a chance of winning. An analysis of election results over the past decade shows that neither Viktor Yanukovich nor Russia-leaning parliamentary parties would have been able to come to power without the support of pro-Russian forces in Crimea and Sevastopol. The hypothetical annexation of the Donbas will ultimately marginalize pro-Russian political forces and their electoral base.

The only effect that self-proclaimed separatist republics and annexed territories (Crimea and Sevastopol have joined the club) can achieve is cementing Russian military presence and serving as combat outposts. At the same time, the socioeconomic standards are rapidly deteriorating there as compared to the countries from which they broke away. In its turn, this discredits the very idea of pro-Russian orientation. The past decades have proved it at the examples of Abkhazia's previously prospering resorts and Transnistria's newly required infamy for being a hotbed of contraband activity.

SUITCASE WITHOUT A HANDLE

If official Kyiv eventually implements previously announced measures to impose a transportation blockade and raise the price of electricity and fresh water to market levels, the Russia-occupied Crimea will also face a deep economic downturn. In 2013, Crimea's exports to Russia were at US \$239.6mn and imports from there at US \$232.3mn, which was a significant part (23-25%) of the republic's overall foreign trade volume. However, these figures are just a fraction of Crimea's trade with the rest of Ukraine, especially if it is calculated at market prices.

EVER SINCE SELF-PROCLAIMED REPUBLICS EMERGED IN POST-SOVIET STATES, THEY HAVE BEEN USED BY THE KREMLIN AS BLACKMAIL TOOLS

For example, various regions of Ukraine supplied 5.96bn kWh of electricity to Crimea in 2013, which would cost over US \$400mn after the price is adjusted to what Moldova, a country located close to Crimea, pays for Ukrainian electricity. The peninsula received some 1.2bn cu m of fresh water. At the price of US \$0.7-0.8 per cu m, it amounts to US \$840-960mn. (Desalination is even costlier at US \$1 per cu m.) Add to this the foodstuffs which were until recently brought to Crimea from the continental part of Ukraine where food prices are much lower than in Russia.

Nearly 70% of vacationers traditionally came to Crimea from other parts of Ukraine. The remaining 30% were not only Russians – tourists arrived from Belarus and other countries in large numbers. Belarus has already announced that it is cancelling flights to Crimea. Eurocontrol (European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation) has also banned flights to the peninsula. Turkish Airlines has similarly cancelled all its flights in this direction. The Russian Tourist Industry Union has acknowledged that it is impossible to restore the flow of tourists – even Russian tourists – to Crimea. The organization says in its statement that if Ukraine imposes a transportation blockade, compensating for the drop off in the number of tourists who used to come by car or train is out of the question. To secure this much traffic by air, airlines would have to make 600 flights per week from the territory of the Russian Federation alone (at much higher prices). As an alternative, Russia's Ministry of Transport suggested a route that involves several different types of transport: train, bus, ferry and then again bus. However, this kind of inconvenience will force a large part of Russian tourists to seek alternative resorts, including on the coasts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov in Russia or in continental Ukraine where they will be able to travel absolutely legally.

Thus, a realization will gradually come that it was these objective economic, transport and communications factors, rather than an ephemeral subjective sympathy of the Soviet leadership, that prompted it to hand over the Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR back in Soviet times.

The policy of producing self-proclaimed states and disputed territories does not bode well for Russia itself in the medium- and long-term perspective. By creating a belt of unviable artificial entities along its borders, Moscow is ruining relations with its neighbours and is surrounding itself with enemies, thereby objectively making it easier for its current and potential opponents to play their geopolitical games against Russia. ■

Ordinary Fascism

In 1965, Soviet film director Mikhail Romm made an historic documentary, *Ordinary Fascism*, which still stands as an anatomy of the rise of fascism in Germany – the anatomy that has yet to be surpassed. Yet this documentary on ordinary fascism appears to have had its highly ambivalent side concealed from the sight of a more or less ordinary watcher.

More sophisticated and perceptive people were all watching this documentary with curiosity and wonder, as if to say that it is a déjà vu phenomenon – where have we seen all of this? Symbols and banners, flowers and ideological signs of a regime composed by human bodies parading before the eyes of the Benefactor/Fuehrer/Father of the Nation; the cult of the young; disdain for doubt, low voice and deliberation accompanied by quasi-religious enthusiasm, mass outbreak of fanaticism and hatred exposed in the right place at the right time – could it have been a broader perspective on the murderous totalitarian regimes and criminal political systems of the 20th century?

That was it. We have all tried as hard as we could to conceal this dangerous thought, yet it kept returning and crossing our minds. Mikhail Romm

made a film with the stroke of genius on our own red fascism which not only bore family resemblance to German National Socialism, but struck us as its twin brother or the Significant Other. It was with sound reason, then, that Russian dissidents jailed and exiled to Siberia used to call the system Red Fascism. Without minimizing the historically unique and unprecedented forms of evil and organized hatred manufactured by the Nazis, we can safely assume that bright and intelligent people in Russia clearly saw the affinity between the two military dictatorships based on the perception of the world as full of enemies and haters of their master race/hegemon class. Romm's *Ordinary Fascism* was about the USSR, rather than Nazi Germany. With horror, the film director put the question mark over the thought as to whether that was the end of this plague of modernity.

Nearly the same sort of déjà vu experience can be revisited on a closer look at the cult Soviet twelve-part TV miniseries, *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, directed by Tatyana Lioznova and based on the novel of the same title by Yulian Semyonov. The film portrays the Soviet spy, Maxim Isaev, who operates in Nazi Germany as a high-ranking SS-Standartenführer in the Ausland-SD under the name Max Otto von Stierlitz.

