

The Ukrainian Week

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Chances of general elections
and vote in occupied Donbas

Privatization of state-owned
companies: plans and obstacles

Romance novels and Ukrainian
society in the 1920s

ON THE VERGE OF SUMMER



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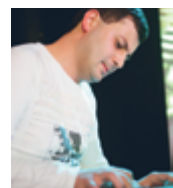
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The Ukrainian Week

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ТИЖДЕНЬ





BRIEFING

The aggressive demon of victory

Stanislav Kozliuk

Ukrainian calendar has obviously got some dates that are more problem-plagued than others. May events of the last two years, including the anniversary of Odesa tragedy and Victory Day, prove this true. On these days, the old world represented by elderly pensioners and pro-Russian Ukrainians clashes with the relatively new one represented by pro-Ukrainian youth.

Warmed by May sunshine, thousands of "Russian World" followers take to the streets all over Ukraine. Those people seem to live in their alternative world

PHOTO BY AUTHOR



with fascists eating children for breakfast, cruel junta fighters, “liberation war” in Donbas and contemporary Europe seen as Nazi Germany. Dialogue is usually impossible with them. Stubborn pensioners would tear to pieces anyone risking to unhinge the walls of their world and to offer an alternative point of view. Saint George's ribbon, heroic war fights of grandfathers, sister nations, gay fascists from Europe are all those elements forming a small cave where some Ukrainians are comfortably living with Soviet songs, Stalin's holy image and monks from Athos.

It could be okay, if those ideas had not been enrooted in the minds of younger generations. The march of The Immortal Regiment held in Kyiv on May 9 serves as proof. “Why do you ban wearing Saint George's ribbon, a symbol used all over the world? Why do you want to go to Europe we have already defeated?” These were not the questions asked by a 70-year-old lady dressed in Soviet military uniform decorated with fake medals. In fact, they came from a 13-year-old teenager who took serious offense at ATO fighters asking him not to wear orange and black ribbons. Had he been born earlier, the boy would have believed in the mythical honorable mission of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. There are no doubts in his young head yet.



TWO YEARS AFTER YANUKOVYCH'S ESCAPE, PRO-RUSSIAN FORCES ARE PROBABLY TESTING THEIR BOUNDARIES AND OPPORTUNITIES AND ESTIMATING THEIR POTENTIAL AUDIENCE

Most proponents of these ideas must have forgotten or may have no idea at all of the fact that Saint George's ribbons had not been widely spread before 2005. They were introduced on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, at the instigation of Vladimir Putin.

Those people get reinforcement of their mindset in everyday life, not at least with the help of Russian propaganda. Those people see a Hitler follower in every man dressed in army fatigues and a junta gendarme in every policeman. They refer to the May 2 tragedy as to “Odesa Khatyn.” By the way, pro-Russian Ukrainians borrowed the term from Russian media. Nevertheless, aggressive Russian world representatives seem not to care about the fact. They have no intention to analyze causes and consequences of fire at the Trade Union House in Odesa's Kulykove Pole.

A closer look at the march of The Immortal Regiment and May 2 demonstration in Odesa reveals Russian roots. To be more specific, the roots that go back to the former Party of Regions members and current representatives of the Opposition Bloc, who act as political providers of spin doctor technologies devised around the Kremlin. MPs Yuriy Boyko and Vadym Novynsky are poster boys of the campaign. They wanted to organize a prayer service in Odesa's Kulykove Pole in spite of the police cordon around it and were spotted in front of TV cameras in Kyiv's Park of Eternal Glory on Victory Day. Former Minis-

ter of Taxes and Revenues Oleksandr Klymenko, being on the wanted list of Interpol, got exposed too. Members of his organization took part in the march of The Immortal Regiment using their own brand marks. None of them seem secure yet. Two years after Yanukovich's escape, pro-Russian forces are probably testing their boundaries and opportunities and estimating their potential audience. May 2 and 9 events could have been much more violent, if they had mass support and an open border with the Russian Federation. The thing is that the 2014 Russian Spring in Eastern Ukraine was partly organized with the help of Russian “guests.” If that was the case now, we would most likely see many Russian guests (such as bikers, for instance) who would gladly visit Ukraine on the May days to protect Orthodox Communists from the deadly nationalist threat, in addition to the babushkas.

Local and state authorities also do not seem certain about what they should do in response. Officials seem to either not yet realize how they should behave in the new circumstances, or they do not want to work proactively. Police and patriotic activists do more or less all right in the area of law enforcement, while preventive work is far from perfect. Odesa inhabitants handle the situation, based on the “once beaten twice shy” principle after the fire at the Trade Union building. Patrol police, National Guard and volunteer battalions from all over Ukraine safeguard the city. Law enforcement agencies seem to cope with their work. In fact, they confiscated dangerous stuff during public gatherings. Meanwhile, there is not yet an understanding of how to deal with the ideas of the Russian world deeply enrooted in some minds.

Public activists traditionally outpace authorities in counteracting hostile techniques. Blocking of MPs Boyko and Novynsky at Odesa airport is an example of public preventive measures. Participation of infamous pro-Russian figures in the public gathering and their passionate speeches could have added oil to the fire in the turbulent city. Actually, preventive measures in dealing with the Russian world fall on the shoulders of general public. Veterans of the war in Donbas try to reason pro-Russian compatriots not to use Soviet and Putin symbols, while nationalists try to dispel myths about the history of “Soviet” Saint George's ribbons and “bourgeois nationalists.” “You are from Azov, so you must be against Ukraine,” concludes an old man from Odesa seeing a boy wearing T-shirt with AZOV inscription. “Oh no, I am pro-Ukrainian,” the bearded boy assures. “So you must come from Western Ukraine,” the old man tries to fit an unusual participant of the Kulykove Pole demonstration into his clichés. “Oh no, I come from Odesa. My parents and grandparents also live here,” the nationalist breaks the mold. “You must be Banderite and bourgeois nationalist,” the old man of the Russian world persists. It's not working. A conversation starts. Not only about Odesa. Not only about Khatyn. About ribbons in Kyiv. About canonization of Stalin in Kharkiv and “repeating Berlin” in Dnipropetrovsk. In the absence of any efficient counteraction against Russian ideas, people's diplomacy seems to be the only way to disrupt aggressive Victory demons. ■

The high cost of news

Stanislav Kozliuk

In mid-week, Ukraine's media was rocked by yet another scandal. Myrotvorets or Peacemaker, a site known for publishing information about those who have collaborated with terrorists, published a list of journalists who have been accredited by the "Donetsk People's Republic". The published list contained more than 4,000 names, some of which were repeated here and there, cell phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and the dates they were accredited by the self-declared DPR. Less than a day after the list was made public, some journalists announced that they had begun receiving threats by phone, while the nationalistic element in Ukrainian society was quick to denounce as guilty just about all of the accredited individuals, calling them "accomplices of terrorists" and "traitors."

The reasoning of the hackers was a bit strange. For instance, they wondered why "many non-Russian media like CNN, BBC or AFP had journalists with Russian names and surnames." True, they explained that they understood that these were the media's locally-based correspondents. Or why "for some reason, many foreign journalists have contact numbers that belong to Ukrainian operators." The impression is that after getting these lists, no one seemed to think it necessary to even try to analyze the information and to understand how the press works—never mind in conflict zones. After all, journalists have not just the right, but even the duty, to try to provide the most objective information possible about events that are taking place. If this means going into occupied territory, that's what they have to do.

Still, it seems that neither Myrotvorets nor a good chunk of Ukrainian society realizes this. "What good could they have done there? Why go there in the first place? We aren't interested in what's going on there," readers began tossing at the journalists. And absolutely ignored the right and duty of a journalist to gather objective information—even if it means cutting deals with terrorists in order to do so.

The scandal also tore Ukraine's media environment into two camps. The first group is mostly reporters who have worked in conflict zones at one time or another. Some of the journalists even published photographs of their own press passes, which, honestly, looked at the beginning like pieces of paper with stamps and signatures. Ironically, some colleagues say that, in summer 2014, this kind of "permit" offered far more access in DNR than accreditation from the SBU or the Defense Ministry does on Ukrainian territory.

The camp of those who are against accreditation includes other media professionals and a slew of public and high-profile individuals in Ukraine. For instance, journalist and political analyst Vitaliy Portnikov stated that Ukraine's press has no moral right to cooperate with terrorists, as they are firstly citizens of Ukraine and only then, journalists. He



gave the Gaza Sector as an example, where, Portnikov says, Israeli media don't operate, as it would be "hard to even imagine." However, he ended up with mud on his face: it turns out that HAMAS, a terrorist organization, has accredited journalists since 2007, according to Freedom House. And Israeli media does operate in the Palestinian territories.

VR deputy and advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs Anton Gerashchenko, who is known for his controversial views and is linked to the Myrotvorets site, went even further, writing on his Facebook page that he proposed instituting control over press content. It turns out that this MP is not against reinstating censorship in Ukraine, arguing that this is a popular move in Ukraine "because we have a war!"

Ukrainian and foreign media folks, meanwhile, turned to Myrotvorets with a demand that they withdraw open access to the database of accredited journalists. Of course, this wouldn't change much because once something is online, it's there forever. Still, such a considerate move to reconcile the two camps might help calm down Ukrainian society

UKRAINIAN AND FOREIGN MEDIA FOLKS TURNED TO MYROTVORETS WITH A DEMAND THAT THEY WITHDRAW OPEN ACCESS TO THE DATABASE OF ACCREDITED JOURNALISTS

somewhat. Instead, the hackers decided to respond differently and announced that they were shutting down the site because of the response to the publication, the endless "worry and concern" expressed by the European Union, and what they referred to as anti-Ukrainian journalists in Ukraine itself. But they did not offer any apologies or admit that they had made a mistake.

Meanwhile, the launch of a criminal investigation for the publication of the data only poured oil on the fire. The Prosecutor's Office called the original act "interference in the legitimate professional work of journalists."

Objectively, a list without contact information has interesting enough information: the number of Russian propaganda outlets operating on the territory of DNR, and which Ukrainian journalists were accredited with Russian media like RIA Novosti. There is more than enough material there for actual in-depth analysis—but Ukrainian society doesn't quite seem ready for yet. ■

Bankova's sparring partners

Bohdan Butkevych

The Presidential Administration is looking for an acceptable scenario for the next parliamentary and presidential elections, while trying to postpone them as much as possible

After President Poroshenko managed, by hook and crook, to put Volodymyr Hroysman in the Prime Minister's chair, Ukrainian political elites went quiet. Not for good, but they definitely took a break. However, this quiet is deceptive. Everyone understands, and the Presidential Administration better than anyone else, that the contradictions and problems that became obvious during the Hroysman drama have not gone away. The public disappointment and the fatigue from the government that has failed to implement radical reforms are huge and bound to result in a power shift. So, Bankova is desperately looking for options to enter the electoral cycle with some chances of success. The coming summer months will be devoted to this quest. Some developments are already noticeable.

In Ukrainian politics, the only rule is: you never know what tomorrow brings. Still, as *The Ukrainian Week* wrote previously, elections are not likely to be held in 2016. First of all, this applies to the early election to the Verkhovna Rada, which seemed so close just a few weeks ago. However, the appointment of Volodymyr Hroysman as Premier has shown that the life instinct of the Ukrainian elites is still strong, especially when they are one step from the abyss. Both Petro Poroshenko and Arseniy Yatsenyuk understand perfectly well that the early parliamentary election would become their political grave, or at least bury their current duumvirate of power.

That is why they agreed on the format of the further existence of the coalition that is more or less acceptable for both, so that each gets what he wants. Yatsenyuk preserved influence and important posts, conditionally upon his formal resignation, while Poroshenko obtained the formal consolidation of all branches of power under his aegis. However, the construction of the new coalition is rather fragile. Not only because of the narrow quantity of votes available in the PPB and the People's Front factions for critical decisions, but also due to the huge internal contradictions both between the President's and former Prime Minister's teams and within them. However, today the two leaders will do everything in their power to make this construction last for as long as possible.

The next test of strength for the coalition and the end of the current truce would be the introduction of the government's package of bills, code-named 'Cooperation with the IMF.' In fact, these bills were originated not in the Cabinet, but within the walls of the Presidential Administration. Chief of Staff Borys Lozhkyn said recently:

"24 important bills should be adopted by the end of May, because this would determine whether Ukraine gets \$1.7bn from the IMF, €705 million from the EU and the additional \$1 billion under the guarantee of the US government. Overall, by the end of the year, another 129 bills should be developed and adopted by the Parliament as part of the cooperation with the IMF and the EU, most of which are the direct responsibility of the Cabinet." In particular, these bills would grant Ministers more power to appoint and dismiss deputies, state secretaries, heads of central executive authorities and their deputies.

It will be interesting to see what exactly of the above list Hroysman will introduce into Parliament and how he will do it, since all experts and political analysts say openly that the ex-speaker has a lot of ambitions and is not going to give them up. Actually, the adoption of the above documents would provide a starting point for the countdown to the launch of political development scenarios for the coming months.



THE NEXT TEST OF STRENGTH FOR THE COALITION AND THE END OF THE CURRENT TRUCE WOULD BE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PACKAGE OF BILLS, CODE-NAMED "COOPERATION WITH THE IMF"

The first scenario would be the failure to adopt the package of bills, for example, in case the People's Front refuses to vote for them, or in the case of a conflict of interests or a simple lack of votes, which may well happen in both factions. This would trigger a chain reaction, which in theory should result in the collapse of the coalition and the early elections. However, this scenario seems strikingly unrealistic. First of all, it has to be understood that the coalition today has only two forces, to which, as we have said, it is vitally important to agree, because they are well aware that 90% of them have no chances of getting into the next Parliament. And there can be no doubt that Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk would try to find a compromise. Secondly, even if the conflict does begin, we should remember that the current parliamentary session ends in July. Hardly would anyone want to solve serious issues such as early elections in summer, or they will just have no time. During the six weeks of vacation, however, many things can be resolved. So, we can identify this scenario for the summer as the least likely.

The second scenario: PPB and the People's Front quietly agree, mobilize all their MPs, find or buy the needed votes in the Vidrozhennya and Volya Narodu factions, and adopt the necessary bills. After that, they finish off peacefully the current session and go for a vacation to the Seychelles or any other destination that is fashionable today with our political upper crust. In this case, an early election is not on the agenda. This scenario appears to be the most realistic and the most likely.

However, it should be remembered that there are three more factions in the Parliament that were part of the coalition, but then sort of went into opposition, even though in fact they continue to cooperate with the Presidential Administration. These are Samopomich, Batkivshchyna, and Lyashko's Radical Party, who are now frantically looking for opportunities to somehow restore their influence. Therefore, the third scenario is associated primarily with them. It is also important to remember the Donbas factor or, more precisely, the possibility that the bill on the election in the occupied territories is adopted.

However, the Presidential Administration that is developing the bill is not going to accelerate the process. According to the sources of *The Ukrainian Week*, they are well aware that introducing this bill means giving the political crisis a second breath, since the coalition's minority stakeholders will use this trump card to rock the situation and bargain further on their 'appeasement' in exchange for posts and cash flows in the executive branch. Or for bringing the situation to an early election.

It is worth reminding that the first one to leak the information about the alleged US requirement that Ukraine urgently adopts the law on election in the occupied territories, articulated by Victoria Nuland, was a Samopomich MP Viktoriya Voytsitska. Besides, there are no votes for this bill even within the coalition. The People's Front categorically refuses to vote for any bills on the status of Donbas or the elections in the occupied territory until the Russian troops are withdrawn. Rumor has it that this is Oleksandr Turchynov's personal stand. Therefore, as informed sources claim, both the PA analyst 'situation room' run by Rostyslav Pavlenko and the Berezhenko-Kononenko's 'room', which is another center of influence, advise the President to play for time as long as possible and prevent the election bill from appearing in Parliament.

So, the third scenario, that of the situation rocked by the three parliamentary factions of the 'new opposition' around the bill on elections in the occupied territories, seems possible, but only if the Presidential Administration decides to introduce the bill into the session hall.

However, if we look a little further than this summer, it will be clear that playing for time, which is today the only strategy of the Presidential Administration, cannot go on indefinitely and is counterproductive. Even if they manage to avoid the threat of early election in 2017 and 2018, there is no way to avoid the election scheduled for 2019. If someone thinks that it is still too far away, they



The honeymoon stage. The President and the Premier would be happy to work without disruptions, but they have no confidence in the Rada

are mistaken, because the cycle of election preparation on the part of the authorities begins at least eighteen months before the date of the vote. This is the so-called period of handing out carrots, ensuring allies, and finding acceptable opponents.

This is where the intrigue begins. Bankova's main trump today is that while finding a formal alternative to the PPB at the parliamentary level is not a problem, at the presidential level Petro Poroshenko has no rivals. Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovy apparently has not yet decided whether to run, and the incumbent head of state has no other high-ranking rivals on the horizon. So, we have to look at those available. In theory, either Yulia Tymoshenko or Yuriy Boyko from the Opposition Bloc could compete with Poroshenko.

According to the information available to *The Ukrainian Week*, Bankova plans to use the good old technology of securing for the second round a convenient rival, who is bound to lose. Leonid Kuchma made sure Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko gets in the second round, while Viktor Yanukovich dreamt of repeating this trick with Svoboda's Oleh Tyahnybok if he remained in office through 2015. Today, Bankova is thinking who could be given the role of Poroshenko's sparring partner. According to our information, they lean toward the name of Tymoshenko. Despite her growing ranking based on the populist criticism of increased tariffs, she has a limited number of supporters (as her confrontation with Yanukovich during 2010 election has shown) and a considerable army of haters, which makes her an ideal rival. ■

Division by zero

Denys Kazanskyi

Election in the occupied Donbas is nothing more than a slogan used at the Minsk negotiations. There are no real tools available today to make it happen

Talks about election in the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts seized by illegal armed groups resumed after the visit to Kyiv of the Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland in late April. Following the meeting, Samopomich MP Viktoriya Voytsitska reported that the US Department of State insists on amending the Ukrainian Constitution to include the 'special status' for the occupied territories and on holding election there as early as mid-summer. Nuland later stated that she had not mentioned any specific dates for the election. However, the bad taste lingers.