It was one of those rare cases when the Nazis were not poked fun at or else caricatured. On the contrary, incredible as it sounds, the film clearly exposed secret admiration for their discipline, fighting morale, loyalty, and Machiavellian stratagems. One had to be blind and deaf not to notice a parallel drawn between the Soviet secret political state police (NKVD, later KGB) and the Gestapo, the latter brightly and colorfully represented

in the film by Heinrich Müller, chief of the Gestapo. The role of Müller was played by Leonid Bronevoy, a great Ukrainian-born Russian actor (born in Kyiv), who, incidentally, had the guts not to support Russia's invasion to Crimea. The cult role of Stierlitz was played by the recently deceased superb Russian actor Vyacheslav Tikhonov.

In a conversation between Stierlitz and Müller where the former has to confront and erase all the suspicions of the latter about his loyalty, the moment of truth unexpectedly comes with Müller refusing to salute "Heil Hitler." Stierlitz astonished at his superior's disrespect for the Nazi salute, learns from Müller that the story of the regime is over and that the days of Adolf Hitler are counted. With one important qualification, though.

It is the story of Hitler that is over, but not the story of

National Socialism which is far from over, according to Müller. One day the world will come to understand that there is no better world order than National Socialism. Everywhere where the folks will greet each other with words "Long live!" or else salute one another in praise of power and might, we will be welcome. We will be at home there.

**THIS TIME RUSSIAN FASCISM
COMES STRAIGHT FROM A
MAFIA STATE AND THE MINDSET
OF THE CRIMINAL WORLD
WHICH EMBRACES NOT ONLY
THE POLITICAL CLASS BUT THE
MEDIA AND MOST OF
DIPLOMATS**

The film in question strikes us even now not only as a curious amalgam of pro-German and anti-Soviet sentiment but also as a surgical prediction of how the opposites can coincide and merge. When the Soviet political analyst Andranik Migranyan, now based in New York where he works in a pro-Kremlin NGO, has recently started rehabilitating Adolf Hitler, one must have been petrified by the degree of his shameless openness concerning the political course that Russia stays in Ukraine and elsewhere.

Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is it. Fascism came to Russia. Ordinary fascism whose plain essence lies in that same unholy trinity of modernity brought up by the 20th and 21st centuries – namely, uncertainty, unsafety, and insecurity. It is the same phenomenon of the escape from freedom so aptly described by Erich Fromm in his famous book of the same title.

Yet there is something different in present Russia from Nazi Germany where the Blut und Boden ideology and global racism were fanatically advocated by the Nazis in an attempt to establish the global hierarchy among the races. Present Russia does not have an ideology. Its ideology is gas, oil, and power. Putin does not have any plausible historical-political narrative.

This time Russian fascism comes straight from a mafia state and the mindset of the criminal world which embraces not only the political class but the media and most of diplomats as well. In fact, it is quite Orwellian – the jackboot trampling on the human face, and power exercised for its own sake. A state organized as a criminal gang with no true-believers – just the mob and its idols. ■



Author:
Leonidas
Donskis

Audrius Butkevičius:

“You must rapidly set about creating your own forces at gunpoint”

Interviewed
by Roman
Malko

Audrius Butkevičius was Lithuania's first Minister of Defence in 1990-94 and is signatory to the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. He is called the practitioner of “colour” revolutions. Butkevičius is one of the highest-paid political strategists and the best student of Gene Sharp, the famous theoretician of psychological warfare. A psychotherapist by profession, he is said to have been involved in many high-profile events in the world. He has done work connected with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, as well as with Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. However, Butkevičius' magnum opus is and will forever be the first “colour” revolution in the post-Soviet terri-

tory: a brilliant operation to discredit the Soviet Army in Lithuania, regain independence for the Republic of Lithuania and break up the evil Soviet empire.

In his interview for *The Ukrainian Week*, Butkevičius draws historical parallels between events in Lithuania and Ukraine, shares his experience of building an army and offers a view on how the Ukrainian-Russian confrontation may develop.

U.W.: You were one of the leaders of resistance at a time when Lithuania was regaining its independence. Can you see any similarities between that time and the current events in Ukraine?

Any aggression begins in very much the same way, especially

when the target of the attack is a country that has not had time to pull itself together and prepare. Ukraine is precisely in this type of situation. People who did not believe that armed forces could be used against them and declared their intention to live in a different way suddenly faced Putin, the gendarme of Europe. He is continuing the old mission of Russian tsars and starts scaring everyone. However, you had 23 years since the breakup of the USSR to build much more muscle. But it turned out that precisely the things that a state rests on, particularly the power structures, are shaky in Ukraine, because Russia has been holding everything in his hands. You had your armed forces, but it



PHOTO BY ROMAN MALKO

turned out in the Crimea that most of your troops defected to the enemy. A similar situation may occur in other Ukrainian military units. The lesson must be learned from this. You must rapidly set about creating your own forces at gunpoint. What has remained is not an army but a frame that can be used to form a real army. It has to arise virtually from nowhere.

U.W.: In the early 1990s, the Lithuanians were actively preparing to put up resistance – the underground emerged and self-defence units were set up. We have had a somewhat different experience.

We essentially came from the underground. It existed in Lithuania until 1960. Our people were killed then, and in the 1980s, when we again began speaking to our grandfathers, the first structures appeared and we started building a new political climate. This led to the emergence of the Sąjūdis movement which primed the people for the proclamation of independence. Back in 1990, the Lithuanians set up their structures, including an army, absolutely legally, even though the Russian troops were still in our territory. Our situation is similar to yours not only because of a crisis but also in that you have essentially broken away from the USSR despite these two decades. Young Ukrainians have broken away – they suddenly understood that it was impossible to live as before and pressed for their right to live a normal life.