It's no longer a secret that the West, especially Europe, wants to settle peacefully the 'Ukrainian issue' as soon as possible. Europeans are interested in lifting sanctions against Russia, which make them

lose money. Of course, Ukraine would have made many in the West happy if it made concessions and fulfilled its obligations under the Minsk agreements unilaterally, without demanding anything from the Moscow-controlled puppet quasi-republics existing at the point of the Russian bayonets. However, if you look at things realistically, it becomes clear that holding anything at least slightly resembling the expression of free will today in Donbas is impossible. And it is unlikely to become possible in the near future.

The main problem is that the militants categorically oppose an election held under Ukrainian laws, with the participation of Ukrainian political forces. This has been repeatedly stated by the self-proclaimed leader of the "Donetsk People's Republic",



Another election? Chiefs of the self-proclaimed republics are able to falsify the voting at any given moment

Oleksandr Zakharchenko. “Closed” and “independent” election is certainly an option. However, it remains unclear why Ukraine would need it or why it should deal with it. Besides, it is not clear why wasting time to imitate the election process, since such ‘elections’ in the DPR and the LPR have already been held in 2014 to legitimize Zakharchenko and Plotnytsky.

There is hardly a politician in the world today who would believe that fair elections could at all be possible in the puppet republics. Even in DPR and LPR, people openly say that there was no real voting in 2014, and Zakharchenko and Plotnytsky were simply agreed in Moscow and appointed by their curators. The disgraced Donetsk warlord Oleksandr Khodakovsky was one of those who made such statements. The former head of the “DPR Central Election Commission” Roman Lyagin still sits in the basement after threatening to tell how the “election” of the DPR honcho was held in reality.

If we assume that the election is to be held in Donetsk this summer, that is, in a few months, what would be the choice? Is it between Zakharchenko and Khodakovsky? Or between Zakharchenko and Gubarev? In Luhansk, however, there is no intrigue left to expect. All of Plotnytsky's potential competitors were exterminated before the previous election. Russia could still appoint some new people as its gauleiters in Donetsk and Luhansk, such as the representatives of the former Party of Regions. But in this case, it would become clear that the republics do not actually exist, but are merely another puppet show controlled from the Kremlin.

Talking about a full-fledged electoral process in the occupied territories today is impossible. There are too many factors preventing the normal expression of the citizens' will in these areas. There is still no answer to the question of how the rights and interests of those Donbas residents who never wanted any DPR or LPR would be accounted for. Will they be able to nominate their own candidates, or will they be forced to choose between the candidates agreed with the Russian occupation administration? Will they be given a chance to vote for Ukrainian parties, or will they be treated as non-citizens in the territory of their own country and discriminated in their choice?

It is also unclear whether the former residents of the areas today controlled by the militants, who became refugees and were forced to leave after the beginning of hostilities, would be able to vote. If we look at the experience of other countries, the example of Croatia proves how important it is for the state to ensure the votes of the loyal population of the disputed territories. When Eastern Slavonia seized by the Serbs was integrated, all Croats who became refugees after the outbreak of the war had the right to elect local authorities there. They were able to vote regardless of their place of residence, and special voting stations were opened for them throughout the country.

Would a similar scenario be possible during the upcoming election in the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts? It is very unlikely. The pro-Russian bands will hardly compromise on this point.

So, once again, what we get is not a solution to the problem, but rather an imitation thereof: appeasing one side at the expense of the other. Accepting the terms of the Russian side in this case would mean agreeing to the results of the purges that actually took place in the area in 2014, when citizens loyal to Ukraine were forced to escape to save their lives. Such lopsided election would only legalize these purges, thus giving a new impetus to the conflict.

There is still no answer to the main technical issue: who and how would count the votes? In the current situation, the work of Ukrainian election commissions and observers on the occupied territory is impossible. In the areas controlled by militias, where the rule of law has been replaced with the rule of Kalashnikovs and tanks, organizing full-fledged voting is out of question.

THERE IS NO ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF HOW THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF THOSE DONBAS RESIDENTS WHO NEVER WANTED ANY DPR OR LPR WOULD BE ACCOUNTED FOR. WILL THEY BE ABLE TO NOMINATE THEIR OWN CANDIDATES?

However, if we try to ignore the reality and turn a blind eye to the upcoming election, this would not only be frankly stupid and detrimental to Ukraine, but would also deal a serious blow to democracy and the values nurtured for centuries by the Western society. And the West is perfectly well aware of this.

It has to be recognized that ignoring the interests of the Ukrainian side and meeting the demands of only one side (in this case, the Russian one) would not reduce the contradictions; to the contrary, it would create a new hotbed of tensions and delay the problem rather than solving it.

After adopting the rules of the game imposed on Ukraine by Kremlin at the Minsk negotiations, the West would have to admit that it is sacrificing its basic principles and values. Holding election in the occupied territories according to Putin's scenario would provide a rather bitter precedent, which in turn would mean a throwback to the realities of the 1930s. Such compliance could result in a serious crisis of Western democracies and the actual victory of the neo-fascist expansionist ideology.

So far, no one seems to have an idea on what the election in the occupied territory should be like and how to organize it in practice. It's like dividing by zero in mathematics: it is an impossible and forbidden operation resulting in system failure. The tangle of concerns is inextricable, and no one has a clear plan. This means that we are unlikely to see any significant progress in finding a political solution to the Donbas conflict this summer. It seems that sooner or later, both sides will come to the conclusion that the best way to stop violence in this case would be the Transnistrian or Abkhazian scenario. This means that most likely we will simply get another frozen conflict and another black hole in the world map in the place of a once successful Ukrainian region. ■

The harvest of hope

Oleksandr Kramar

After two very hard years, Ukrainians may be able to breathe more easily this coming summer

As anticipated, it looks like 2016 will actually become the year of stabilization and the start of a slow recovery for Ukraine's economy. The standard of living is also looking to stop its decline, after household incomes sharply declined in the last two years. The calm after the storm is likely to be most felt this summer—provided, of course, that we don't see an escalation in the Donbas.

Inflation has been slowing down over the past year after reaching upwards of 60% in spring 2015. For instance, consumer price inflation compared to the previous year dropped from 40.3% in January 2016 to 9.8% in April. Food products cost just 6.1% more this April than a year ago, although in January they had jumped 36.9% over January 2015. Prices for clothing and footwear went from a high of 31.5% inflation in January this year to 19.6% in April, medicines from 31.9% to 8.4%, and transport from 25.9% to 7.3%. The same can be seen across the board.

This summer, Ukrainians could see price inflation drop to marginal levels altogether. What's

more, this will not be a matter of seasonally adjusted prices for food compared to last winter or this spring, but relative to summer last year. Even prices for gas will be lower than a year ago, with the rate reduced from UAH 7.19 to UAH 6.88 per cu m.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Lately Ukraine's economy has been more and more clearly based on two pillars, the farm sector and trade, which together constitute almost equal shares of about one third of the country's GDP. Last year, the contribution of agriculture, UAH 236 billion, was almost identical to that of the processing industry, UAH 239.1bn. Since nearly a third of the latter comes from food processing, the overall food industry actually outstripped the trade sector, which contributed UAH 288.1bn to GDP in 2015.

Trade and agriculture also remain the main employers in Ukraine. According to Derzhstat, the statistics agency, every second Ukrainian earns a living in these two sectors. In Q1 2016, output actually shrank marginally, by 1.7%, in the farm sec-



Bread winner. Trade and agriculture remain the main employers in Ukraine. Every second Ukrainian earns a living in these two sectors

tor, as did food processing, by 2.1%. By contrast, the remaining processing industries increased output by 4.4%, with steelmaking up 9.8%. At the same time, there's a clear trend in the farm sector to monthly improvements in its indicators, which suggests that the slight decline will be reversed in the second half of 2016.

Retail sales are inching up slowly—1.6% in Q1'16 compared to Q1'15. With prices stabilizing and marginal improvements in social benefits and average salaries, this pace could pick up.

Second-tier sectors remain transport, machine-building, the mining and metals complex (MMC), fuel extraction, education, and healthcare. The fuel sector's share of GDP has been growing as the country moves to market-based pricing for natural gas, while education and healthcare each represented 3-5% of GDP in 2015. Since the beginning of 2016, metal production has grown, 9.8% in Q1, and 18.8% alone in March, compared to 2015. However, this growth was only the outcome of an adjustment in prices on world markets after the previous steep decline and is unlikely to prove sustainable. In contrast to the agricultural sector, Ukraine's steel industry doesn't have much of a competitive edge over a slew of other producers, especially in Asia. On the contrary, the cost of production is higher than there, especially compared to the largest producer, China, so that it is unlikely that this growth will be sustainable.

Freight carriage has been growing lately as well: in Q1'16, it was up 4.2% over 2015, and looks to pick up pace as industrial output rises. As real household incomes stop their decline and the cost of fuel goes down relative to 2015, passenger transport should also pick up pace. What's more, internal tourism is growing ever-more dynamically as the cost of traveling abroad grew beyond the means of most domestic travelers with the devaluation of the hryvnia.

A HOT SEASON

Summer, and particularly the harvest season, should begin to play a more and more significant role in Ukraine's economy, as the farm sector is turning into its biggest component. It ensures the biggest capital inflows into the country, which means that the quality of the harvest will largely determine the stability of the currency and finance spheres.

For the third year in a row, Ukraine's farmers have brought in 60+ million t of grains, while domestic demand has fallen since the occupation of Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. And so, although the 2015 overall crop was less successful than in the previous two years, grain exports reached record volumes. By the end of April, that is, two months before the end of the 2015/2016 marketing year, over 33.5mn t had already been shipped out—not much less than the entire previous marketing year. Last year, poor weather conditions cost Ukraine a significant part of its cereal harvest, with wheat down 3.2%, corn 7.3%, sugar beets 9.0%, and soybeans down 14.3%. Even if most crops reach 2014 yield levels in 2016, there should be a considerable increase

in the gross harvest of these crops. In addition to this, cultivated areas for these crops are also likely to expand significantly because the winter crop, which sprouted poorly or failed altogether and had to be re-sown. This will be largely due to sunflower, soy and maize, which yield much more per hectare.

The devaluation of the hryvnia was compensated last year by a decline in dollar-based prices on world markets for Ukrainian farm products. As a result, profits for domestic agribusinesses remained high in 2015 and the overall sum of profits in the sector was UAH 78.2bn. Even in their dollar equivalent, it was more than in 2014.

Sunflower remains the most profitable crop, but there were a number of surprises this past year. Vegetables have moved up into second place for profitability, which grew from 16.7% to 47.5%. This has stimulated an expansion of sown areas and, most likely, a bigger harvest in 2016. Profits are nearly 40% for grains and soybeans, which also grew in 2015, spurring successful growers to invest in growing it this year as well.

IN THE NEXT WHILE UKRAINE IS LIKELY TO GAIN AS MUCH PER CAPITA FOR ITS GRAIN EXPORTS AS RUSSIA GETS PER CAPITA FOR ITS GAS

The Ministry of Agricultural Policy was predicting grain exports of 37mn t this year, but the current pace of 3mn t in April suggests that in May and June considerably more than the 3.5mn t needed to reach that level is likely to be exported. The growth in grain exports is coming against a background of growing domestic elevator infrastructure and increased port facilities for handling grain. At 38-40mn t of exports of grain, Ukraine will confidently take second place in the world, ceding only to the US, which exports nearly double—around 70-80mn t a year. What's more, Ukrainian grain not only competes successfully with other suppliers in the eastern hemisphere, but is even catching up to exporters in the western hemisphere, which includes such grain giants as the US, Canada and Argentina.

Given that the price per tonne of Ukrainian grain is already higher than 1,000 cu m of Russian natural gas sold abroad, in the next while Ukraine is likely to gain as much per capita for its grain exports as Russia gets per capita for its gas—around \$1,200 per cu m.

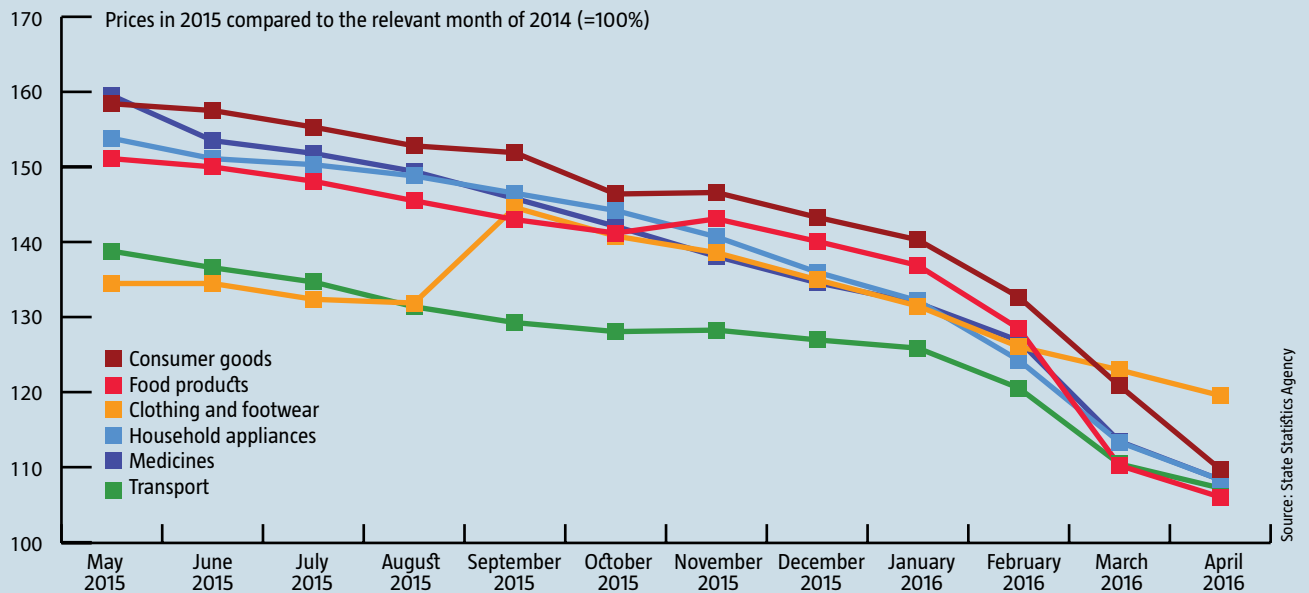
NEW NICHES

More interestingly, the prospects for Ukraine's farm sector on world markets are not limited to grains or oils. Lately, Ukraine has been taking on new niches for foodstuffs on the most promising markets. This process is taking place at a glacial pace, but the final result could be impressive.

Ukrainian growers are not only opening the EU market for themselves, but are also entering the biggest food markets in the world: China and Southern Asia—India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Altogether, these represent nearly 3 billion people, so that supplying even a small fraction of their ap- ➤

Keeping the prices calm

In the summer of 2016 the prices of most consumer goods will hardly change from what they were a year ago, while real average wages will grow, for the first time in the past few years. This should bring an end to the lengthy decline in the standard of living



petites, which are growing along with their economies and numbers of urban residents with cash to spend, represents a colossal opportunity for Ukraine's farmers. In September 2015, the Chinese gave export privileges to a few dozen Ukrainian dairy producers, and in early 2016, so did the EU. Meat deliveries to these two markets have also been growing.

Ukraine's growers respond quickly to demand for niche produce on world markets. For instance, in recent years, legumes have been sown, harvested and exported in ever-greater volumes, especially peas. This plant is popular in the traditional cuisines of Southern Asia and has considerable prospects for sales to grow. In 2015, Ukraine exported more than 200,000 t of peas. This year, one third more territory was sown with peas in anticipation of a crop that could reach more than half a million tonnes, with about 300,000 t of that going abroad. In short, from being a second-rank product not so long ago, the pea is turning into a major item in Ukraine's exports, because the price of peas is at least double the price of such grains as wheat, maize and barley.

Produce infrastructure is also sharply expanding: for instance, the biggest tomato processing plant in Europe is now being built in Mykolayiv Oblast. And berries have become a significant export item. Domestic demand for berries remains relatively stable, which means that any growth is aimed at expanding into the European Union. And with good reason: in 2015, this market grew an impressive 66%. Since no more than 15% of the produce grown in this sector is currently being exported, an expansion of even just 20-30% per annum could ensure severalfold growth in export volumes over the next few years. At 150-200% profit per year, berries are highly attractive. Since hand-picking them involves considerable labor,

this product can also help reduce unemployment in rural areas.

WORRISOME SIGNALS

Because import indicators are leading exports, however, the trade deficit is growing, a visible warning sign. So, whereas imports of goods for Q1 2015 were declining faster than exports, at 36.5% to 32.9%, in Q1 2016, they were shrinking far more slowly, at 4.1%, than exports, at 18.1%. As a result, instead of a positive balance of trade of \$380mn a year ago, this year, Ukraine has a \$950mn negative balance. The reason for this can be partly found in the shifting hryvnia exchange rate that is currently being caused artificially, through restrictions administered by the National Bank of Ukraine.

At this time, the trade deficit is being compensated by other sources of capital in- and outflows, but the decline in the trade balance could represent risks down the line. Moreover, in the last few years, Ukraine saw its balance of trade in services also go down sharply. In 2016, compared to 2013, imported services only declined by \$2.5bn, going from \$7.609bn to \$5.144bn while exports went down \$5.285bn, from \$14.836bn to \$9.551bn, resulting in the positive balance dropping from \$7.2bn to \$4.4bn.

So, the current trend towards a decline in the balance of trade in goods suggests that even this year, Ukraine risks returning to a negative balance of trade in goods and services. Without a highly unlikely large-scale increase in foreign direct investment in the country, this could indicate that Ukraine is once again falling into the trap of being highly dependent on external borrowings to operate and this promises little good. To prevent this kind of situation from developing, the NBU needs to stop intervening in the currency market as soon as possible. ■

Ihor Bilous:

"Foreign investors are alarmed by macro instability and political turbulence in Ukraine"

The head of the Ukrainian State Property Fund tells *The Ukrainian Week* about the estimated value of state assets in Ukraine, performance of the privatisation plan, bidders for the Odesa Port Plant and Russian management of Ukrainian regional power companies.

Interviewed
by Tetiana
Omelchenko

The State Property Fund of Ukraine (SPFU) is mainly associated with privatisation. But its role in managing state assets is no less important. How do you assess the balance between these two functions in recent years, including almost a year under your leadership?

– The primary function, of course, is privatisation. More precisely, preparing facilities owned by the State Property Fund for privatisation. I'm talking about companies and shares that were transferred to us by various ministries and departments. During this preparation, we carry out corporate governance of certain portfolios. But that's a derivative function. In addition, there are two more: valuation and leasing of state property.

How much time does the SPFU spend to prepare facilities for privatisation?

– A large company in the "G" group (strategic enterprises) takes six to nine months. Typically, transferred facilities are with us for a year, sometimes longer (more than 10 years for the Odesa Port Plant and Turboatom). But I don't like this policy and am going to insist that the transit period of our corporate management should decrease (because this function is temporary). What's more, the SPFU has a small staff, no resources and no expensive specialists. A budget of 20 million hryvnias (~\$800,000) for the entire fund – to manage 402 companies – is ridiculous! Please note that half of them are involved in court cases, bankruptcy proceedings and so on. We do what we can and are working at a solid 7 out of 10 points at the moment. We're still a long way from the next level up and don't have the resources to get there. Where we can, we defend our positions, but we're not able to fight with the courts.

As for the estimated value of the assets managed by the SPFU, what sort of numbers are we talking about?

– The SPFU manages 352 joint-stock companies (from 0.1% to 100% of the shares). Only 69 of them presented their statements for 2015. Those where the state owns more than 50% are required to file these documents. Some were unable to do this because of the anti-terrorist operation, occupation, liquidation, bankruptcy, reorganisation and so on. The value of

the assets of these 69 companies managed by the SPFU is 48.3 billion hryvnias (~\$1.9b).

Generally, a company is valued by us for further lease or sale. In other cases, property valuation is not carried out, because it has a certain period of validity. Today, this period is less than a year, and the valuation can expire before the SPFU has finished the preparation of the facility. So we want to increase this period to at least 12 months. In addition, the valuation process becomes more expensive each year. We have recently changed the valuation method and our procedures for

NOW, THE PRIVATISATION IS AT SUCH A STAGE THAT IT COULD ONLY BE CANCELLED BY THE PRIME MINISTER OR PRESIDENT

selecting evaluators, who now work according to international standards. Of course, you can value an asset based on its book value or the nominal value of its shares too. But why would you want to?

How much has the state budget received recently from assets leased by the SPFU?

– Last year, we generated over 1.5 billion hryvnias (~\$60m) for the state budget thanks to lease agreements. As of mid-April 2016, we have received 332.5 million hryvnias (\$13m). The target for the year is 615 million hryvnias (\$24m). Plan fulfilment is 54.06%. We monitor almost 20 thousand agreements (the register can be found in the public domain on the SPFU website in the Activity/Lease block).

Do you see the potential to increase revenues? Which steps would be required for this?

– They can definitely be increased. It is necessary to fundamentally restructure the system for managing state properties. In its regional offices, the SPFU has 1,200 employees, many of whom work on lease agreements, and for no good reason: the lease department looks for a lessee, concludes a contract... And the procedure takes months because everything is linked to the valuation, which has its own legal and bureaucratic formalities. I consider all this to be a vestige of the past. If we look at the total value of the SPFU's property, it is several times higher than Ukraine's sovereign debt (by conservative estimates). I think we should create a separate body or company (with assets amounting to billions of dollars) that will not only take care of leasing state property, but also buy- ➤



PHOTO BY ALEXANDR RATUSHNYAK

Ihor Bilous, born in 1978 in Ternopil, Western Ukraine, graduated from the Kyiv National Economic University with a major in International Business Management. He worked in various companies and organizations as financial analyst, director of corporate finance and head of project development departments. In 2014, Mr. Bilous was First Deputy Minister of Taxes and Revenues. In 2014-2015, he headed the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine. In May 25, 2015, he was appointed head of the State Property Fund.

ing, selling and developing it. State property is not just square metres of real estate in a certain class, but also a multitude of plots of land.

But this company should be managed based on tenders by professionals, who would receive fair remuneration for this (a percentage of revenue from leasing or profits). In this way, the state would have an effective manager for its property and get rid of various debts. All we need for this is some desire, political will and a small budget to start the process. In the future, this will pay off handsomely.

What is the ratio of profitable and unprofitable enterprises managed by the SPFU?

– As of 1 January 2016, out of the 182 enterprises and companies with state ownership of more than 50% of the share capital that are managed by the SPFU: 38 are profitable (of which 14 worked “effectively” in accordance with our financial and business evaluation criteria and 25 – “satisfactorily”), 56 are inefficient and 68 were not evaluated (for various reasons). 384,950,000 hryvnias (\$15m) was paid in dividends in 2015. State-owned enterprises managed by the SPFU have paid 55,800 hryvnias (\$1,500) of net profit

into the Ukrainian state budget since the beginning of 2016. That is to say, the overall picture is rather miserable. If not in terms of dividends, then surely in terms of the number of companies involved in bankruptcy proceedings: most of them are bankrupt one way or another and are in the process of liquidation or reorganisation. But there are often attempts to carry out the reorganisation procedure using obscure resources (without money). The SPFU does not like this, but we don't have enough levers of influence to deal with such cases. And statistics show that many companies have been informally privatised in this way.

What has changed in this respect under your leadership?

– I wouldn't say that there has been a revolution in corporate governance during my tenure. But we're on our way there. We don't really monitor operating performance, because we only fulfil the role of a shareholder. So the SPFU's functions are usually limited to appointing a supervisory board, which then selects managers itself. Of course, we have to talk about profitability too, and low performance signifies a shortcoming in our work. But the main function of the SPFU is still privatisation. In contrast, pre-privatisation preparation and cleaning up the operational and financial life of the companies is a matter for the ministries that hand these enterprises over to us. We have companies that pay dividends: Turboatom, some regional power companies, representatives of the mining industry, but the condition of most facilities transferred to us does not stand up to criticism.

To what extent have privatisation plans been met in recent years? What are the main obstacles: the inadequacy of the plans themselves or some other contrived points during the denationalisation process?

– The plans are not being implemented. My team and I were immediately faced with a huge problem: the legal and regulatory framework for privatisation is outdated (the last denationalisation was in summer 2005). Another obstacle is sabotage: the issue of transferring enterprises from the ministries to the SPFU. The respective resolution number 271 was adopted in May 2015, but to date only 12% of the more than 300 enterprises have been transferred to the fund. What can we put up for sale if we aren't given anything? And even when the facilities are handed over to us, they're without their statutory documents, immovable and movable property registers and so on. How can the SPFU sell them? This is a long established problem.

When in August 2015 we approached the issue of selling the Odesa Port Plant (OPP) based on the valuation method formed back in 2003 (5% of the company for 39 million hryvnias), we realised it was time to change. As a result, privatisation of the OPP didn't take place last year. However, the law on privatisation and valuation methods was changed. Since July 2015, the SPFU has been preparing the OPP for sale: millions of dollars of donor funds have been spent and environmental audits have been conducted in accordance with Western standards. In May, we want to start the process of privatising the plant. And international corporations will come to us, I'm sure. Then there will be the denationalisation of regional power companies, Centrenergo and other small facilities (various central heating and power plants, a

bank, the President Hotel in Kyiv). We are really looking forward to parliament approving a law that would lift the ban on selling so-called strategic companies that are not actually strategically important anymore (Ukrspyr, the producer of alcohol; Artemsil, an extractor of salt; machine-building enterprises, etc.).

How are you going to attract investors?

- We consider as one of our achievements the possibility to include dispute resolution through international arbitration in the sale contracts. Generally, attracting investors is not only a problem for the SPFU. We spend a lot of time in negotiations with the National Bank and the other day its chairperson Valeria Hontareva finally made a statement on the partial removal of currency restrictions on dividends. Because it's impossible to sell something for hundreds of millions of dollars if you don't let the investor take any money out of the country.

You have said that the tender for the privatisation of the OPP should be closed by the end of July. Does the position of the SPFU match the attitude of the newly appointed government towards privatisation? Will it not be blocked by new ministers and representatives of various groups of influence? Maybe there have already been some attempts?

- There is currently no resistance, and I am pleased that the ministers are planning to support the course towards privatisation that has already been set. The SPFU has done its bit, and I really hope for support. As for foreign investors, statements and words aren't enough for them – they want to see an official decision from the Cabinet. Now, the privatisation is at such a stage that it could only be cancelled by the Prime Minister or President.

You previously said that ten investors were interested in the OPP, now five remain. Why did the rest lose interest?

- No one has lost interest: negotiations are underway with nine potential investors. So far, only the overly bureaucratic Chinese have dropped out because there is no documented decision regarding the privatisation. Moreover, they start taking over markets with significant loans (mostly under government guarantees). Out of the nine companies that have shown interest in the OPP, some have already signed a confidentiality agreement, some are still thinking it over, others (the majority) are waiting for an official decision from the Cabinet, which is a kind of point of no return for them. And it is natural that investors who intend to mobilise hundreds of millions of dollars want to be sure of the Ukrainian government and president's serious intentions. I would like to mention that among investors there is an active interest in the OPP, although this is due to indirect factors (profitability, margins). Ukraine has problems that alarm foreigners: the macro instability of the state, political turbulence, the recent change of government and lack of leading positions in global commodity markets.

Where do the companies interested in the OPP come from and which fields do they specialise in? Are there any bidders for the company with Ukrainian capital?

- There aren't any with Ukrainian capital. The main business of the bidders is the production or trade of

mineral fertilizers (90% are producers). From the United States, the Netherlands, Morocco, Indonesia, Turkey and Brazil.

Has procurement in state-owned enterprises been switched to the ProZorro system? Have you managed to do away with intermediaries when preparing companies for privatisation? If so, what economic effect has this provided?

- The SPFU hasn't used the ProZorro system yet. Currently, the SPFU is working on a directive regarding the composition of the tender committee under the new procurement terms. The statutes and regulations of the Fund that will regulate the procedure for electronic purchases are also being prepared for approval. In addition, we are waiting for electronic signature certificates from the responsible people at the tax office.

As for the OPP, we are only beginning to switch it onto the ProZorro system. Moreover, the system is not normally used to buy energy sources: neither coal, nor gas (which are 90% of the plant's purchases). As for other companies, we are only providing training at the moment and recommend that they familiarise themselves with all the procedures. First and foremost, ProZorro was created for municipal and regional governments. Therefore, they should enter the system first, and only then state enterprises. I fully support the transfer of procurement in state enterprises onto ProZorro. I think that by the end of the year most of them will use it.

Many discussions are continuing on whether Ukraine should maintain economic relations with Russia in the current political situation. The Russian VS Energy group, whose shareholders include odious Russian MP and businessman Aleksandr Babakov, owns seven Ukrainian regional power companies. Not so long ago in our country, there was talk of possibly nationalising companies controlled by VS Energy, but it came to nothing. Does this create a risk for the state?

- Not at all. I consider calls from certain people to nationalise companies under the control of VS Energy to be nothing but emotional outbursts. There must be objective reasons to reprivatise or nationalise a company. We can only make these sudden movements when there is clear evidence and court decisions. Otherwise, I oppose such developments and would advise steering clear of them. You need to be very careful with such calls to action, because they are a very negative factor for the investment image of our country. Today, assets will be taken away from Russians and tomorrow – from other foreigners. And then the day after tomorrow no one will want to invest in Ukraine any more.

Speaking of VS Energy, they purchased the Ukrainian power companies officially. In 2013, the corporation legally bought the Kyiv and Rivne regional power companies, paying a lot of money into the state budget. I will mention that the Russians are rather efficient in managing their assets and use electronic systems. The SPFU is currently analysing Ukrainian regional power companies, and I have to admit that VS Energy, like any private owner, manages them much better than the state. The company is working on capitalisation, invests money and regularly pays salaries to our citizens. And I really want the new owner of the six power companies that we're putting up for privatisation to be just as good. ■



PHOTO BY DMYTRO KORENEV

Gretta Fenner Zinkernagel:

“The really critical condition in investigating financial crimes is no political interference”

Interviewed by
Anna Korbut

The *Ukrainian Week* spoke to the Director of the International Centre for Asset Recovery at the Basel Institute on Governance about cooperation with the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine in investigating financial crimes of the Yanukovich regime, effective tools to search for stolen assets, and mechanisms of international interaction in financial intelligence.

You have been cooperating with Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office on the recovery of stolen assets. What do you work on together specifically?

— Our cooperation started in August 2014 when we signed an agreement with the Prosecutor Gen-

eral's Office which mandated my organization, the International Centre for Asset Recovery, to assist it in locating and ideally recovering assets that were suspected to have been stolen by former President Yanukovich and his close allies. The ICAR assistance in particular focuses on assistance in devising the investigation strategy, financial investigation, and the use of more tools for tracing assets. Almost all of the cases involve tracing the money internationally. That requires active liaison with law enforcement agencies in other countries and help in drafting requests for legal assistance to other jurisdictions – European and American. That's our primary mandate. We do that in other countries as well.

How active is the Ukrainian side in this cooperation?

— We can see some progress in some cases – in domestic investigation, which is always essential.

Generally, there is often a misunderstanding that the solution to a stolen asset problem is in a foreign jurisdiction where the money is. However, the solution is never in another country. It is always primarily in the domestic investigation, and only then in the other jurisdiction.

That has taken some time for the PGO to understand, and that's also something we see in other countries. It is easy for countries where lots of money has been stolen to blame other jurisdictions that have accepted it – and, indeed, they do have some blame to take. But you can't just wait for them to do the job and bring you the money back. It doesn't work like that. The reason is that a lot of the evidence of what happened with the money – how it was stolen and in what way it was illegal – is in Ukraine. So the local law enforcement agencies have to do their job. I think we lost a bit of time initially with creating that understanding.

As to the cases, I would say that we have progress in some cases, while in others the process is very slow. That has partly to do with the fact that certain cases are extremely complicated.

It has also to do with the fact that there are different levels of capacity – even in the PGO. Some investigators are more experienced, others are less so. In general, there is no great level of experience in financial investigations at the GPO. Again, this is not typical just for Ukraine, but for countries all over the world. Utilizing financial investigation tools is still something very new – even for some of the more developed jurisdictions.

Also, we are probably looking at different levels of motivation. This can be understood: it takes courage, at the very low salary paid at the PGO, to be the lead investigator against people who are still very powerful and have resources at their disposal to destroy you if they want to. So I have great sympathy for the investigator level – it's not an easy job. If you're too successful in your work, you expose yourself to risks.

In addition to that, there are operational issues which we are addressing: we are helping the PGO create better connections between cases. So far, they are used to working on cases individually, while in financial crimes there is a lot of interconnection.

Ultimately, the success of these cases will depend on leadership. It will depend on instructions from Prosecutor General and from Deputy Prosecutors General. Investigators really need the backing to do this very courageous job. Unless they have that leadership, it will be very difficult for them to work successfully.

In fact, many in Ukraine see the lack of top political will as the biggest problem in investigating financial crimes by former politicians and preventing new ones. Is it generally the crucial component to success in asset recovery efforts?

— It's a very important condition. The really critical condition is that there should be no political

Interview was organised in cooperation with the Embassy of Switzerland in Ukraine



interference. In the best case scenario, you have no political interference but strong political support in terms of giving the message: yes, we want you to prosecute this and we'll give you resources to do this. That's an ideal scenario. You can do without the political support as long as you don't have political interference. Independence of the PGO is therefore absolutely essential. And that is often not given in countries that still struggle in democratic transition. Prosecution services all around the world, in countries with young democracy or no democracy for a long time, have actively been used as a tool of political power. Changing that, in reality and in perception, takes time.

THERE IS NO GREAT LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE IN FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE GPO. THIS IS NOT TYPICAL JUST FOR UKRAINE, BUT FOR COUNTRIES ALL OVER THE WORLD

How long do you think Ukraine could take to recover the assets stolen from it, and what share could it be?

— The first question is always how much money was actually stolen. In terms of assets that are currently frozen, we know it's not as much money as people expect. So we have an expectation management problem. The recoveries we will probably see will most likely take at least another 3 years, or more. The fastest recovery I have seen took 5 years, and that's a fast and comparatively easy case. But the main point of asset recovery, in my view, is not only to bring the money back, but to deal with impunity, to showing people that there is the will to break with the past practices and punish the criminals. We should not hope too much for recovering the money, but rather for closing cases and giving people satisfaction in that those who stole the assets can't get away with it.

Where does the first step come from in investigating cases on stolen assets? Is it necessarily initiated by the country where the money was stolen, or are there alternative ways?

— There are two first steps, in my view. On the one hand, the state where the assets have been stolen – Ukraine in this case – has to immediately seize any information or piece of evidence possible after the fall of the regime. This has to be done very quickly because money can disappear rapidly, information can be burned, files can be lost.