U.W.: How did you set up self-defence units? Were you preparing for a full-fledged armed resistance?

Our situation was much more complex than yours. In 1987-88, the USSR was still fairly strong. Weapons were not easily obtainable. Moreover, we understood that a small country could not win using the strategy of a large country, i.e. if we defended ourselves only militarily. We had tons of experience. Lithuania mounted armed resistance from 1944 until 1960. Just like in Ukraine, we waged guerrilla warfare. At the time, we lost some 100,000 people, while the Soviets lost essentially three full NKVD divisions in our land. But we failed to regain independence and realized that we had to use a different method – turn all

the people and entire society into a viable structure that would fight for independence. We understood that an enemy would not be able to control a country politically if its people refused to cooperate.

As the head of the Defence Ministry, I banked on psychological and informational warfare. We used all available possibilities to stop collaboration between the population and the occupation authorities. And only when the Soviets used military force against us in Vilnius, we showed that the country had to defend itself. Otherwise, it would be like the present situation when Putin says: “What annexation? Was there at least one shot fired?”

We decided to defend ourselves militarily but only in one place, the parliament building, if it was attacked. In other words, we chose this symbolic act of self-defence that would be seen by the press across the world. We were able to utilize the fact that the Soviet leaders themselves had invited a great number of foreign journalists to Vilnius to show them how the Lithuanians were beating up the Russian-speaking population, while the Soviet Army came to help and rescued them from bandits. But it so happened that the picture these journalists showed was quite different. The entire world saw how Bolshevik tanks invaded a quiet city for no good reason. It became the key starting point of our victory over the Soviets in general and specifically in this operation. The Soviet troops were hugely demoralized at the time. I think you should also take into account the lessons of psychological warfare in setting up your self-defence.

U.W.: What is your take on the recent events in Ukraine?

In my opinion, everything that has been taking place in your country is planned Russian aggression. Viktor Yanukovich was not only Moscow's henchman but also its captive. On the one hand, Putin pressed him economically, while on the other, he frightened him by suggesting that Ukrainian people would tear him to pieces if he did not ask for help and failed to appeal to Russia to come and restore order. And this is where the Russian leader miscalculated. He did not expect Yanukovich to

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make a manoeuvre typical of a criminal – lie low instead of fighting as befits a politician and inviting Putin in a timely manner while still holding the president's office. Because Yanukovich simply dropped everything and ran, Putin lost his main excuse for legitimately entering Ukraine. He had to show his hand and reveal, for no obvious reason, the “green men” which he sent to the Crimea. It did not work for him and Putin grasped that no-one was deceived by his trick. That is why Sergey Shoygu handed out medals, thus taking off the mask and showing to the world that it was a military operation.

U.W.: Will Putin go any further?

I believe that Putin is weighing possible losses. The reaction of the USA is quite modest. The EU has not shown that it is a monolithic entity – many countries that deal with Russia are afraid to impose strict sanctions. They are speaking negatively of the Russian president but no-one goes any further. And Putin understands that this is a victory. The only thing that can force him to estimate losses is how

AN ENEMY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL A COUNTRY POLITICALLY IF ITS PEOPLE REFUSE TO COOPERATE

If you give Putin a clear understanding that an attempt to take over your country politically will mean not only huge losses for him in the international arena but also the loss of his people and that he will not be able to impose political control, there will be a very serious possibility of stopping him

much Ukraine is willing to defend itself. If you give him a clear understanding that an attempt to take over your country politically will mean not only huge losses for him in the international arena but also the loss of his people and that he will not be able to impose political control, there will be a very serious possibility of stopping him.

U.W.: Did Ukrainian politicians act adequately during the revolutionary events in Kyiv, or could they have done a better job?

The fact that they seized power is definitely a smart move, because if they had waited for a little longer, the legitimate president would have asked comrade Putin to restore order in a brotherly country on a legitimate basis. And then you would have had no chance to shout. So, it all happened against

Putin's wishes and frustrated his plans. 10 points for this.

The fact that they failed to take the levers and chains of command in their hands is also a matter of time. Criticizing is the easiest thing to do. Evidently, the institutions of power are being built now. All military, security and police structures were intentionally corrupted by an enemy state which planned to devour you and create Novorossiia (New Russia) in line with Aleksandr Dugin's theories.

In other words, your government is having a very hard time. I think its representatives have done enough for Putin to understand: they will not drop their cards and run as Yanukovych did. Instead, they will issue an order to defend the country, thus permitting the international community to come to help. I would like to voice the key thought here. The European countries, the USA and even China are looking to see what Ukraine is ready to sacrifice for the sake of its territories and the right to live as it wants to. If Ukraine itself does not want to sacrifice anything, why does a Bulgarian or a Pole have to do it for you? The Lithuanians are a different kettle of fish – we're all a little crazy; that's why we're here.

U.W.: Looking back at your experience of forming the Lithuanian army from scratch, what would you recommend to Ukraine so that it could repulse aggression?

Create territorial defence. This is something that can be done quickly. You will need a centralized structure governed from one centre that would accept people from across Ukraine and unite them, starting from the smallest town, raion, village and street. And it should not be a purely military force. It should have many patriotic functions that the state now has a need for.

U.W.: Could you please expand on how this is working in your country?