On the other hand, other jurisdictions have to act very quickly to search for and freeze assets. In the case of EuroMaidan, European jurisdictions acted as fast as they ever have. Yet, there are still differences from one jurisdiction to another. Switzerland has a special legal regime that makes it possible to act quickly, with the so-called administrative freeze. This means that the Federal Council can freeze assets under the Constitution when it serves the purpose of "safeguarding the country's" »

Gretta Fenner holds bachelor and master degrees from the Otto-Suhr-Institute at the Free University Berlin, Germany, and the Paris Institute for Political Science ("Sciences Po Paris"), France. In 2010, she further completed an MBA at the Curtin University Graduate School of Business, Australia. She served as the Managing Director of the Basel Institute on Governance in 2005-2008 and since 2011 till present. During these intermittent years, she primarily worked as freelance consultant advising governments, donors, international organisations and multinational corporations from around the world in governance and anti-corruption related topics as well as organisational change and development processes and policy design. Prior to joining the Basel Institute, from 2000 to 2005, Gretta worked at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris as the organisation's manager for anti-corruption programmes in the Asia-Pacific region where she played a key role in establishing the ADB/OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific.

interests". By contrast, most jurisdictions need to have either sanction lists for people, suspicious transactions reported to financial intelligence unit, freeze requests from other jurisdictions, or they have to open criminal investigations themselves and freeze under those provisions.

The EU sanction list helped as well. However, the problem with the sanction-based freezes in the EU is that they are up for renewal regularly. In an ideal world, you freeze assets under the sanction regime or constitutional provisions, then add additional layers of freezing, i.e. freeze assets under an opened criminal investigation, report from a financial investigation unit or under the mutual legal assistance mechanism. The point is to have as many layers of freeze as possible so that it becomes difficult for the defendant to challenge that, while you have more time.

But that takes very quick reaction and a lot of coordination between the involved jurisdictions. What often happens is so-called "fishing expeditions", where one jurisdiction asks another to freeze assets but cannot present enough information to substantiate this request. So it's essential that the so-called "requesting jurisdiction", in this case Ukraine, does not just ask other jurisdictions to freeze assets on a vague suspicion, but that it presents as much detailed information as possible. The information that civil society collected in the immediate aftermath of the fall of former President Yanukovich for example was important in this context.

What are the major hubs for corrupt leaders to store their stolen assets, especially in the developed world?

— Usually, everybody talks about Switzerland, the UK, the US, Austria and Lichtenstein in the Ukrainian case. It's true – we often find money there. But in my experience, the amount of money in terms of percentage of the total global corrupt assets has decreased in these jurisdictions. This seems to indicate that criminals are choosing other destinations because these ones are getting a little too risky for them. What bothers me in this whole discussion is that many other financial

centers, such as the Middle Eastern and Asian ones, in addition to certain overseas territories and special jurisdictions, or in fact a number of European jurisdictions, are never mentioned for the simple fact they don't collaborate actively in asset recovery. We don't find money there – because they don't provide the same level of support and assistance that countries like the UK or Switzerland or Lichtenstein do. There are a lot of jurisdictions which, in my opinion, should take a greater responsibility in supporting international efforts to recover stolen assets. That includes Germany and France, and those countries which don't take the same leadership as the UK or Switzerland.

What about joint efforts to try and limit the space for corrupt assets? How do you see the dynamics there, particularly after scandals like the Panama leak, or that of Ukraine, Russia, the leaders of Arab Spring countries earlier?

— I think there are some efforts going in the right direction in that regard. The international community of FIUs is probably the most advanced when it comes to finding pragmatic and quick ways to share intelligence. There is a joint intelligence platform where one can post information and others can call upon it. It goes through the Egmont Group. And that's an excellent example of a tool that allows you to act very quickly in a pragmatic, legal and efficient way. There are a lot of ideas like creating the International Anti-Corruption Court, or giving the International Criminal Court jurisdiction over corruption cases. In addition to that, we have Interpol, Eurojust, Europol. So, I'm always in favor of using existing international organizations and tools more effectively, rather than creating new ones.

THE EU SANCTION LIST HELPED AS WELL. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM WITH THE SANCTION-BASED FREEZES IN THE EU IS THAT THEY ARE UP FOR RENEWAL REGULARLY

Do you think the latest Panama scandal will affect in any way the way the world of financial flows operates?

— I think it was great, a massive wake up call. We know that all this is happening. But the mere scale of it is shocking! And it was just one law firm in Panama!

I think the effect will be a huge push for more transparent beneficial ownership registries. There is a lot of expectation from Panama papers to create much evidence and intelligence information that will allow us to solve all cases in the world. I'm not necessarily sure about that aspect. One of the risks – and I hope it won't materialize – is that everyone points their fingers at Panama and thinks that once that one is dealt with, the problem is solved. But there are many more jurisdictions that have the same effect. ■

The withdrawal that wasn't

Syria still provides a useful stage for Russian strategy—and propaganda

When Mr Putin said in March that “the main part” of Russia’s forces could now leave Syria, their mission having been accomplished, he was partly telling the truth. Russia today hardly looks like the mere “regional power” that Barack Obama once dubbed it. Any path to peace in Syria now runs through Moscow. “Only Russia and the United States of America are in a state to stop the war in Syria, even though they have different political interests and goals,” wrote Valery Gerasimov, chief of Russia’s general staff, in a recent article.

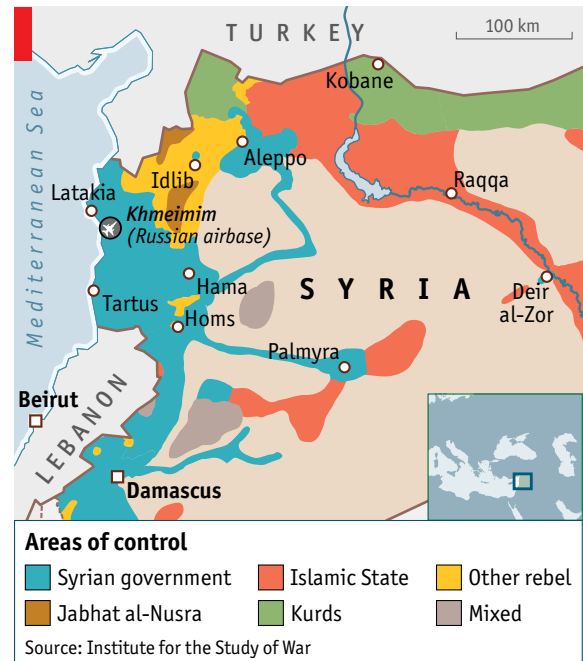
The curious thing about Russia’s withdrawal, however, is that it has not actually happened. To leave would be to abandon Russian influence and hand Syria over to Mr Assad’s other ally, Iran. Rather than withdrawing his forces, Mr Putin has retrenched. The March announcement was really “a way to reconceptualise the presence as permanent, rather than as part of a specific mission,” says Dmitry Gorenburg, an expert on the Russian armed forces. Russia did recall a handful of aircraft—a signal to Syria’s stubborn president, Bashar al-Assad, not to take it for granted. But its footprint in Syria remains heavy.

The Khmeimim airbase near the Syrian port of Latakia hums with fighters and bombers taking off. New attack helicopters have arrived for close air support. Powerful S-400 anti-aircraft missiles maintain an air-defence perimeter in the eastern Mediterranean that constrains even NATO. Just as America’s bases in Iraq had KFC franchises, Russia has tried to make the desert home: Slavic women serve *kasha* (porridge) in the mess tent; a container unit holds a library of 2,000 Russian books.

On the ground, Russia seems to be running the show. When Russian and Syrian forces carry out joint missions, they operate “on Russian terms”, says Dmitri Trenin of the Carnegie Moscow Centre, a think-tank. A Russian defence-ministry convoy that took journalists on a recent press tour rolled nonchalantly past dozens of checkpoints. Throughout the tour, Syrian officers deferred to the Russians.

The bombing campaign has been massive, but Russia has also done much else. Palmyra, recently recaptured from Islamic State (IS), now hosts a small Russian base, ostensibly for sappers clearing the area of mines. Russian special forces are involved in intelligence and targeting. Instructors train Syrian counterparts. Russian officers have waded into local politics, brokering ceasefires. The Russians are here for the long haul: when the defence ministry ordered medals for the Syrian campaign, it asked for over 10,000.

Mr Putin has framed his intervention in Syria as a battle between good and evil. In fact, Syrian and Russian forces have as often targeted moderate rebels as extremists. Mr Assad’s plan has always been to convince the world he is fighting jihadists rather than his own angry citizens. And indeed, he has helped stoke the rise of IS and, by killing moderates, he has driven some of his people into the welcoming arms of the extremists.



On May 5th Russia brought its world-renowned Mariinsky Theatre orchestra to give a concert in Palmyra’s Roman amphitheatre, on the stage where IS executed dozens of people last year. The orchestra delivered a sublime performance of Bach, Shchedrin and Prokofiev, even as bombs were falling on Aleppo, Syria’s largest city. Many Syrians were disgusted.

It was no accident that the concert took place just before Victory Day, the Russian holiday marking the end of the second world war. Mr Putin called the Russian soldiers in Syria “worthy successors of the great patriotic war heroes”. The concert was dedicated in part to Alexander Prokhorov, a special-forces soldier who, Russian television reported, had called in air strikes against his own position when surrounded by IS during the battle for Palmyra. Even liberal commentators normally critical of Mr Putin gushed.

In Syria and in Western capitals, this charm offensive is less effective. Even some supporters of Mr Assad are wary of Russia’s growing control over their country. The West sees Russia’s talk of fighting terrorism as a smokescreen for supporting Mr Assad’s autocratic regime. Philip Hammond, the British foreign secretary, called the concert “tasteless”. Few believe Russia’s claim that it is working towards a fair political solution in Syria. But Russia is not concerned with winning over the West. Instead, by proving itself indispensable, Russia believes it can compel the West to collaborate on Russian terms. Or as Mr Trenin says, to “love us as we are”—bombs, cellists and all. ■

Sabotage in the name of "peace"

Bohdan Butkevych

A new Russian propaganda agency has started up in Kyiv as part of the Kremlin's fifth column of “soft power”

Under the guise of a “peaceful resolution” to the war in the east, Russia continues to try to place its agents of influence inside Ukrainian society. Its primary focus is on the information arena and NGOs to promote messages along the lines of “World peace,” “Enough bloodshed” and “Stop the civil war and the bloody ATO.” And so, the capital of Ukraine recently saw the launch of remarkably lively activity on the part of an organization dubbed the “Peace Institute,” around which a crowd of overt and covert agents of Russkiy Mir or Russian World quickly coalesced. An investigation showed that the Kremlin is directly behind this Institute and that funding is coming from channels belonging to the Yanukovych “family.”

FIRST SIGNS

On February 29, 2016, the Peace Institute first announced itself through a press conference entitled “Minsk Accords. Way out or problem?” at one of the leading news agencies. The main message was that the Donbas must be granted special status and that “an information war was interfering in the work of the Minsk accords [sic].” Interestingly, word of this press briefing was spread mainly by the Ukrainian branch of RIA Novosti, an infamous Russian propaganda agency that continues to operate completely legally in Ukraine today. Other than the staff of the Institute, the briefing was attended by representatives of the OSCE and the Donbas SOS volunteer organization, quite reputable individuals who were to provide a cover for the real purpose of the event.

On April 18, a closed event organized by this Peace Institute took place at the President-Kyivskiy Hotel. The list of invited guests that ***The Ukrainian Week*** was able to obtain was revealing, although the organizers were very reluctant to make it public. Among them were Jan Novoselskiy, the editor-in-chief of the infamous Channel 17, one of whose employees, Dmytro Vasylets, was under arrest for suspected cooperation with “Donetsk People’s Republic” terrorists; Kost Bondarenko, a pundit who has worked for Serhiy Liovochkin, that is, Party of the Regions, for years; Dmytro Rozenfeld, the former editor of another Russian news source, RBK-Ukraine; Valeriy Lytkovskiy, advisor to the former Human Rights Ombudsman under Viktor Yanukovich; anarchist Mykhailo Chaplyga; and businessman



"Peaceful" propaganda. Anton Rozenvayn's articles in the Novorossiia newspaper

Garik Korogodskiy. Others who were expected at this event included Enrique Menendes, the leader of the Responsible Citizens NGO that cooperates with Rinat Akhmetov. The group's activists were recently chased out of the occupied Donetsk

by the militants because of the conflict with the oligarch. Interestingly, the only two media that reported on this event were that same Channel 17 and NewsOne, a channel belonging to Yevhen Murayev, a member of the rump Party of Regions faction in the Verkhovna Rada, now called the Opposition Bloc. Murayev himself is linked to former PM Mykola Azarov. The members of the board and the founders of this NGO, which was legally registered in February in the Dnipro District of Kyiv, were also present.

"VLADDY AND THE PEACEMAKERS"

The head of the Institute is Maksym Lenko, who is from Horlivka, Donetsk Oblast, and made himself a career as a prosecutor in Donetsk Oblast when Yanukovich was in power. His peak came on September 2, 2013, when President Yanukovich appointed Lenko head of the Main Investigative Administration of the SBU. Lenko served the Yanukovich Administration in faith and truth in this position, and did not flee. Still, he was lustrated quite early on, which did not hinder this worthy citizen from quietly taking the top position in the Peace Institute and, since he had his own law firm, according to *The Ukrainian Week's* sources in the SBU, to help clients beat the legal system through the agency of his firm.

The Institute has another prosecutor from Donetsk Oblast on its board: Dmytro Moroz. He started out as a detective in Donetsk and rose to be first deputy prosecutor of Donetsk Oblast by 2013. His career included being prosecutor in one of the districts of Sevastopol as well, over 2011-2012. Things were going along beautifully for Moroz until the Maidan struck and in 2014 he was lustrated. Still, he did not remain jobless for long.

Further, the deputy director is Olha Malkina-Bohuslavska, the daughter of ex-Shepetivka Mayor Valeriy Malkin. Malkina-Bohuslavska was known for having worked in a series of Ukrainian media outlets and espousing far-left views. It is unnecessary to go into detail about the Communist Party of Ukraine and its role in stirring up conflict in Donbas. The new left is of greater interest now and is no slouch compared to the old, especially the organization "Borotba" or "The Struggle," whose members have persistently supported the pro-Russian militants. Of course, when they came in person to visit Donetsk, they found themselves taken captive, but that changed little.

And so, Malkina-Bohuslavska has been actively working with the terrorist mouthpiece NewsFront, for which she has, among others, produced an interview with the wife of Pavel Gubarev, one of the leaders of separatism movements in the Donbas. The interview focused on investigations into "crimes" by Ukrainian military in DPR, setting up courts and quasi-legislation in the pseudo-republic, and so on. She often visits occupied Donetsk where she appears to have no problems getting around.

In terms of leftists, the founding members of the Institute include Anton Rozenvayn, who



Антон Розенвайн

журналіст

Коли в країну прийшла війна, я - корінний киянин - перестав любити своє рідне місто. Його сталінний лиск здається недоречним на тлі жахливої трагедії, яка спіткала нашу країну. Я перестав розуміти своїх земляків, які продовжують підтримувати те, що діється в Україні заради нескінченного споживання, що забезпечується логістикою. Я міг би залишитися жити в США, міг виїхати в Росію, в Донецьк, де у мене багато друзів, але я повернувся до Києва, щоб змінити соормований порядок речей. Адже це моє місто, а Україна - це моя країна.

Co-founder. A screenshot from the Institute of Peace website

at various times belonged to different anarchist and marxist groups, is a known ukrainophobe, and has unconditionally supported the "separatist" side since the start of the Russian war. He was also in charge of information policy at Novorossiia and Svobodniy Donbass, two papers that are published in the occupied territories in substantial quantities. He also writes articles for them with titles like "Genocide in Horlivka." His minders in DPR are such "activists" as Serhiy Tsyplakov, a "deputy of the People's Council of the DPR" and Yevhen Orlov, the leader of the "Svoboda Donbassa civic movement." Orlov

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT PLANS OF THE INSTITUTE ARE LED BY FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER LEONID KOZHARA. HIS SPECIALTY IS EMBASSIES, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, CONSULATES AND SO ON

himself is linked to an ex-Party of Regions MP called Ghennadiy Bobkov, who has considerable influence over the situation in ORDiLO. For a long time, Rozenvayn lived in occupied Donetsk but traveled in and out of there into the rest of Ukraine without hindrance because, so far, not a single criminal case has been opened against him. Rumor has it that he is currently in the US, taking advantage of his old contacts in the trotskyite grant community.

The founders of the Peace Institute also include a number of opportunists who can always be found orbiting around "Russkiy Mir" projects where an extra kopiyyka can easily be pinched. One example is Denys Zharkikh, who was fired from the Kyiv community paper Khreshchatyk in 2007 for "lack of professionalism" according to his labor book, after which he played at being an aide to Party of the Regions deputies. Or the Vilenskiys, founders of the Arsia Academy of Intellectual Development and the Ihor Vilenskiy Center for Ecral Analysis. Or the "philanthropist" Ilya Bohomolov, founder of the supposed charitable organization called "International Medical Aid," which delivers humanitarian aid exclusively to ORDiLO.

There are also such individuals among these “peacemakers” as Denys Zhukov, whose father is a steward for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. One more board member who deserves mention is the former FM in the second Azarov Cabinet, a one-time member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of Party of the Regions, and today in the “Socialists” Party, Leonid Kozhara, a loyal footsoldier of Yanukovich’s.

WHOSE BANQUET AND WHO’S PAYING?

The Peace Institute has clearly gathered a very diverse company under its roof, from Yanukovich-era prosecutors and diplomats to turncoat leftists, old PR admen and unabashed bounders. What’s brought them all together? Clearly, the goal to set up the latest propaganda outlet, whose purpose is to indirectly influence the information flow in Ukraine. And directly, for that matter, while taking advantage of funds coming from Moscow.

The Ukrainian Week spoke with one of the representatives of this Institute who left due to an internal disagreement and shared some details about its current efforts. Funding for the Peace Institute is currently going through Sberbank Rossii, the RF state savings bank, which continues to operate freely in Ukraine. The funds come exclusively in the form of cash to personal accounts so that the law cannot link anything to the Institute itself. These funds supposedly belong to the disgraced Minister of Taxes and Revenues under Yanukovich, Oleksandr Klymenko. But the process is being managed from Russia, which still hopes to unload ORDiLO on Ukraine on its own terms: a separatist Bandustan where Party of the Regions and terrorist ganglords will rule.