Let me begin by saying that clause 3 of our Constitution says that in case of aggression, every Lithuanian citizen has the right to take up arms and defend his country. He automatically becomes a combatant, and if there is an attack, his actions are protected by our Constitution. In the 1990s, we

TO REFUSE TO ARM PEOPLE AND DEFEND YOUR OWN COUNTRY IS NOT AN OPTION AND NOT THE PRICE TO BE PAID FOR ALLOWING POLITICIANS TO SLEEP WELL AT NIGHT

In the 1990s, we started forming voluntary defence structures. Some of those who came as volunteers joined the regular army, while others signed a contract with us: they would give part of their time, whenever they could, to the defence needs of the country. In this way, every region and city (in our case, down to the level of villages) had some military unit. Initially, these citizens were unarmed, but eventually they were given weapons to keep at home. In this way, we received the so-called "five-minute notice" army

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Thus, we obtained the so-called "five-minute notice" army. It was scattered, making it hard to

target all of it at once. Following a signal, we could rally a certain number of armed people in any place in the country. It worked quite effectively in 1991 during the events in Vilnius. The world saw only the capital, but our defensive actions covered, in fact, all of Lithuania. We managed to either block Soviet military units or strike a deal with them and create a situation when the USSR was forced to bring in its Pskov Division. (You will soon learn about it yourselves; it is now deployed along your border.) So, this unit is time-tested.

Territorial defence was of great help to us when the Soviet troops left Lithuania. The foremost echelon, whose task was to attack Western countries, took a year to leave. It included huge arms depots, three divisions of paratroopers and lots of missile equipment. We also let through the troops that were withdrawing from Germany.

Territorial defence was a voluntary structure, but it worked very efficiently. We also had a regular army, border guards and special units. But I am now speaking about territorial defence, which is kind of a multifunctional branch of the armed forces. These units used to be under my command as a minister, but now they have the status of a separate branch of the service and perform, among oth-

ers, mobilization functions and train the reserves. These units themselves are the so-called organized army reserve and train the mobilization reserve in case of a crisis or war.

U.W.: What about weapons? Do the defenders still keep them at home?

Some of them. Every military unit has its own base with arms rooms. After Lithuania joined NATO, we lost this "five-minute notice" battle readiness and our politicians made serious cuts in defence spending for reasons of austerity. It is my great hope that the events in Ukraine will force many people in Europe, including my country, to return to the good old practices.

U.W.: Is Lithuania under any threat now? If so, will NATO be able to quickly react and provide adequate aid?

Let me begin by saying that you were also protected by a memorandum with the USA, Great Britain and Russia. If you assess its psychological, moral and political foundations, they are no smaller than NATO's common defence clause. By not protecting Ukraine, the NATO countries are essentially giving carte blanche to everyone to believe that an inter-





PHOTO BY AP

national non-proliferation treaty is just a piece of rubbish. After seeing this, what is it that we can pin great hopes on? The 10 F-16s that are patrolling airspace? The Russians have sent to Belarus the same number of Su-27s, which are a totally different, more advanced generation from the viewpoint of engineering. Can we feel secure only because a good guy from America should come and defend us? If something happens, let us be frank, even if we are defended by others, the conflict will be taking place in our territory, and this is the most unpleasant thing.

U.W.: Ukrainians are now concerned about lustration, particularly in power structures and in the army. As you formed the Lithuanian army, did you recruit former Soviet officers?

There was a time when we were in great need of people even with Soviet military education, for example when the Russian troops were leaving. To secure this process, we used them very seriously. We also made use of former Soviet officers in combat units but tried to choose those who had battle experience or were young. During this time, we created our education institutions, a school for non-commissioned officers and a military academy, and trained new

Soviet tanks on the streets of Vilnius in January 1991

It is better to have better trained, albeit small, armed forces which you can rely on at a critical moment and give the enemy a headache rather than feed a bunch of coffee-toting colonels

people whom we then quickly involved in the process.

Our Western partners also helped. Lithuanians began to receive training in Germany, France, the Czech Republic, Britain and the USA. We quickly let them go through these grindstones. It was easier for us with our small structures. But you can also handle this task, because it is better to have better trained, albeit small, armed forces which you can rely on at a critical moment and give the enemy a headache rather than feed a bunch of coffee-toting colonels.

U.W.: In view of the threat of aggression, there is an ongoing discussion in Ukraine about whether to take weapons away or legalize them. This is quite a painful issue. What makes more sense, in your opinion?

You need to formulate the task for everyone in a very precise manner. In order to defend itself, society must be organized and act according to a plan. Those who are ready to do so should not resort to guerrilla warfare. The enemy is waiting for you to give it an excuse. If your guys are not playing a purely political game, all of them should obey one command at this moment – it is better to have one stupid commander than two smart ones.

There's always a danger that politicians will be toying with armed people. But it is naïve to think that you will avoid such problems without arming people, creating an army and, if need be, defending the country. On the one hand, there must be political and democratic control over the armed forces. On the other hand, you need to reach a certain agreement among parties to keep the army outside of domestic politics. You need to have certain agreements here, because to refuse to arm people and defend your own country is not an option and not the price to be paid for allowing politicians to sleep well at night.

U.W.: The people who have had the experience of the Maidan are now often facing certain psychological problems. I know that you in Lithuania also dealt with something similar and were able to overcome it. Could you please share your experience?

People who are very good in wartime are often a burden to so-

ciety in peaceful times. They cannot find a place for themselves in a world of accountants and lawyers. What can be done? The territorial structures that you will be creating now will simply absorb the citizens and will put them in the right place. There are even countries that intentionally maintain a certain level of battle readiness and keep people willing to use weapons in military units rather than in the streets. When they serve in the army, they can be gradually adapted to a different life by learning civilian professions. There is an entire programme for their socialization.

Countries like mine and yours are not mature enough for projects like that. But you can put off this task for a while and explain to the veterans of the revolution: "If you are a patriot, your mission is to be in territorial self-defence rather than sit and eat sandwiches in the Maidan. There is no point in trying to pose as a hero here when the country needs strong hands." This will solve the problem for a while. Then, you will need a programme to socialize these people and help them move to a civilian way of life. Let me tell you that after our own events we kept the barricades by the parliament building for quite a long time. And then I had to slowly but methodically drive out, every night, the people who began to live there. We did it in a sparing way by finding jobs for them that matched their defensive mindset.

U.W.: You are called the practitioner of "colour" revolutions. Have you been involved in a revolution in any way?

Only indirectly. There are guys here who served in our forces in the 1990s. They are Ukrainians who simply came to Lithuania to defend it. The idea of "colour" revolutions was based on the assumption that we would be able to quickly export them to other territories. They laughed back then saying to me that I would probably pick them first to fight against the Russians so that fire would spread to Ukraine as well. I am very pleased that it indeed erupted 20 years later and that these people who manned our barricades are still young enough to throw a Molotov cocktail at a Russian tank. ■

Putin's Regiment in the EU

The “referendum” in Crimea revealed Vladimir Putin’s partners in the EU. Most are minority radical parties which, according to his design, have to undermine the EU’s already quite unwieldy system from the inside with Moscow’s support



LEGITIMIZING THE ANNEXATION: “International observers” in Crimea, including Mateusz Piskorski (Poland) and Johan Bäckman (Finland), helped create an appearance of a free democratic vote

Author:
Olha
Vorozhbyt

Putin’s annexation of Crimea has again drawn attention to the political fifth column in the EU – the oftentimes marginal radical parties that voiced their support for the Kremlin’s actions. They are a political motley crew, ranging from the far right to the far left, but are not afraid of finding themselves in one company with each other and Moscow.

The easiest way to see who in the EU supports Putin’s annexation of Crimea is to browse through the list of “international observers” at the “referendum” Moscow staged on the peninsula. They include MPs representing the Freedom Party of Austria

(FPÖ) in the National Council. The FPÖ is a far-right radical party, which did not prevent it from becoming the third biggest party in Austria. It dispatched its “observers” to Crimea and they, of course, saw no violations there. One of them, Johannes Hübner, said that everything went well during the vote. At a press conference following the pseudo-referendum, FPÖ Chief Heinz-Christian Strache lambasted the Austrian government for not sending any official observers. Strache only forgot to mention who paid the travel and accommodation expenses for his Parteigenossen who went to the Russia-occupied territory. According to profil.at,

an Austrian media outlet, the sponsor was the Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections led by Belgian far-right radical activist Luc Michel, a long-time supporter of Putin.

The first place on the list of Europe’s best-known right-wing radicals is shared by the Hungarian party Jobbik and France’s National Front (FN) led by Marine Le Pen. Both parties dispatched their representatives to the Crimea. There is some background to this decision. The Russians tried to actively cooperate with these political forces throughout 2013. In May, Jobbik’s leader Gábor Vona was in Russia where he had an open dis-

cussion with the Kremlin's ideologist Aleksandr Dugin. Thus, the reaction of his party's representatives, who called the Crimean vote "exemplary" and "a triumph of a community's self-determination", came as no surprise. The Hungarian radicals would like to transfer this "triumph" to Zakarpattia (Transcarpathia), a Ukrainian region bordering on Hungary, and have already publicly declared this intention.

Marine Le Pen visited Moscow in June 2013 at the invitation of Chairman of the State Duma Sergey Naryshkin, who is also a close friend of Putin. She also went to Crimea at the time. Her spokesman Ludovic De Danne said that the "referendum" was legitimate and that "Crimea is historically part of Russia". Le Pen and her party are widely rumoured to receive financing for their projects from Moscow.

Mateusz Piskorski, a representative of the Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland, a marginal eurosceptic party, also agreed to be an "observer" at the "referendum". Piskorski headed the group of "international observers" in Crimea and recognized the vote as legitimate. The Bulgarian Ataka party declared the same position. Professor of Political Science at Northeastern University in Boston (USA) Mitchell A. Orenstein wrote in his article for *The Foreign Affairs* that WikiLeaks data shows that Ataka had close contacts with the Russian embassy. The parliamentary group of this political force demands that official Sofia recognize the results of the "referendum". On 1 April, the party went even further, threatening to overthrow the government if Bulgaria supported a new round of Western sanctions against Russia over Crimea.

However, right-wing radical parties are not the only forces in the EU that supported the Kremlin's aggression. They were joined by minority left-wing forces, such as the Communist Party of Greece and the German Left Party. Interestingly, the Greek communists said that the "referendum" did not either "effectively solve the issue of intervention or take care of real problems", because "most people in



Putin's far-right "friends".
FPÖ Chief
Heinz-Christian
Strache and
FN President
Marine Le Pen

Russia and Ukraine are suffering in conditions of capitalist barbarianism". However, they called the position of the EU, USA and NATO on the situation in Ukraine and the "referendum" in Crimea "a moment of hypocrisy", because these are "the same forces that played a key role in tearing Yugoslavia apart".

The German Left Party (Die Linke) surprised everyone by voicing its support for Putin. Deputy Chairperson Sahra Wagenknecht said that the annexation of Crimea had to be accepted, adding that she understood Russia's fears over Ukraine's possible accession to NATO. In her opinion, even though the Russian invasion of Crimea was a violation

his opposition to 'Nazis' in the Ukrainian government. ... Putin's dislike for Ukrainians 'fascists' ... has to do with the fact that they are Ukrainian nationalists [and] stand for independence in a country that Putin does not believe should exist separate from Russia," writes Orenstein. Even more bizarre is the fact that radical representatives of the opposite ends of the political spectrum, the far right and the far left, are willing to be part of Putin's regiment in the EU. There is one common feature that catches the eye upon closer inspection: nearly all of these parties are eurosceptic and want to either reformat the EU one way or another or dissolve it altogether. Orenstein believes that this may be the main reason why the Kremlin favours these parties and helps them grow in every way. In this manner, Putin wants to destabilize the situation in the EU and safeguard himself against its further expansion.