The recent plans of this organization clearly designated two very “hot” propaganda dates for Russia: May 2 and May 9. May 2 is the day that Moscow’s agitprop raises again the fiction of the “Odesa massacre organized by Ukronazis.” Memorial campaigns were supposed to be held in Moscow and St. Petersburg, while the main propaganda show was to become a provocation in Odesa. According to this source, the Institute had prepared a special project called “The Wailing Wall” in Odesa, where, as the idea went, “angry Odesites” were supposed to show up, with the purpose of stoking aggression on the part of the patriotic population to demonstrate the “terrifying nazis” who wouldn’t even allow people to “honor the memory of the dead.” And this was to provide plenty of cud for Russian and pro-Russian Ukrainian television viewers to chew on.

May 9 is the key date in the modern-day religion of Russia. “The Immortal Regiment” was supposed to march through Kyiv following the traditional route from Metro Arsenalna to the Eternal Flame at Ploshcha Slavy, where, under the guise of honoring Ukrainian veterans, the main soviet-kremlinist agitprop would be rubbed in once again and every effort made to demonstrate how the “bearers of the true faith”

have been downtrodden by the “junta.” Interestingly, the source says that the lead role in these projects was played by a former scandal-ridden MP from the Opposition Bloc, Irina Berezhnaya, who became highly visible on Russian television for repeating all the clichés of Kremlin propaganda and smeared Ukraine’s Armed Forces.

Eventually, things didn’t go exactly as planned. Representatives of the Institute spent all day of May 2 in Odesa. But the police surrounded the Trade Unions’ building and Kulikovo Pole to check them for explosives after they received anonymous notifications of the mining in both venues. In Kyiv, the Immortal Regiment had a big march on May 9, with thousands of people, some clashes with the police and a bunch of TV channels filming all that.



THE PEACE INSTITUTE HAS GATHERED A DIVERSE COMPANY UNDER ITS ROOF, FROM YANUKOVYCH-ERA PROSECUTORS AND DIPLOMATS TO TURNCOAT LEFTISTS, OLD PR ADMEN AND UNABASHED BOUNDERS

One more project in the Peace Institute’s plans is a charitable campaign called “Lifeline,” to provide assistance to those living close to the frontline on both sides of the line of contact. This is a timeworn tactic favored particularly by Rinat Akhmetov: feeding the hungry people of ORDiLO in the expectation that, when Russia leaves Donbas, locals will vote as the hand that fed them dictates.

EARLY FRUIT IN THE GARDEN OF EVIL

But perhaps the most important plans of the Institute are led by former Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara. His specialty is embassies, international organizations, consulates and so on. The main goal here is to disseminate the Russian take on the war in the Donbas—and to use the image of the respectable diplomat in this striped company to legitimize the Institute. And to provide support for a legal challenge in international courts against the supposed illegality of the Anti-Terrorist Operation, protesting the April 14, 2014 Decree by the then-acting President Oleksandr Turchynov launching the ATO. The challenge has supposedly already been either filed or is about to be filed. Kozhara’s efforts appear to already be paying off in spades: quite a few European embassy and consular staff showed up at the closed event at the President-Kyivskiy Hotel.

The presence of Channel 17 along with individuals representing nearly the entire range of pro-Russian forces shows that the Kremlin has recovered from the current blows in the information arena because of the war and has decided to go on the attack, consolidating its agents within the framework of a number of NGO, charitable and media “gathering points” that are all funded by the Yanukovich “family.” The Peace Institute is clearly intended to be not just one of these but possibly the central point in this network. ■



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 buddha-bar KIEV	pizzeria • ristorante il Molino	<i>L'entrecote</i>	 LaFemme <small>АВТОМАТ КИЇВ 2002</small>	 RED DOORS <small>Red Door Project</small>	CITY·ZEN cafe & bar

Serhiy Hunko:

"We cannot issue documents to unidentified persons"

Press Officer for the State Migration Service of Ukraine spoke to *The Ukrainian Week* about foreign refugees, internally displaced persons and their status in Ukraine.

Interviewed
by Bohdan
Butkevych

Is SMSU in charge of the IDP-related issues?

— Under the current law, the Ministry of Social Policy is fully responsible for the registration and social protection of internally displaced persons, not us. SMSU does not issue certificates to IDPs either, all of this is done by social security agencies.

What about the documents? For instance, if a child was born in the occupied territory, does your agency still have to issue the documents?

— Such situation is governed by the general rules applying to all citizens of Ukraine, even though there are some specifics. When a child is born, it is registered with the Ministry of Justice, whereupon we issue the respective documents. In general, any person leaving the occupied territory of Crimea may apply to any SMSU unit in Ukraine. As for the occupied territory of Donbas, its residents should apply to any unit in the oblast where they are registered, since passport books are issued, especially for the first time, and new photographs are inserted at the place of their registered domicile. However, if they already have an IDP certificate, they should turn to an SMSU unit in the region where they are registered under the certificate.

The IDPs keep complaining about bureaucracy and ill-treatment at government agencies, including the SMSU. In your opinion, at which stage do the most problems arise?

— We are constantly in contact with the IDPs' NGOs, such as Donbas SOS, Crimea SOS, Vostok SOS, etc. Their representatives are included in our citizen's board. We meet with them and address their issues. Today, the biggest problem is the identification of the persons applying for documents or for their recovery. If a person comes from Crimea or the occupied territory of Donbas, we can't have access to a very important Form No. 1, which is a complete copy of the information from a Ukrainian citizen's passport stored in paper form in the respective SMSU unit. It is a piece of carton of A5 format with all the data, including the photographs taken upon reaching a certain age. Obviously, all these documents remained in the occupied territories, so we currently cannot have access to these materials. We try to identify people based on other doc-

uments. For example, international passports (we already have the respective electronic database), driver's licenses or any other documents or databases, even if they were issued by another body. However, in specific cases, which are not many, we cannot identify persons who carry no documents at all. Nowhere in the world, even taking into account the experience of international conflicts, has a solution been found to what to do with such people. The experience of the war in Yugoslavia, when there were very similar problems — paper-based passport records on paper carriers, and territories that did not cooperate with each other to exchange information — is also useless. In their case, people with no documents just had to wait for the cooperation between different territories to resume. Please understand that we cannot issue documents without identifying a person. This is very dangerous even in times of peace, not to mention the times of war. Anyone could take advantage of this: terrorists, spies, or killers.

Talking about the refugees. Under the law, SMSU deals with this issue exclusively. What is the current situation with the refugees, especially the political asylum seekers?

— One important point: there is no such thing as a political refugee status in Ukraine, although many people are not aware of this. We simply grant a refugee status, regardless of the reason. In 2002, we joined the UN Convention relating to the Sta-

TODAY, MOST FOREIGNERS CONSIDER UKRAINE NOT AS THEIR COUNTRY OF DESTINATION, BUT RATHER AS A TRANSIT POINT

tus of Refugees, and in 2011 the Ukrainian legislation was finally harmonized with it. Let me remind you that a refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." 1,000 to 1,500 people apply to SMSU annually to get a refugee status for various reasons, and this dynamic in the recent years has not changed significantly. However, we don't keep separate records of the criteria for seeking asylum. After all, the status is



PHOTO BY UKRINFORM

granted on an individual basis, and in many cases, several criteria of the Convention are considered at once. We also have to understand that in many cases, obtaining a refugee status is not necessary to receive the right to live in Ukraine. A person does not need one when he or she has a Ukrainian spouse or relatives in Ukraine, or if his or her grandparents were born in the territory of Ukraine.

From which countries do refugees come to Ukraine most often? And how many people with this status are in Ukraine today?

— Today Ukraine has about 2,500 people recognized as refugees. In 2015, the leaders among the countries of origin of asylum seekers were Afghanistan, followed by Syria, Somalia, Russia and, finally, Iraq. We have to understand that most foreigners do not consider Ukraine as their destination. For them, it's rather a transit point. Also, the refugee status is granted irrespectively of whether a person got to our territory legally or illegally. We have quite a lot of cases of fraud, when people, mainly from the Russian Federation, are taken to Ukraine and said that they are already in the EU.

Describe the procedure according to which your agency grants the applicants a refugee status.

— This is a multiple-stage procedure, which takes up to six months in Ukraine. By the way, in many European countries it can take up to 2 years, so we are more or less quick. First of all, persons seeking asylum have to appeal to our regional office. There, they are taken care of by the experts who conduct interviews and study their materials. Next, their cases with recommendations are forwarded to the central SMSU office, where all information is checked again. Then it is submitted to senior management, which makes the final decision.

In percentage terms, does Ukraine take more positive or negative decisions on refugees?

— On average, refugee status is granted to 10% of all applicants. Accordingly, in 90% of the cases, SMSU denies such status. Plus, let's not forget that we have one more tolerant status, that of a so-called person in need of extra protection. This is not exactly a refugee status, and it is not covered by the UN Convention, but it is similar. Let me provide an example. For instance, Syrian citizens in Ukraine are mostly granted this status. Why? Because, even though a civil war is going on in their country, there is no direct evidence that something is threatening these people according to the UN Convention criteria. Generally, some »

political forces aiming to undermine the situation in the country like to spread terrible rumors about Syria. Historically, however, Ukraine had close relations with this country since the Soviet times, when we had many Syrian students. Most Syrians who come here are such former students. They mostly come from wealthy families, know the language, have higher education and therefore can be useful for the Ukrainian society. Many of them also have mixed marriages, that is, are married to Ukrainians. What I'm trying to say is that Syrians who come to Ukraine know very well where they are going and what for. These people consider Ukraine as their country of destination. Very often, we do not grant them the refugee status, because they can obtain an immigrant status without it. Finally, Ukraine, as you understand, is not on the main geographical route along which Syrians get to the EU.

What are the rights of a person granted a refugee status?

— First of all, it is the right to permanent residence. Besides, it provides all the rights and duties of a citizen of Ukraine, except for special rights: the right to vote and to hold public office. Refugees don't get any other benefits in Ukraine. We are not the EU that can also afford social assistance to refugees. However, we understand that there are certain categories of refugees in need of social assistance at least at the stage of integrating into the society. This is why today we operate two refugee centers that can host 320 asylum seekers: one in Odesa and one in Mukacheve, Zakarpattia Oblast. These are just dormitories, which a person may leave anytime. We also sent only those who ask for it there. Those centers provide temporary accommodation for the most vulnerable categories: large families, mothers with children, children without parents and victims of torture who need adaptation. During their stay at the centers, the state provides them with food packages so that they can cook for themselves. We also take measures to integrate them in the society, and extensively coop-

erate with the relevant UN agencies, NGOs, and charitable funds. Such measures include language courses, psychological training, job fairs, etc. By the way, going back to the subject of the Syrians, today we have 12 citizens of Syria (six adults and six children) living in our centers, the rest are from other countries.

Some are spreading rumors about some secret arrangements between Ukraine and the EU on the transfer of the refugees from Europe to our territory. Is it true?

— This is completely untrue, there have never been even talks about it. First of all, it is legally impossible, because a refugee status cannot be granted to a person who arrived in our territory from a third safe country. That is, asylum should be sought in the first safe country to which a refugee arrives. Secondly, such persons would not be able to cross our border with the EU, since they have no reason to enter.

UKRAINE HAD CLOSE RELATIONS WITH SYRIA SINCE THE SOVIET TIMES, WHEN WE HAD MANY SYRIAN STUDENTS. MOST SYRIANS WHO COME HERE TODAY ARE SUCH FORMER STUDENTS, MANY OF THEM MARRIED TO UKRAINIANS

Are there any benefits to foreigners who fought as part of the Armed Forces or the National Guard of Ukraine at the front line and want to obtain Ukrainian citizenship?

— One of the reasons for obtaining Ukrainian citizenship is state interest, that is, services provided to our country. Such people can use a simplified procedure, which requires fewer documents and takes less time. The only thing that is required is an application from an executive authority to the SMSU to confirm that a person has actually done something in the state interest. In this case, we are talking about a direct application by either the Defense Minister or the Interior Minister. In fact, the SMSU can only endorse such application and forward it to the Commission on Citizenship under the President of Ukraine, which takes the final decision signed by the President. In the last year, there were six such cases. If there is no application from the Defense Ministry or the MIA, the person may just follow the usual procedure. There is one more point. The legislation has recently been amended to allow foreigners to serve under contract in the Armed Forces and the National Guard of Ukraine. Military service cards obtained by such foreigners are proof of their legal residence in Ukraine. Besides, three years of the military service under contract are now the sufficient grounds to apply for citizenship. So far, there have been no precedents of the application of this law, since it was adopted only recently. Those who were not formally registered while serving at the front line, unfortunately, are not covered by this law. ■

According to a new initiative following the change of Government, the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs is created. We have yet to see whether it will be effective. Meanwhile, a number of international organizations have been working in Ukraine since the beginning of the conflict to help IDPs deal with the consequences. "We focus on IDPs: children and the elderly, single parents with children," says Dariusz Zietyev from Terre des Hommes. "We try to give the most support to children, working with schools, showing teachers how to provide psychological support to students and their parents. We pay particular attention to children who have no parents, given them grants to pay for dorms or buy food and clothing." Andriy Vaskovych from Caritas Ukraine says that the organization's priority after the first wave of IDPs from Crimea was to help them survive: make bank cards for them and put some money on it to pay for shelter, food and clothing, or give out electronic vouchers for medicines. The organization continues to distribute help in the buffer zone along the contact line till present.

Geoff Wordley:

“It looks like the main movements of IDPs have now stopped”

Prior to his appointment in Ukraine as Head of the UNHCR Sub-Office in Dnipropetrovsk, Geoff Wordley served in conflict-affected Rwanda, Kenya, Croatia, Kosovo, South Sudan, Sudan, and Iraq among others. He spent the past year in Eastern Ukraine, supervising support for IDPs in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. Shortly before he left Ukraine in April, The Ukrainian Week spoke to Mr. Wordley about the impact of forced migration during conflicts on social and economic structures in the regions and countries where they occur, the role of UNHCR in the current crisis in Ukraine, and the problems to solve as priority issues in similar situations.

Interviewed by
Anna Korbut

What is your assessment of the displacement situation today?

– In situations like this you often see the displacement of young people. They want to move out because they have families and seek services, need schools and medical facilities. The older population is left behind as they find it much more difficult to leave the village.

That's where you begin to see a terrible social distortion: there has been a lot of damage in villages, services are practically stopped, and the population is old. These people would have had the support of younger population previously, but are left in a desperate situation without them.

The worst thing is that no matter what the government, the international community or the UN do, they will never be able to put the villages back to where they had been prior to the conflict. Once the young people have moved out and become used to the services provided in big cities, the social and transport infrastructure, they often don't move back.

This type of conflict creates a long-term social and economic problem for the country in which it is taking place. In non-government controlled areas (NGCAs), there is no economic activity worth speaking about, generating any jobs or circulating currency on which people could live. That's a very depressing economic state.

Whilst there has been no dramatic humanitarian emergency yet – in comparison to other places around the world – it could appear in the NGCAs. Certainly in terms of lack of food, but also the lack of heating next winter, as well as healthcare, supply of medicines for the population. The further down the line and the longer the economic blockade remains without moves to find political solutions, the more likely we are to see severe humanitarian hardships.

Aggravating the situation in NGCAs is that UN agencies and various NGOs have not been able to move freely there. Since July 2015, when the ques-

tion of accreditation was first raised, we have had very little access to the zone along the line of contact. And since then we've been trying to find the right formula with the de facto authorities to unlock the door and permit full UN program to be carried out there. But for the moment it's proving to be elusive.

In conclusion, I would say that I can see the advent of humanitarian crisis if the situation is allowed to go on without a strong ability for the UN to perform its functions.

The situation in the five oblasts outside the line of contact is also worth mentioning. There is no humanitarian crisis there – people have enough to eat and accommodation – but there is severe economic depression which prevents them from finding employment. Partly, this results from the lack of employment possibilities. But there are also bureaucratic hurdles. This is the area we would want to start addressing during the course of this year.

How do you expect these crises to develop further, what timeframe are we looking at? And what could be the priority steps to address the issues?

– In terms of timeframe, we've just come through winter and that's always a good part of year to test the situation in terms of the humanitarian aspect. Last winter, UNHCR had an extensive program for assisting people on both sides of the contact line. We were eventually allowed to carry out distributions which we felt were essential in Luhansk and Donetsk, and we appreciated that. We provided over \$6.5mn worth of coal, heating fuel, clothing, and some cash. There were also other inputs.

The problem is that with continued deterioration in economic situation, food may start to become scarce, and I think it is already becoming so. So we are advocating that pensions for people who are of pension age and are entitled to pension, whether displaced or not, should get it. As far as IDP benefits are concerned, the government perhaps has a legitimate concern about who claims those. But we would advocate that before undertaking ad-hoc measures to cut people off from these benefits, there should be a period of consultations with the UN. We do have expertise in terms of how to track displacements, how to register them, and how to keep a better track of who is entitled to the benefits.

You monitor the situation with IDPs not just along the contact line, but all over the country. How would you describe the dynamics in terms of numbers, settlements, compared to the beginning of the crisis?

– The UNHCR has done a pilot intention survey jointly with the Dnipropetrovsk National University »



Survived the winter. Humanitarian aid was UNHCR's priority this winter according to Geoff Wordley

looking at the possibility of running a much bigger survey in Ukraine that would look at the intentions of IDPs: what people expect – go home, under what conditions, or integrate locally?

At the moment, we don't know in detail what people intend to do. But we think we are on the brink of being able to have a more extensive survey. I very much hope that we will be able to do this with the oblast government, or even with the national government in Kyiv. It would enable better planning.