Some analysts are afraid that the far right may claim unheard-of 20% in the elections to the European Parliament in May, which may, in the long-term perspective, lead to a serious political crisis in the EU.

The Kremlin's active cooperation with the Europeans following the rationale that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" is already bringing nice dividends to Putin but may backfire on his collaborators in the EU. ■

THE KREMLIN'S ACTIVE COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEANS FOLLOWING THE RATIONALE THAT "THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND" IS ALREADY BRINGING NICE DIVIDENDS TO PUTIN

of international law, it was "a reaction to an undesirable development of events", i.e., the creation of an interim government in Kyiv.

THE EU'S POWDER KEG

"The Putin government's cordial relations with Europe's far right sit oddly, to say the least, with

Lamberto Zannier:

“Ukraine must protect itself. It should not become a victim of the clash of the EU and Eurasian Union policies. Therefore, a strong internal dialogue is important”

Interviewed
by Anna
Korbut

OSCÉ monitors are currently in working in Eastern Ukraine, including cities like Sloviansk in Donetsk Oblast that are on the verge of turning into local “warzones”. Their task is to assess the situation on the ground. Getting there was not easy for OSCE monitors. Earlier, unarmed military observers from OSCE participating States tried to get to Crimea but were prevented by people wearing Russian military uniforms and local “self-defence” units. Monitoring the situation in other cities across Ukraine, from Odesa and Kherson in the south to Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi in the west, seems far less challenging. OSCE participating states are about to send 1,000 observers for the upcoming presidential election in Ukraine due on May 25. 100 of them are already here, working as part of the long-term mission and

monitoring the election campaign. Two weeks ago, OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier visited Ukraine to speak at the Kyiv Security Forum. *The Ukrainian Week* spoke to him about the OSCE mission for the presidential election, the way the current crisis is changing the role of international organizations including the OSCE in the world, and about circumstances that would force it to revise its current toolbox.

UW.: The guarantors to the Budapest Memorandum have failed to meet their obligations in the current crisis? This severely undermines the system of international agreements, borders and security. Does the international community need a new system or agreement to ensure territorial integrity and security of countries like Ukraine in

conflicts like the one we are witnessing now?

Frankly, we have what we need in the international community. Internationally, stability is based on a number of things. Rules are one part. The political process and dialogue are another part.

What went wrong in this case is the political process and certain interpretation of some principles. If this interpretation becomes a precedent, it will be a very worrying one. It could be applicable to many situations all over the world if we start saying that self-determination has a higher priority over the constitutional order of a state. So, I think there has to be a debate on this issue. But this debate is a political process and what we are seeing in the common European space is confrontation. This is confrontation of policies – between the EU and its enlargement policy on the one



hand, and the concept of the Eurasian Union on the other. These concepts are not being developed in a coordinated manner, but appear to compete and to generate divisions. Ukraine is exactly on the fault line between the two. Subsequently, the risk for Ukraine is that of internal stability.

As an international community, we should do two things. There are roles that specific groups play. One group can impose sanctions against another, exercising the policy of power, if you will. The other thing is to work on the political level in order to find ways and solutions to the issues on the table. So, on the one hand you have a clash, on the other you need to have a positive element.

The OSCE is a good tool for the second element. Sanctions are not something we discuss in the OSCE. The OSCE is a framework that can try and look for solutions. In that context, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office has proposed to set up a contact group, and we have seen that materialize (Didier Burkhalter, OSCE Chairman-in-Office for 2014, initiated the establishment of an international contact group as a potential platform for coordination and sharing information on assessments of the situation on the ground – Ed.).

The other important element is that Ukraine must protect itself. It should not become a victim of this clash. Because of that it is important that Ukraine really engages in a strong internal dialogue. I have seen the reaction of the public to some statements of a representative of a certain part of the country (this refers to the speech by ex-vice premier and Party of Regions member Oleksandr Vilkul at the Kyiv Security Forum in April where he said that “Ukraine is where the future of Europe and the world, and the mechanisms for preserving the balance of relations of the biggest political and military interstate powers are being designed now”, so it is of utmost importance to “preserve traditional markets for Ukraine and find the new ones”, as well as for the central authorities to “hear the regions”. He also underscored the need to implement a mechanism to decentralize power – Ed.). I don’t think that the fundamentals of what he said were wrong. The Party of Regions representative referred to the need to preserve the unity of Ukraine and said that Crimea is Ukraine, but also expressed views

that others did not agree with. This shows that the basic elements are there, but there are differences that need to be solved. So, there is a need for an internal dialogue that should be unifying. That’s the level where, I think the international community can help Ukraine to have this dialogue and try to defend stability and sovereignty.

If the current situation continues or aggravates over time – and I’m not talking about Ukraine alone – this could affect the entire geo-strategic area where we operate. Then we would have to rethink the way our institutions function, including the OSCE. We may need to reform some processes. There is a serious debate that has surfaced again on whether we should act as an organization that is based on the concept of consensus so that all decisions are made by everybody. Some start saying that maybe we should move to consensus minus one that would include isolating the country and taking decisions against it. That’s a very drastic move and it would take a very difficult debate. But it shows that there are some who think that the tools we have now are not functioning properly anymore and we should revise them.

UW.: We have heard threats not only to Ukraine from Russia, but to its other neighbours. Do you have any proactive rather than reactive solution agendas to these threats?

We always work against every display of threat or force. That is the basic principle. For instance, in the Geneva negotiations we worked to encourage Russia to come up with the declaration on the non-use of force in relation to the situation in the Georgian region¹.

When it comes to relationships between neighbouring countries, we have principles for those too. We discuss issues. In the past, we have had discussions on Russia’s military exercise close to the borders of one of its neighbours, Latvia². That’s something that we continue. We will try to deal with similar situations using the toolbox we have.

The role that organizations like the OSCE can play is to try to introduce the element of transparency and deescalate the crises. But we see the risk that threats on the one hand and military reinforcement on the other can escalate crises. Unfortunately, we are now entering the

BIO

Lamberto Zannier is an Italian career diplomat. He took up the post of OSCE Secretary General in June 2011. In 2008-2011, he was UN Special Representative for Kosovo and Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). In 2002-2006, Mr. Zannier served as Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. Previously, he had been Permanent Representative of Italy to the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the Hague, chairperson of the talks on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, and Head of Disarmament, Arms Control and Cooperative Security at NATO

¹ Geneva International Discussions focus on the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia. The aim is to encourage Russia to engage in further dialogue that will bring it closer to Georgia in making a legally binding commitment to the non-use of force and to stop the construction of fences and other obstacles along administrative boundary lines in Georgia between the territory administered by the government in Tbilisi and the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which continues to this day

² This refers to the Zapad 2009 military exercise Russia held close to the Latvian frontiers in Belarus. According to the then Defence Minister of Latvia, the drill was to rehearse an invasion to the Baltic States via liberation of the “encircled Kaliningrad”. The OSCE’s response toolbox to that included the Vienna Document 2011 signed by 57 member-states, including Russia and Latvia, whereby the signatories commit to sharing information about their military forces annually, including about deployment plans and military budgets; notifying each other ahead of time about major military activities such as exercises; and accepting up to three inspections of their military sites per year. They are also encouraged to voluntarily host military visits to dispel concerns. This year, unarmed OSCE member-state monitors tried to visit Crimea under the above-mentioned provisions albeit with little success

logic whereby demonstration of force or attempts to use it are becoming normal. The OSCE now sees that the tone of discussions has changed, growing more antagonistic. I remember being involved in the CSCE (the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe created as a predecessor of the OSCE to serve as a multilateral platform for a dialogue between East and West from the 1970s until the early 1990s – Ed.) during the Cold War. Some of the things I heard lately remind me of some rhetoric during the Cold War. This is unfortunate but we see this emerging. Therefore, we need to strengthen mechanisms that allow us to address this. The CSCE, as a predecessor of the OSCE, was particularly tailored to maintain this controversial dialogue during the Cold War and maybe it is becoming important again today. Every day, we have meetings where Russia, Ukraine and everybody else sits at the table and discusses the issues in not an easy way. However, we at least have everyday engagement.

UW.: Do you already have a head of the observer mission for the upcoming presidential election? Is the OSCE mission planning to arrive in advance and stay during the vote count, not just for the election day, in order to observe the entire process?

We have two parts of the mission. One is the long-term mission that already has an appointed head. It has around 100 people who will be doing exactly that: monitoring the campaign and access of the media to it, making sure that there is no improper use of state resources for the campaign, looking at how impartial is the Central Election Commission and the like. That will make a large part of our assessment report.

We will also have a short-term mission of 900 more people coming for three-four days to monitor the process of the voting and counting. ■

Author: Valeria Burlakova

According to earlier announcements, 14 heroes of what started as a peaceful march to the Verkhovna Rada filled the ranks of Nebesna Sotnya – the Heavenly Hundred – on February 18. These are the people, whose bodies were found at the Officers' House and on the barricades. These are the people who died in hospitals. These are the people whose arteries punctured by shrapnel. These are the people whose internal organs were ruptured as a result of blows from truncheons. These are the people with bullet wounds. These are the people who died of heart attacks.

However, many protesters still see before them not only the faces of those for whom funeral services were held on the Maidan, but the covered deformed bodies being loaded onto buses; black bags being loaded onto trucks; and decapitated bodies.

It seems that today, those whose "honest" power was won by the nameless hundred who gave their lives for it, are not concerned with the search for their mass grave, not to mention for those who committed the atrocities.

BLACK BAGS

Ihor from Lviv is in the Third Hundred of Samooborona, Maidan's self-defence. He is still on the Maidan – he has been for a long time now... He sometimes leaves the tents and barricades and goes to the Parliamentary building. This route is now a little easier for him. First of all, he can finally walk without crutches. Secondly, time heals somewhat... Before, he would sometimes get there and fall on his knees. He doesn't want to go anywhere else. "I thought that I too had to stay here with them," he says.

Many had similar thoughts.

On February 18, the day of the peaceful march, Ihor was detained with others by the police. He remembers being stripped, how mobile phones and money were taken from them. How they were beaten. How some interior troops gave the detainees who spent six hours in the paddy wagons cigarettes and bottles to use as toilets. He remembers ripping up a jumper to bind the open leg fracture, suffered by a young boy. How members of the AutoMaidan took him



The Nameless Hundred



Ihor, from Lviv, shares his memories of February 18: "Three guys were shot to death. Four were beheaded before my eyes. While sitting in the paddy wagon, I saw black bags being loaded into a truck"

from the hospital – when asked if he could walk, Ihor honestly responded "I don't know". How he woke up in a church on the Left Bank. How he later hid in the apartment of good people, whose neighbour was the aunt of a Berkut officer.

But these are not the worst memories. The worst are those about death. He only talks about what he himself saw on February 18. "Three guys were shot to death. Four were beheaded before my eyes. While sitting in the paddy wagon, I saw black bags being loaded into a truck."