Based on the pilot we have done (only in one oblast and not necessarily representative), we believe that the majority of displaced people say they want to integrate locally. What happened since the initial displacement into Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia etc, is that the population has been shifting westward. A large group of IDPs are in Kyiv, Odesa and further west. But it looks like the main movements have now stopped. Where people are now is where they probably think they want to settle. That needs a very robust program for economic development so that we can these people can be able to get jobs. If we ask IDPs in government-controlled areas, what their main concerns are, the first one they will name is a job. The second problem is accommodation. This one is partly tied to the propyska system, as well as money. The third problem is health care. They are not obtaining a sufficient number of necessary drugs. That is particularly the case now in the NGCAs where for a number of months we've been hearing alarming stories about healthcare issues and the supply of drugs.

How do we address the needs of displaced people in terms of "durable solutions"? Start with legal aspects of how you define a displaced person. That means that we have to work with the government to look for the problems caused by the propyska system and to enable people to settle more easily.

Then, there are economic inputs. The UNHCR does not have a mandate for these things. This as-

pect needs a very broad, almost Marshall-plan type of thinking. In similar conflicts in the past, the international community provided large multi-donor trust funds with billions of dollars to help regenerate economy somewhat. But the starting point in getting to that kind of financial injection is security. And that means that political solution is needed first. I'm hopeful that if a political solution did come, the international community would be more than prepared to step in with this sort of financing and encouragement of investment from private investors.

What are the models Ukraine can use to find solutions to the current situation from previous conflicts elsewhere?

– First of all, I have a good deal of respect for Ukraine as a whole. At the level of civil society, there has been a remarkable response to the initial displacements. Deep within society there was desire to assist these people and many community-based or national NGOs sprung up to address that. I've not seen anything like that anywhere in the places I've been to.

At the same time, I have a great deal of respect for the Ukrainian government. They have been paying these allowances to IDPs. I'm trying to think of other cases where such benefits were paid by the government and I can't, apart perhaps for former Yugoslavia. Last year the total bill for IDP benefits was something around UAH 3bn. It's not small money. And clearly there is frustration within the Administration that there can be fraud going on, so checking is legitimate. Keeping track of displacement is a notoriously difficult task for any government. Very advanced countries have had problems with that. The international community, in particular the UNHCR, should engage more with Ukraine's government to look and exchange ideas on how to track displaced persons in order to understand the dynamics of



"DURABLE SOLUTIONS" FOR THE DISPLACED INCLUDE ECONOMIC INPUTS. THIS ASPECT NEEDS A VERY BROAD, ALMOST MARSHALL-PLAN TYPE OF THINKING

the displacement and enable planning, but also to better support them. Certainly one solution to the tracking/database problem would be more engagement with the UNHCR and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). These organizations have the ability, a long reach to experts who know how to run these things and how to advise governments.

What specifically has the UNHCR been doing, and what is your focus this year?

– Following the initial displacements in 2014, UNHCR focused on providing basic humanitarian assistance mostly in the form of domestic items such as blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets and even plastic sheets to assist people still living in damaged houses. That quickly expanded to include cash based assistance. We had cash distribution pro-

Geoff Wordley was educated at Sudbury Grammar School, Suffolk, Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and the French Naval Staff College, Ecole Militaire, Paris. He joined the Royal Navy at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth in September 1972 and from 1975 spent the next eighteen years serving in a variety of ships, submarines and shore establishments. He specialized in logistics and administration. In 1994, Mr. Wordley was recruited by the UN Department of Peacekeeping in Rwanda (UNAMIR). After that he joined the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ngozi, Burundi, during the refugee crisis caused by the Rwandan civil war. His appointments in UNHCR included further service in Kenya, Croatia in the aftermath of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, Guinea, Kosovo, Macedonia, Geneva, Chad, Pakistan, South Sudan, West Africa, Ethiopia, Sudan, Iraq.

grams reaching about 12,000 families over time and worth about \$4-5mn.

Also, last year the UNHCR focused increasingly on supporting and capacity building of the emergent civil society. We had two cash distributions in the latter half of the year and worked with many national NGOs, seven of which we were able to fund some activities. The organisations have become stronger as a result. We were also able to carry-out over twenty quick-impact projects throughout the east including in the ATO, aimed as the title suggests at assisting the displaced and host communities, at the community level. The focus of this work is guided by the results of what we would call “Protection monitoring” conducted in concert with our partners. In it, we try to measure the status of the population and adjust our own interventions and advise other members of the UN and NGO community on the gaps needing to be addressed by humanitarian assistance.

During 2016 we will be focusing more towards helping people find longer-term solutions to their displacement, while withdrawing humanitarian aid in government-controlled areas somewhat. That’s why I mentioned propyska – we want to become more engaged with the government in looking for ways of enabling people to settle where they want. Housing and property is another area where we’d like to become involved. On the government-controlled side, we’re trying to become a bit more engaged in the legal support to the population. We are working with the Right to Protection, the Ukrainian national NGO, and have a very extensive monitoring and legal assistance network which is now being set up throughout not just eastern Ukraine but other areas of Ukraine as well to assist the displaced in making sure that they can get access to their rights – including benefits, compensation for damage etc.

In NGCs along the contact line the situation is still so fluid that we will have to continue to engage in basic humanitarian assistance from which little comes out. It’s very short-term assistance and there is very little long-term thinking behind it. So, we have this two-tier system of assistance planned for this year.

What we’d like to do more is work directly with NGOs. We have already signed seven partnership agreements which we funded with national NGOs. This has helped build them up into much more confident organizations. To name a few, these are Stantsia Kharkiv, Slavic Heart in Sviatohirsk, Mariupol Youth League, City Aid Center in Zaporizhzhia... All these NGOs were

addressing the needs of the displaced by setting up community centers where people could come to look for assistance. Then the organizations have been trying to obtain through donations – much of that through local people. Now they are working with us. We can see that they could become involved in distributing assistance through cash, directly to the most vulnerable of the displaced, which we felt had a lot of impact previously. If we had more funding, then we would be able to extend that program. Also, I think that investing into sustainable development of civil society is one of the key aspects. At some stage, as the conflict terminates, and when it does international funding will dry up. And these organizations have a really important role to play in Ukrainian society whether or not there is conflict, in terms of providing a social safety net for people who would otherwise fall through.

One problem with charity and benefits is that these do not create the source of sustainable economic development. With the beginning of the Maidan, then the conflict, the readiness to donate and available funds for that amongst common people and businesses were far higher than they are now. What are ways to develop sustainable safety net for displaced people? Especially in a strained economy that Ukraine is?

IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS YOU OFTEN SEE THE DISPLACEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE. THAT’S WHERE A TERRIBLE SOCIAL DISTORTION BEGINS

– Humanitarian assistance does tend to come in the forms of handouts distributed for free. Over time, that has a negative effect because it develops dependency. We’ve seen that in every operation I’ve been in, particularly where refugee operations are concerned. In protracted situations refugees become dependent on international assistance. That’s very difficult to exit and needs some strategic thinking on the part of the UN and the government together and now.

But I would say that civil society and national NGOs could first of all continue to provide great support for the government. It’s very cost effective to provide social support through these NGOs rather than directly through the government. If I think of Britain, the government there does fund some charity. They recognize that they don’t want to engage in providing some of these services directly, or that the NGO can be much better positioned to providing these services. Besides, everything from drug addiction to family support doesn’t have to be done by the government, yet the government does have a role in funding them. In Britain these sectors have been developed since Victorian times when recognition of poverty took place, and the government understood that civil society has an important role to play.

Another thing NGOs can achieve in terms of sustainable funding is through reaching out to Ukraine’s diaspora. Diasporas in most countries are very interested in what’s going on in their home country. And they are generally better-off compared to people in their home countries. So, links between these NGOs and diaspora could be very beneficial. ■

An unwelcome host

Maksym Butkevych, co-founder and project coordinator, No Borders NGO

Ukraine's place in modern migration

When you read, hear or watch media reports on migrants and asylum seekers in Ukraine, you have an impression of being in two worlds at the same time, that seem to be mirror images of one another. In one, migrants and refugees flow to Ukraine quietly to eventually outnumber Ukraine's population, impose their values, infect with their exotic diseases, and increase crime rates. This world exists on flickering TV screens, some websites, and in the speeches of politicians, professional xenophobes and those whom they managed to confuse. In this world, Ukraine is a destination for strangers trying by hook or by crook to get into its territory and gain a foothold here as refugees, economic migrants, or otherwise. This picture is best described by the title of a program once aired by a popular TV channel: "They come like flies to honey."

There is also another world that exists in statistics, analytical surveys, research, conclusions based on monitoring visits and human rights reports. In this world, Ukraine is a country of origin, rather than a destination for migrants. From Ukraine, people go for temporary labor migration to Russia (even today), or for a longer periods westward. The number of Ukrainian migrant workers is not small, especially compared to the number of migrants in Ukraine. Ukrainian citizens are requesting refugee status or simply fleeing the war not only inside Ukraine, but also abroad. The number of these people is growing and is tentatively estimated at one million, which is far more than the number of those ever granted the official refugee status in Ukraine. The lives of both foreigners and a huge number of Ukrainian internal migrants are to this day complicated by the Soviet concept of *propyska*, or "registered domicile". It often becomes an obstacle to obtaining a legal status or even citizenship of Ukraine. Meanwhile, getting a refugee status here is uncertain and unlikely, like winning a lottery. Compared to Ukraine's system, the ones in the EU seem logical and regulated.

Between these two mirror worlds, one is more familiar to the general public and dictates a simple agenda: close the doors, defend ourselves, and restrict or stop immigration to Ukraine altogether, as well as the attempts of foreigners to find asylum from persecution or war in Ukraine. The second world covers a more varied and specific range of issues: develop strategies and make decisions that would guarantee the rights of Ukrainian migrant workers and our fellow citizens staying abroad for other reasons; replace the *propyska* regime with a modern and flexible registration system; change legislation in order to allow foreign nationals to work in Ukraine for the country's benefit without red tape obstacles; and, finally, provide adequate support to IDPs and improve the dysfunctional protection system for refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine.

When the concept of the former prevails, it poses a threat to the second echelon of issues, like it does in any environment where xenophobia, fear and emotions hinder the development and implementation of strategies based on a rational analysis. However, there is still some progress in Ukraine. The proof is the Sixth Progress Report on the Implementation by Ukraine of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation (VLAP). Published in December 2015, it was the last of the six reports and provided grounds to assert that Ukraine has met all VLAP requirements, which means that the requirements of VLAP's Block 2 (integrated border management, migration management, asylum) have also been met. Even if such conclusion is partly political, the report still lists specific solutions which Ukraine has implemented. These cannot be overlooked.

The first of these reports dates back to 2011, and the third one was published in November 2013. At that time, biometric IDs were the fiefdom of corrupt politicians and businessmen, the concept of "fighting terrorism" was very different from what it entails today, and "border management" did not entail a large part of Ukraine's border that the country does not control today, nor illegal discriminatory restrictions on other sections of the border introduced today. A lot has changed since, and new challenges are the most obvious in the area of migration and asylum.



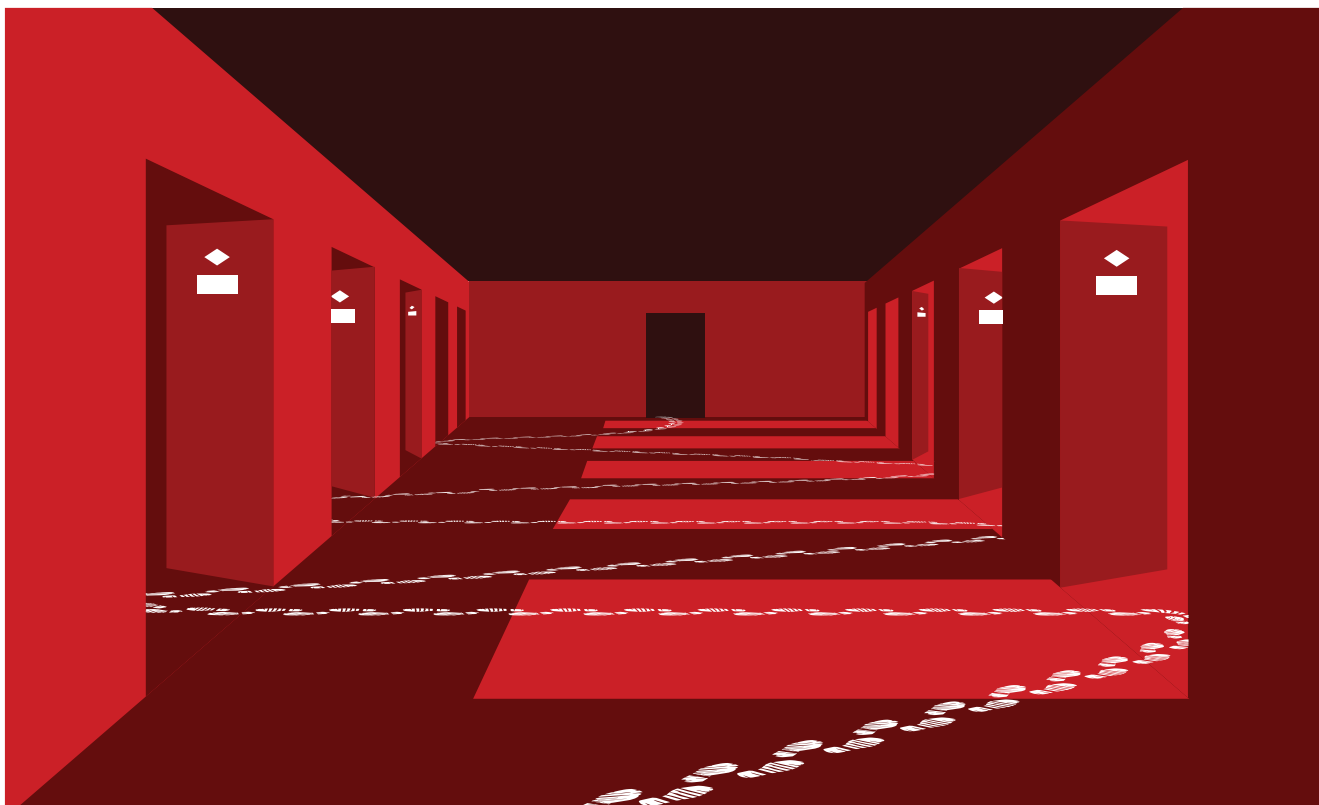
THE LIVES OF BOTH FOREIGNERS AND A HUGE NUMBER OF UKRAINIAN INTERNAL MIGRANTS ARE FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE SOVIET CONCEPT OF PROPYSKA

There have been no major legislative changes in this field, with the exception of some government regulations and amendments to laws. This means that the process of granting asylum or residence permits is governed by the same laws as before the current war. This alone means that they do not meet the demands of the situation today.

For example, the main reason for seeking asylum in Ukraine in 2013 for foreign citizens of FSU countries was just to get a legal safeguard against immediate deportation. On the whole, 1,310 people asked for a refugee status or other protection that year, and 216 people were granted it.

In 2015, Ukraine still had the image of a young post-revolutionary democratic republic, almost the embodiment of all aspirations of democratic activists from all over the former Soviet Union. Despite the fact that the war and occupation make Ukraine not too attractive a destination, the total of 1,443 persons asked for asylum in Ukraine in 2015, and 167 were granted it.

Those who were denied protection included activists from Russia. Some of them were persecuted for opposing



Putin's regime, others for demanding democracy and fair elections in Russia. Some took part in Maidan protests, and almost all of them protested against Russian aggression in Ukraine. No wonder that they hoped – in vain – to receive some solidarity and from our country. Their disappointment was especially bitter when Ukrainian state bodies started using arguments like “it is impossible that Russia prosecutes for political views: it is a democratic state governed by the rule of law” to justify their negative decisions on asylum seekers. Some Russians were eventually granted shelter, which would have been impossible in the times of ex-president Viktor Yanukovich. Yet, in many aspects the old system remains unchanged. This system is appropriate for an authoritarian regime that is reluctant to give refuge to active dissenters and damage its relations with authoritarian neighbors, but not for a democratic country that is taking an active stand on civil rights and liberties and meeting its international commitments.

To reform the system, a number of steps need to be taken: from immediate solutions, such as changing the unrealistically short terms for filing asylum applications or for appealing denials, and simplifying unnecessary bureaucratic procedure for obtaining work permits, to the actual and effective changes, such as ensuring the basic conditions for the newly arrived, providing guarantees to those coming to the border to ask for asylum, and establishing an independent body for appeals against denials.

Activists who work in the refugee rights field aimed at accomplishing all these goals by February 2014. So far, however, even the immediate goals are achieved in the one step forward and two steps backward pace.

The situation is worse for Russian and Belarusian citizens who arrived to defend Ukraine at the frontline. They face persecution at home but aren't allowed to

stay in Ukraine after their short-term residence permit expires. Those of them who have not committed any criminal offenses either at home or in Ukraine hoped to get at least a refugee status or a temporary residence permit, if not Ukrainian citizenship. But Ukrainian laws, as mentioned above, date back to the pre-war times and do not provide any grounds for granting permit or citizenship to such people, while the State Migration Service of Ukraine denies them a refugee status. Despite the numerous promises to resolve the situation given by politicians, including President Poroshenko, Ukraine still shows its ingratitude to those who fought for it, let alone refugees from more distant lands. Human rights organizations are again recording more frequent denials of asylum to Syrian refugees, even though this is unacceptable in view of the current situation in Syria, according to the Right to Protection Charitable Foundation, an NGO focused on legal and other assistance to IDPs and refugees.

Some justify this inadequate protection of refugees in Ukraine by the need to support our own IDPs from Crimea and the East. However, this support so far is limited to cutting their social benefits, restricting their rights and having no strategy of integrating them in local communities.