In contrast to many eye witnesses, talking about similar incidents on February 18, Ihor is not afraid and agrees to be photographed.

BEATEN TO DEATH

"After dinner, when the police attacked protesters near the Parliament, I and five friends managed to break through to Mariinsky Park, which is where organised titushkas regrouped after the slaughter," recalls Svoboda member Yuriy Mykhalychshyn.

He stressed that the titushka contingent was diverse. It included professional athletes, petty crimi-

nals and blatantly antisocial thugs. The mercenaries were armed and coordinated differently. However, well-equipped and armed groups stood out. "They had non-lethal weapons and, I think, firearms. We saw several Kalashnikovs. Based on their appearance, they were coordinated and given tasks by former military personnel. At that time, they were guarding captives. They were taking off clothes and removing footwear from Samooborona members (we were surprised to see that titushkas actually knew what many of the Samooborona people looked like), cuffing the captives' hands behind their backs with plastic strips and escorting them one by one to several staff tents. We saw one of those tents – there were probably 50 people in there. They were literally piled up ... And at the same time, the titushkas handed some over to the police, although the criteria for their selection is unclear – and took them to the paddy wagons that were parked near the observation site in Mariinsky Park. Given this unusual filtration of detainees, it is almost certain that titushkas had cooperated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs which treated them as colleagues of sorts, conducting joint



What did the police, together with the titushkas, do with the bodies of the people, who were decapitated in the centre of Kyiv on February 18?

PHOTO BY ANDRIY LOMAKIN

operations with them,” Yuriy pointed out.

Together with his colleagues, he was able to rescue a few self-defence people from the police. “We found Andriy Illyenko’s brother, Pylyp, in the paddy wagon. We also freed several guys from Ternopil Oblast. They were already barefoot, some were still in a state of shock from their acquaintance with stun grenades, some were badly beaten ...”

But this was nothing compared to other incidents. “...To this day, I have horrific recollections,” Yuriy says. “It was on the side of Shovkovychna Street; I think they were members of one of the special forces units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, possibly Omega, but I’m not sure. They stood out because of their unusually strong physical condition, superlative equipment and the fact that they communicated among themselves in a specific manner, which made it clear that they were not regular internal-security troops. Members of the special forces tried to kill several of the captives that were already in cuffs. Their motivation for this was that these captives had allegedly attacked their friend. It was only with the help of five MPs that we were able to free people, lift them over

the parapet and take them to the first aid point in Parliament. Once there, we took off their cuffs and later transported them out of the government quarter using the cars of MPs who were members of different factions. But in actual fact, they did not simply try to wound or severely beat these people. They intended to kill them. At the same time while we were getting the captives we had freed over the parapet, we saw deformed bodies being carried past us. Several were missing heads and limbs.”

Were these bodies carried to an ambulance? “No,” Yuriy says. “The dead bodies were carried to buses that were parked along Shovkovychna Street. They were covered, but had clear signs that they were deformed and generally dressed in camouflage. I assume that they were fighters from Samoborona units.”

THERE IS NO COOPERATION

What happened to these bodies? The question is open. These people have gone missing. However, there is absolutely no doubt (even if the deaths and “cleansing” is blamed on the titushkas, not the police force, after all, from the very start of the EuroMaidan, criminal mercenaries were not independent and always coordinated closely with security forces) that the Ministry of Internal Affairs could have established their current location. But it appears that it has no desire to do so.

“From 18 – 23 February 2014, sub-divisions of the Main Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in Kyiv received 30 notifications of people disappearing without trace,” the Ministry informed *The Ukrainian Week*. “12 criminal cases have been opened on the basis of this data. At present, the location of the indicated persons has been established – two have been recognised among dead bodies.” How many missing persons’ applications were filed after that? How many are pending at police departments? It is difficult for Ukrainians to find this out, since the departmental regulations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine “do not provide for the summarising of individual information on the disappearance without trace on 18.02.2014” as the Ministry comments.

As of April 13, 113 people were still missing according to EuroMaidan SOS, an NGO. Those who

stood with them shoulder-to-shoulder through fire are not happy with the police’s activity.

Taras Matviy, a coordinator of the Maidan’s Search Initiative says that for a long time, members of the group, which was established on February 28, tried to help enforcement agencies. They questioned people on the barricades and collected quite a bit of potential material evidence. They visited the places of origin of the people that had come to Kyiv and subsequently went missing. Not once did the locals say that the police had visited them either before or after said members’ visit or that they had made inquiries or that they had searched for the missing.

Of course, the volunteers offered their assistance to law enforcement officers. They wrote letters. “But there is no cooperation. We are working through MP inquiries, there are MPs that are helping us,” says the group coordinator. However, they don’t always get responses, even to the inquiries of MPs. The information is often considered to be classified.

Society is gradually “closing itself off” from the authorities. “The current authority bodies cannot operate openly,” Taras Matviy concludes. “Over 40 days have passed. We have not seen any support.”

Distrust of law enforcers is back to square one. “What is the guarantee, that if we start to reveal information, it will fall into the right hands; that this information will not be used for a negative purpose or against us?”

Towards the end of our conversation, Taras said that volunteers, who are forced to work virtually independently, have already found quite a few people. They are alive, thank goodness. However, he admits that the main purpose of his group is to search for the mass grave.

The mass grave of those, whose names we don’t yet know, but there is hope that the lists of missing persons (although they are undoubtedly not exhaustive) contain the names of people who are still alive. Those, in whose honour, the mournful lines of the Lemko song “Who will dig my grave” will undoubtedly be heard again on the Maidan.

In this case, someone had dug their grave. And that someone must pay for this. ■

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