Finally, in the foreseeable future, Ukraine would not have to defend itself against the hypothetical migrant invasion. Unfortunately, it is not on the agenda. Unfortunately, because the country involved in an armed conflict, partly occupied and undergoing an economic crisis, with no decent paying jobs or social welfare system, with the few available social services being cut, and with no independent judiciary system, is an unattractive destination. When it becomes attractive, it would mean that things for Ukraine have finally taken a turn for the better. ■

Creativity and the town

Oleksandr Stukalo

Locals in the town of 13,000 in Northern Ukraine upgrade library, build parks for children and encourage community to grow culturally



Devoid of Soviet nostalgia. The local monument to Lenin was demolished in the town over 20 years ago. The popular ideology instead is volunteer activism

Ukrainians don't know their own country well enough. Each time they get a chance, they are off to see other lands, where they swim, tan, and take pictures of the landmarks. Then they write travel guides and share experiences and photo albums. Yet, tourist guidebooks often warn that sightseeing in any country's capital and along the major routes is good enough, but way too boring. Off the beaten roads of civilization is where adventure starts. Go to the countryside to find more tastes, colors and happiness. There you can find sincere and friendly people who will not try to make money on you.

The same rule applies to Ukraine: the most fun is not necessarily in the large cities.

Little is known in Kyiv about the culture of rayon, or county capitals – often towns of several dozen thousand people. The periphery is automatically considered to be of lesser value and lower quality. Often contributing to these stereotypes are the media: events and objects perceived in magazines and on TV are automatically perceived as significant, and therefore important. But if no one talks about you, you are regarded as not worthy of being talked about.

If we try to rank Ukrainian regions based on the mentions of cultural and art events there in the nationwide media, we will find leaders and outsiders. Topping the list will be "festival tourism" regions, while agrarian and mining regions, where most people think in terms of annual cycles rather than music or fashion, will naturally drag behind. Chernihiv Oblast will definitely not be among the leaders in the cultural rankings. The cliché image of it is of the land of forests and potatoes, not of books and music. Yet, like many other places in Ukraine, it the key cultural driver of modern Ukraine, the volunteer movement, pops up in the most unexpected places. Seventy kilometers northeast of Chernihiv, the town of Koryukivka is hid-

den in aboriginal forests. Founded in the 17th century, this agrarian town is little known outside of the oblast. In 1943, it was burned to the ground in two days. About 7,000 local residents perished. This tragedy is not widely known. It was silenced for a long time, and Koryukivka residents have their own version of the events, which is at odds with the official Soviet history. According to them, when police goons and Germans destroyed the town, a large partisan unit was hiding nearby, but did not intervene because the expected "people's wrath" after the fire was more important than saving Koryukivka. This may be the reason why there are far fewer Soviet sympathizers there than in the neighboring town of Schors. The Lenin statue in Koryukivka (again unlike in Schors) disappeared long ago: the bronze leader was stolen in the late 1980s or early 1990s, and has not been seen since. Numerous Ukrainian flags can be found on the town's streets, residents coordinate their efforts through social networks to support the army and Ukrainian prisoners in Russia, and the local library has a corner dedicated to the ATO, the anti-terrorist operation. Local enthusiasts Volodymyr Onischuk and Oleksandr Havryush have headed the NGO Alternatyva for five years now, and it seems to be the main "agent of change" in town. Apart from that, Oleksandr also continues the family tradition, working together with his father at the family business, "Havryush and Sons." He has three degrees. The first one was earned at a seminary (he comes from a Baptist family). His second degree is in teaching. His third degree is in economics, and he obtained it after realizing that he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. After a short-lived career of a teacher in a rayon center the young man accepted his father's offer to join his home cooking and baking business. The Havryushs' enterprise was launched in the early 2000s, but it became a family business only



Modernization. Activists have turned the mothballed children's library into a modern art center

when Oleksandr and his wife settled in Koryukivka and began helping his father. Apart from the Havryush family, there were no other bakers in town. First, they sold all kinds of cookery in family shops, but when the first supermarkets came to town, it became clear that they needed to reorganize to stay in business. The family started baking bread.

Apart from the family baked bread, the "Havryush and Sons" shop offers something unusual: its premises are styled in the spirit of urban Koryukivka of the early 20th century. As you walk down the corridor, you pass one room, then another, and find yourself surrounded by artifacts. Old family photos on the walls, a retro telephone, a typewriter, a table, and a record player – everything is modest but elegant. A guestbook and a coffee machine can be found on the counter. Half of the pages in the guestbook are filled with comments from visitors.

"The style of this room is the result of my love for the 1920s and for literature, in particular, Valerian Pidmohylny," Oleksandr says. "At some point I realized that an average person would know more about rural Ukraine at the beginning of the century than about Ukrainian towns. Our country is mostly associated with peasants. I decided to change this perception. It was not easy, though. I wanted to show urban artifacts, but they are hard to find. We found a radio-gramophone at home, fixed it, and now it plays music. We found photos of the old town in the museum, but very little has been preserved, because after the 1943 tragedy Koryukivka was a taboo in the Soviet times. Some people brought old suitcases and phones. Not exactly from the 1920s, but at least something old. We used everything we could find. Besides, I decided to research my family history. I was inspired by Valery Shevchuk's novel *Tini znykomi* (Vanishing shadows). We found some old photos of parents and grandparents. We also managed to get from the Security Bureau of Ukraine, the successor of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic's branch of the Soviet KGB, the file on my great-grandfather, who had been persecuted for his faith. In this room, the urban atmosphere of the 1920s is mixed with the history of four generations of the Havryush family. All our guests say they saw nothing of the kind in rayon towns. The locals are generally not very proud of this, besides, we don't yet have the tradition of family visits to coffee shops. But I believe that conditions should be created for those who could or would be willing to develop culturally. This applies to the room, the coffee shop, and the small library in it to read at lunch."

Oleksandr Havryush is assisted by his longtime friend and fellow student Volodymyr Onischuk, who came to Koryukivka at his invitation and stayed there to live and to develop cultural initiatives. After several attempts to forge his path in teaching or catering, Volodymyr realized that his realm was social activities. After setting up the Alternatyva NGO in 2011, Onischuk with other activists launched the first project the following year: building a children's playground. The authorities and the community, Volodymyr says, engaged in a joint effort for a common cause, probably for the first time.

"Of course, the officials did not believe that we, a local youth organization, could make something happen. We bought sealed boxes for donations, installed them



No room for periphery boredom. The locals arrange events that appeal to the oldest and the youngest in town

and collected about 20,000 hryvnia over two summer months. The playground project became a reality," Onischuk says.

By the way, today Alternatyva plans to build a skateboarding park in Koryukivka, and has already found the funds. After the first successful project, many more followed: opening a renovated children and youth club, cleaning local parks, and buying children's books for libraries with the funds collected by Christmas performances organized by Alternatyva.

"The Nativity performance is not one of the local traditions, but it was accepted with enthusiasm," Volodymyr says. "For the play, we chose a canonical 18th century script: the arrival of the three kings to the infant Jesus, Herod's attempt to find the newborn, the massacre of the innocents and the punishment by Death. The performance included carol singing and generous congratulations. We performed at the local library, at the Mayak newspaper, in hospitals, and in village schools. In October 2014, at the same library, the Alternatyva activists met with the actors of Chernihiv Youth Theater. The project of the Union of Ukrainian Youth and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was presented: a family theater performance of *Pid Dakhom* (Under the Roof). Both adults and children play in our drama productions, and everyone can try different roles. We put on our first performance at Christmas, and Easter is next. Jointly with NED, we are implementing our current project Bookitoria: we will transform the reading room of the rayon children's library into an art space, because the institutions that lag behind their times are simply doomed today. We want to transform the antiquated library into a lecture hall, an art studio or a small auditorium, to put up new wallpaper, new lighting, and upgrade the premises."

Volodymyr and Oleksandr are popular in the town, and the events they organize attract a lot of people (which the author of these lines could see at first hand). The grownups can go listen to guests at the library, which will soon become Bookitoria, while children can make themselves comfortable at the new computers (they don't necessarily play games, some search for something online or read). One good thing about creating initiatives in small towns: you immediately become a star, and don't have to spend on advertising. ■



The battle for historical moment

Ihor Losiev

The capacity of a community to maintain an awareness of the image of its past that brings up strong emotions over a long historical period is what we call national memory. Of course, national memory is no mere projection of the past: it is extraordinarily tightly intertwined with the present and the future of people who are joined through common historical memories.

In fact, this kind of association is one of the most important factors in the internal consolidation of a nation, because differing attitudes towards the historic path of development of a nation work against unity. Undoubtedly, it's possible to have different viewpoints on national heritage in any society, but what is important is to have a critical mass of those who support the mainstream national memory.

Where a more-or-less equal proportion of people in a society maintain opposed concepts of the nation's history, broad-based discussion of such a controversial topic is often simply avoided. For example, in Spain, many people to this day strongly favor different sides in the Civil War—Francisco Franco's right-wing fascists and the leftist republican camp. In the spirit of reconciliation, whose main principles were laid out in a document known as the Moncloa Pact, the Government of Spain has been trying its best to ensure that these two groups of Spaniards do not enter into an ideological confrontation by avoiding overly strong and large-scale abstract debates while neither persecuting nor prohibiting either position. To ensure this kind of consensus, however external and formal, Generalissimo Franco, although he was a dictator, himself had an enormous pantheon built in honor of the dead on both sides of the devastating conflict in 1936-1939. It was a way of acknowledging the need for a national truce.

Still, there are no universal approaches to this kind of reconciliation, and no policy of national memory as such. Every country and each nation has to walk its own pathway to consciousness of the past and the formation of an acceptable interpretation of historical events. Someone else's experience is of only relative and limited help.

One way or another, historical memory that is accepted and supported by the majority of a country's people fosters consensus about the past, which, in turn, almost guarantees consensus about the future. For this reason, the liberal-humanists who are "for everything good and against everything evil" and naively call for leaving history alone and consolidating the nation exclusively around current issues offer little more than wishful thinking that is very hard to make real. In fact, the experience of many traumatized countries shows that a nation cannot move ahead without an open and honest accounting of its past.

Would Germany's socio-economic development and democracy have been possible without the necessary level of unity in German society in its stance

towards the Nazi era? The point is that a common view of history makes the formation of a common vision of the country's further development infinitely easier, while disputes over the past quite often turn out to be disputes over the present and future as well. Nations look at their past to see their tomorrows. It's not about antiquity but about memories of the future, so to speak.

A policy of national memory is one way to become conscious of the historical heritage of the nation as a factor in contemporary civic and political processes. The concept of "leaving history alone", apart from brief periods of the opposite, was tried out in Ukraine for nearly 20 years, but everything that people tried to ignore, to not notice, has now floated to the top, as might have been expected, and is demanding resolution: Moscow's totalitarian regime in Ukraine, the imperial "denationization" of Ukrainians, the puppet republic that was the Ukrainian SSR and the pseudo-elite that emerged from it—which some journalists prefer to call a lowlife elite—, russification and its consequences, attitudes towards OUN and the UPA, to communism and nazism, interpretations of Russia's influence in Ukraine since 1991, the cult of the "Great Patriotic War," and so on.

THE LOSS OF CRIMEA AND PART OF DONBAS IS THE RESULT OF THE TRIUMPH OF SOVIET-RUSSIAN HISTORICAL MEMORY OVER UKRAINIAN HISTORICAL MEMORY

Still, despite the reluctance of Ukraine's current leadership to resolve the painful issue of national memory, this issue has been the subject of intense dispute the entire time since Ukraine declared independence. We only have to recall how fiercely the Communist Party of Ukraine and other pro-Russian political forces resisted anything that was connected with remembering the Holodomor, because any memory of this genocide would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for them to continue to collaborate, given that it showed the true genesis of those forces and their role in carrying out massive terrorism against Ukrainians. The party bosses understood perfectly well that the more people memorialized the Holodomor and other "achievements" of communist actors, the issue of historical and po-



litical responsibility would be raised sooner or later and the party that emerged in the summer of 1918 in Moscow would be banned. Of course, when it was useful, CPU leaders would declare themselves a new, original force, rather than an heir of the Communist Bolshevik Party of the Soviet Union. And when it was convenient, they would underscore this heritage in every possible way and promote it.

It is absolutely no coincidence that all those years, local pro-Russian officials in eastern and southern Ukraine—of course, not just there, but most actively in those regions—desperately fought to preserve its pantheon of soviet ideological gods, not because of their great love of the arts, but in preparation for the Southeast to be under Putin, or whoever was running Russia at that point. That included not allowing Ukrainian cultural influence in any way, shape or form on those territories. In Sevastopol, for instance, the head of the municipal administration, appointed by President Kuchma, personally forbade the building of a church belonging to the Kyiv Patriarchate—and so none was ever built.

In other words, they were determined to keep Russian-Soviet historical memory intact by not permitting any Ukrainian alternative. And so in many areas of Ukraine, a cult of Russian arms, its all-encompassing “victories,” a cult of Russian and soviet heroes, and billboard esthetics dominated. At the same time, it was noticeable that there was a very careful rejection of any attempts to more-or-less thoroughly and deeply analyze these “accomplishments” and military “achievements.” Incidentally, southern Ukraine, despite its hordes of monuments and names in honor of all kinds of Suvorovs, Potemkins, Kutuzovs, Catherines, and Peters, there are very few monuments to the heroes of Kozak Ukraine who were closely tied to the history of the region.

For instance, even when it was still under Ukraine, Sevastopol had a monument erected to

Admiral Klochakov, who was supposedly the first to lead his squadron into what would be Akhtiarsk Bay in the future city, yet there’s no mention of the Kozak Colonel and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy graduate Sydor Biliy, who took the Dnipro flotilla into the bay of the future city of Sevastopol even earlier than the Russian Admiral. While it was part of Ukraine, Sevastopol erected a monument to Catherine the Great, although the real founder of the city was not the German Empress of Russia but the Rear Admiral of the Russian fleet, Scotsman Thomas MacKenzie, whom no one seems to remember. It seems that Ukrainians were not the only victims of Russian politicized historical memory...

What’s more, this policy in eastern and southern Ukraine has continued the entire period of Ukraine’s supposed independence, and it’s not entirely clear that it has stopped today. We only need to recall attempts to rename Kirovohrad Yelysavetgrad after the Empress Elizabeth.

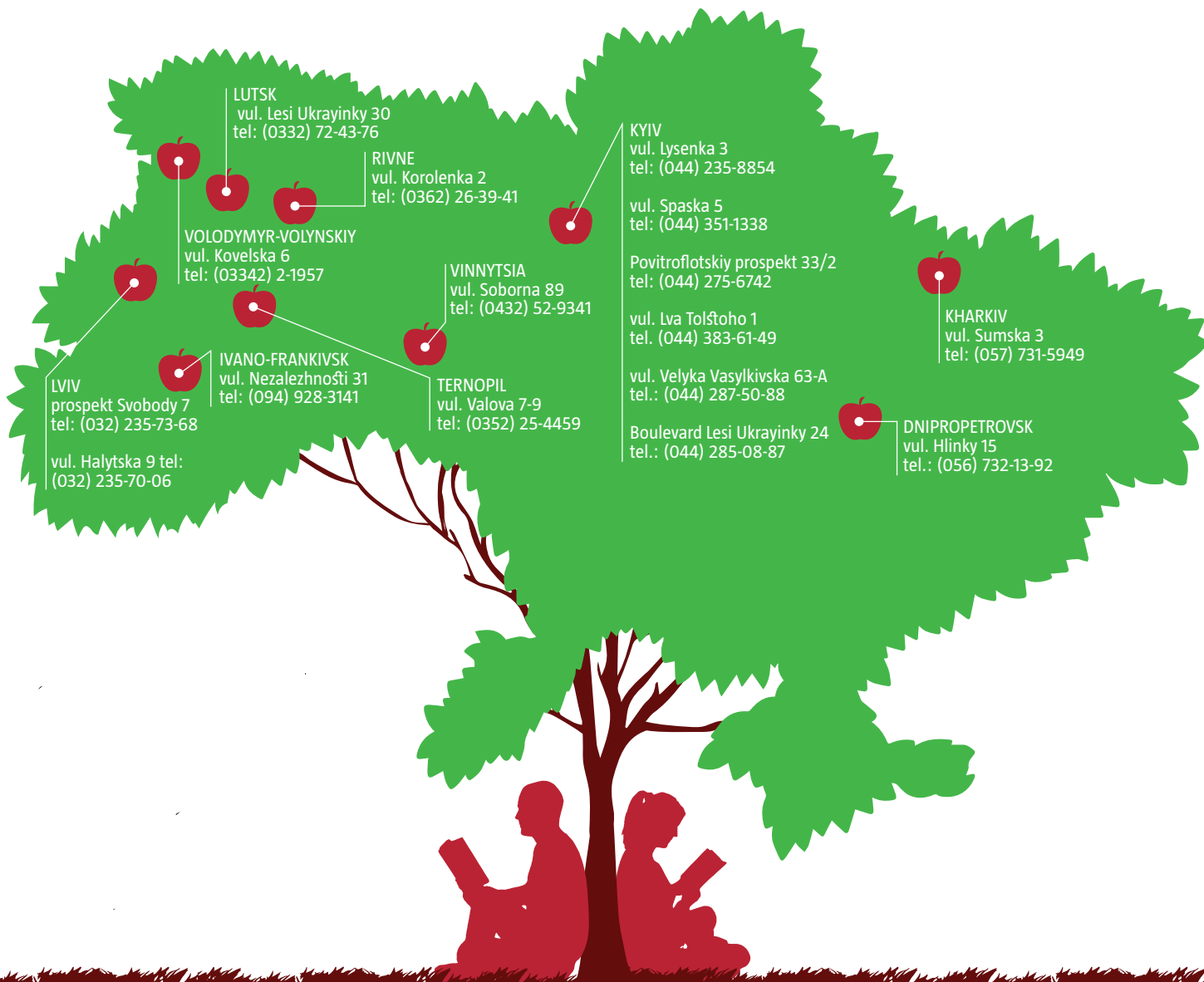
In contrast to Ukraine itself, pro-Russian forces have quite effectively made use of the nearly 25 years of effective independence and lack of control—and sometimes even open indulgence—provided to them by the leadership in Kyiv. These forces applied their soviet agitprop skills and enriched them with new Russian techniques. Lots of music, slogans, drums and fanfare, hyperpatriotic verses, the exploitation of lingering negative attitudes towards the US and NATO, and controversial tsarist-chekist romance—“feed the masses”—, created an ideological compote that the courteous neutrality of official Kyiv allowed to be fed to the *hoi polloi* in southeastern Ukraine for so long.

After events in 2014, the confrontation between the two models of historical memory—the patriotic nation-building and the communist-imperialist—intensified sharply and, despite the specific situation with the Russian war in Ukraine, it’s early to say whether the former has overcome the latter ideology. The opponent continues to resist and sometimes even goes on the attack. Lately, the epicenter of this confrontation has shown up on the Inter channel, which is trying to consolidate all those elements in Ukrainian society that are disgruntled with the rejection of communist names and, therefore, the law on decommunization. With this purpose in mind, Inter is proposing that all those who oppose renaming places, as the law requires, to join the site polk.inter.ua—“polk” meaning a military company—, which address appears on the Inter screen on a regular basis with the predictable slogans. On some channels that are nominally Ukrainian, Russian and pro-Russian management dominates.

Those in power in Ukraine today need to begin to bring order to this arena, otherwise this task will be taken on by civic activists using direct action. The confrontation of the two systems of national memory is a battle for the future of Ukraine, for its very existence, and the state should not make the mistake of maintaining a position of phony neutrality by keeping itself equidistant from the two sides in this battle. This is the position that has been taken by every government in Ukraine for a quarter-century now and today we see the direct results of that... ■



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Love, pride and class prejudice

Ярина Цимбал

The authors, the readers and the anti- bourgeois persecutors of romance novels in the 1920s

In the 1920s, Ukrainian readers enthusiastically wrote to authors, because there were no other ways to communicate with their favourite writers. The authors themselves encouraged this. For example, Valeryan Polishchuk and Oleksa Vlyzko even indicated their home addresses for feedback in their books. It was a kind of measure of success: how many people reply and whether they have praise or criticism.

Vasyl Mynko was literally bombarded with letters after the release of his story *Belladonna*. Fair female readers reacted to his book roughly the same way that their modern-day equivalents do to Jane Austen: "I read *Belladonna* and couldn't sleep all night for crying..." Another time he was asked on a date. One passionate admirer wrote, "I will wait for you at five o'clock at the Central Post Office next to window 3. I will be wearing a green hat with *Belladonna* under my arm." Men wrote to him too, "Dear author Mynko. Where can I buy your book? I've been around all the bookshops in Poltava and everywhere they say that it's sold out." The joy and compliments melted the 26-year-old author's heart.

The secret of his success was the genre. Romances were incredibly popular in the 1920s, as is confirmed by both the readership and circulation figures. At that time, no one knew this literary term or its colloquial meaning of "love affair", while critics branded such works petty bourgeois, vulgar, mundane and even sexual literature. Reviewers did not spare paper and ink for them. Oles Donchenko's *Golden Spider*, Vasyl Mynko's *Belladonna* and Hordiy Brasiuk's *Donna Anna* gave rise to dozens of comments, reviews and remarks, not to mention public debates that were never recorded.

ABOUT LOVE ONCE AGAIN

The new Ukrainian Soviet literature sought a "great novel", and when Valeryan Pidmohylny's *City, Illness* by Yevhen Pluzhnyk, Oles Donchenko's *Golden Spider*, *Harmony and the Pigsty* by Borys Tenet and Viktor Domontovych's *Little Girl with a Little Bear* came out at the same time in 1928, critics were at a loss. Where were the philosophical and ideological conflicts? Where were the images of proletarians? Where was the industrial subject matter?

Instead, an age-old and always relevant issue was troubling the young and old, men and women, Bolsheviks and non-party members. One critic wrote accusingly, "Mynko elaborates primarily and almost exclusively only one side of life – the relationship between women and men". At this time, well-known theatre critic Isaac Turkeltaub was attracting large audiences to a lecture course entitled *Marriage and Free Love*. The programme of these lectures was like a cheat sheet

for the contemporary writer: take any topic and write a novel on it.

For many, a new life was starting in the 1920s, and no one knew what to take from the old one and what should be built from scratch. Marxist and feminist Olexandra Kollontai did not take reject the idea of love, but insistently developed a concept of a new woman – an independent personality whose interests are not confined to Kinder, Küche, Kirche, that is to say to the family, home and religion. The programme of Turkeltaub's lectures also covered many sore points of the time and even tried to identify the relationship between economics and sex. Admittedly, many of these issues have still not resolved. Here are just some of the most interesting ones: the essence of love; economics and the issue of sex; the family and marriage as an institution of oppression; the sexual crisis; forms of marital interaction (marriage, prostitution and free love); sex and class; new women of the bourgeoisie (the single woman, the fighting woman); the revolution and new morality; Soviet power and the problem of sex (a new Family Code); love and the working class; communism, love and the sexual crisis; social reforms and the potency of love; the ideal of "great love" and exhaustion with the past; monogamy or polygamy, free love or marriage?

The Civil War died down, a peaceful way of life took hold and a new economic policy was introduced; these issues inevitably cropped up on the pages of 1920s romance novels.

To the Young Communist – with an anxious love

This unpretentious and unromantic dedication opens Borys Tenet's 1928 novel *Harmony and the Pigsty*. The main character Kateryna Lasko fights tooth and nail with the pigsty – the old way of life, its backwards and hypocritical moral code, the inequality of men and women in society, the quagmire of stagnation. She is a member of the Young Communist League, as is everyone else around her, but she is alone in her struggle. Kateryna pushes away a man she loves, because he is not ready for the harmony that she sees and belongs to the pigsty: "While there is a struggle, there is movement; while there is movement, there is nothing to be afraid of."

That's why I don't want to be yours after all, Mykhailo, because love quickly fades, calms down and dies out.

I want to love in a way that will set the world on fire... Will you be able to do that, without deliberation? Nowadays, everyone in love lives through their brain, not the love itself."

There's your ideal of "great love" and of marriage and the family as institutions of oppression, especially for women. The woman is looking for new relationships and harmony, but men do not conform to her



Oles
Donchenko



Vasyl
Mynko



Petro
Vanchenko



Hordiy
Brasiuk



The cover of Universalny Journal (#6, 1929), featured the painting by Ivan Padalko. The issue itself carried the following editorial commentary:

"An error occurred on the cover of this issue of Universalny Journal as result of editorial sloppiness: a boy embraces a girl! This ideologically loose action is taking place against the backdrop of our capital with its smoking pipes and radio towers, to the powerful industrial rhythm of construction. The boy looks like a proletarian element. As to the girl, we don't take upon ourselves to act as critics of fiction literature (who evaluate the morality of characters at first sight), yet we have to admit that this bourgeois-looking lady is embraced by an unrestrained worker student.

The editorial board of Universalny Journal would never serve their readers such sentimental dish and, obviously, you will not find anything alike further on the pages of UJ. Yet, in truth, the boy has ridden to the countryside on his bicycle, and is in fact resting in nature with his machine. Even if anyone wants to see a girl, not a machine embraced by the boy, we kindly ask all our readers to immediately correct this unacceptable printing error on the cover of UJ."

ideals and do not support her aspirations. The author loves his characters, the Young Communists, but with an anxious love.

Oles Donchenko's story *Golden Spider*, also about Young Communists, came out in 1928 as well. Borys Tenet belonged to Kyiv literary group Lanka (Link), which was later renamed the Workshop of the Revolutionary Word. Its writers – Valeryan Pidmohylny, Hordiy Brasiuk, Yevhen Pluzhnyk – always gravitated towards psychologism and individualism, so they were immediately given up on. For them, a person with his joys, experiences and suffering – love, jealousy, betrayal – meant more than the entire Bolshevik idea or Soviet power. But Donchenko, a member of the literary organisation Molodniak (Youth), which was under the patronage of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Young Communist League, was qualified as someone who showed a lack of ideological self-control.

"GOLDEN BOY" OF THE TWENTIES

The party came up with Molodniak in order to organise young writers and protect them from the influence of the older and already "lost" Mykola Khvyliovyi, Mykola Zerov and Panteleimon Kulish. The Komsomol writers' organisation originated in 1927 and immediately began publishing a magazine under the same name. Oles Donchenko's play *Komsomol Wilderness* was printed in the first issues, while the prose highlight of the magazine's first season was his story *Golden Spider*, which triggered heated debates in the Komsomolets Ukraine newspaper. The following year, the story was published as a book with a print run of five thousand copies; a year later another five thousand were printed, but the author was faced with a wave of negative criticism. Just the titles of the articles say it all: Ivan Momot's "In Search of Deviations", Andriy Klochia's "What Is Opportunism and What Is a Hack Job" and "Biology Above All Else!" by Leonid Smilianskyi.

Although Komsomol writer Ivan Bahmut called Donchenko one of the most prominent figures of the new generation, this did not save him: any author who dared to raise the question of love and sex in the lives of young communists was accused of pornography.

The reviews of the writer's "colleagues" from Molodniak were amazingly diverse. In Kyiv, Smilianskyi flew into a rage: "Donchenko has not realised that the relative importance of physiological moments in the life of the Young Communist League and Young Communists is nowhere near so significant, that it is not necessary to exaggerate when unveiling them, and that showing Komsomol only in this way means objectively reflecting decadent and bourgeois views on Soviet reality." In Kharkiv, Bahmut was full of praise: "*Golden Spider* has the ability to create a mood – the ability to make the reader live the life of the characters, to feel the subtlest nuances of their feelings and, ultimately, to awaken the reader's interest in certain everyday social issues and problems."

Based on the reviews, we get a sound piece of fiction on one and a story that could degenerate into a banal contrast between positive and negative types of Young Communists with an ideologically "correct" dénouement on the other. In the real story, the "good guy" Kolia Shpak manages to love his wife and have sex with another girl on the eve of her wedding, while

the "bad guy" Volodia Bazylevych goes to prostitutes not only for sex, but also guided by his feelings.

A BEAUTIFUL POISONOUS LADY

The tips of spoof cattle farming professor Omelko Buts sometimes came in handy: "If you want to write a story, try to take a very interesting adventure from our lives and describe it in detail. For example, if the most interesting adventure in your life was the move from your native Zadrypanka to Kharkiv to study at the worker's faculty. You describe the interesting procedure of getting the ticket at the station, the train coach that you had never seen before, Kharkiv Station and so on. The more thoroughly you describe everything, the longer your work will be. You can write a novel in this way too."

Vasyl Mynko tried this recipe, changed it a little and made no mistake. In the mid-1920s, he was called up to the army and served in an aviation unit somewhere in Rostov. Then when the head of the Union of Rural Writers, which Mynko remained true to for many years, advised him to write about aviation once again, saying that it is great subject matter, the young writer fell to thinking: "But about what? I've already squeezed all the heroism out of myself. Perhaps about mechanic Ihor Dreus and his romantic adventures? Ihor's affair with a pilot's wife made a big fuss in the squadron where I served. In addition, knowing that I write a bit, Ihor gave me the diary of a prostitute who he kept company with. How is this not good material?"

Two beauties of easy virtue, one idle and too well-off for her own good, the other... I thought about the name for a long time, in order to express the concept of the future story in one or two words. I go to the library, bury myself in an encyclopaedia.

'Belladonna is a beautiful woman.' And below, another meaning of the word – a poisonous flower. 'It grows on rotten soils... The fruits of are bitter and salty, they have an intoxicating smell.' That's it! Exactly what we need".

Mynko's first book of prose brought him notoriety. In his characters' dialogues, he liberally used slang and colloquialisms: his "bella donna" Nina Serhiyivna calls the young pilot a "khokhlyonok" (little Ukrainian) and a "little devil", as well as singing romances and criminal songs. Events transform quickly, Mynko's moods, situations and actions are intricate, his endings unexpected. The adventurism, dynamism, Free Love and passionate scenes with the demonic woman were enough to have the novel deemed vulgar and cheap.

THE BODY AND SIGNS OF GREAT LOVE

Critics also regarded Petro Holota's stories *Dirt* and *Entertainment* as vulgar and cheap. Their content was considered worthless too, because, instead of workers and villagers, the author described the life of the middle-class Halan family and the adventures of village boy Tolko-Anatoli, a libertine and seducer, in the city. Whereas Mynko took some lines from Alexandr Blok for the epigraph to his novel: of Blok "I feel odd myself and the world that I ignited is strange", Holota accompanied *Entertainment* with a passage by Sergei Esenin, which was even then considered to be the epitome of bourgeois tastes: "The body needs too much." And also gave the wholesome Young Communist girl



Belladonna
by Vasyl
Mynko



Dirt
by Petro
Holota



Golden Spider
by Oles
Donchenko



Donna Anna
by Hordiy
Briasiuk

in his novel magnificent breasts. The author was so carried away by her ample bosom that one critic called it a "dirty delectation", and Holota's novels – vulgar twaddle.

The characters in both Holota stories tried out all possible forms of interaction: official marriage, free love without commitment, even prostitution. Relationships in his romance novels, as the epigraph warns the reader, are very physical and often end with syphilis. Although, as Dr. Leonardo said in one of Mike Johansen's stories, "What is syphilis, if not a sign of Great Love."

The thing is, contemporary critics did not like this at all. As ill luck would have it, Petro Holota had an impressive career in the Party and at the end of 1920s belonged to Molodniak, as did Donchenko. During the struggle for Ukrainian independence (1917-1921), he joined the Komsomol in his native Yelisavetgrad (today Kirovohrad) and organised Young Communist centres in the province. At the same time, he started to be printed in local publications under the pseudonym Holota (his real surname was Melnyk) and soon became famous throughout the city: "When editors refuse to publish him, the Komsomol district commission writes a resolution on the poem: (in Russian) 'Print immediately. The poem is imbued with revolutionary spirit. A failure to print would mean that you are shirking your duties.'" In 1921, his first collection of poems, *The Thorny Path to Freedom and Education*, was released, published by the Yelisavetgrad District Commission of the Ukrainian Communist Party.

Komsomol writers had many problems with Holota. The Komsomolets Ukraine newspaper regularly reported on his weakness for alcohol, he twice spent time in prison for drunkenness and there was trouble in his family too. Add to that these novels with their "out-and-out", as reviewers liked to say, philistinism.

Indeed, Holota had no positive role models to offer: only philistines, shopkeepers, a meek communist who did not know what to do with his boisterous wife, an imposing official who rapes his servants, prostitutes who are satisfied with their profession, big spenders, thieves – in short, non-working and often criminal elements. Not the sort of adventures that a working rural reader expected from a Komsomol writer.

LIFE IS A THEATRE

More often than not in the 1920s, romance novels did not revolve around banal love triangles, but were built on class contrasts: he was a Communist, she was bourgeois. Or the other way around: he was a White Guard, she a revolutionary. At the time, everyone was engrossed in Borys Lavrenyov's story *Forty First*, in which a female Red Army soldier, Mariutka, shoots a captive lieutenant she had fallen in love with in the back. In peacetime, love stories did not end so tragically, especially if class contradictions were tearing apart the hearts of proletarians and intellectuals.

In Yevhen Pluzhnyk's *Illness* (1928) and *Tale Without a Name* (1930) by Petro Vanchenko, party members fall in love with actresses. The plot develops while the theatre is performing on tour in the city. In both novels, the actresses desert their lovers and the unrestrained Bolsheviks conclude that they are wasting

themselves on such wretches. Modest and steadfast company manager Ivan Orlovets recognises opera star Iryna Zavadzka as the daughter of the factory director he worked for in his youth. Bolshevik and chairman of the City Council Radyvon Saran cannot find the right words to describe the feeling that has seized him, although the author gives us a clue: it was love – "a now abandoned feeling". Radyvon is faced with the severest psychological tests: a poor communist who had gone through the revolution and civil war, he is head of the city council, responsible party member and functionary with a wife and two sons. Pluzhnyk and Vanchenko have the same internal conflict and a similar clash of interests where even love is a disease and an ailment.

Had he fallen in love? Radyvon Saran could not believe it himself, because love is for the youth and Young Communists, while he was an experienced, old Bolshevik, already 43 years of age. He is just as ashamed to admit that thoughts about his sons sometimes prevail over his state affairs. Indeed, nothing human is alien to the Communist and a beautiful woman, an operatic diva, awakens in him long-forgotten feelings and carnal desires. "Radyvon Saran fell in love with the operetta prima donna Kateryna Narosh. He came to this conclusion two weeks after his first meeting with her. At first, he could not understand what had happened to him and could not explain the reasons why he had lost his mind. Only later, observing himself and listening to Kateryna's allusions, he realised that this excitement and incomprehensible despair of his were leading to very serious events in his personal life and that they should be classified as love for that blonde girl."

Feelings versus duty and lover versus partner is another eternal dilemma. There is no talk of finding a female comrade, however, because neither his wife Olena, nor actress Kateryna share his views. His wife religious and superstitious, his mistress frivolous and empty, Radyvon is a lone wolf. He wrestles with himself, runs away from temptation and takes an assignment from the party committee to work in the countryside.

Maybe this is also part of Vanchenko's personal experience, as he participated in the civil war on the side of the Bolsheviks and fought against the Germans before taking an interest in theatre, performing on stage and leading the Union of Art Workers in Poltava.

The theatre is also the setting for key scenes in Arkadiy Liubchenko's story *Contempt*, which is about a Bolshevik who fell in love with a prostitute and made her his wife, but is willing to sell her to his boss in exchange for career advancement. Thanks to the artistic component, 1920s romance novels at the same time became examples of urban prose in Ukrainian literature.

THE BIOLOGY OF LOVE

What is stronger – ideology or physiology? Critics did not like the very question itself, because they felt that the answer would be even less satisfying for them. The issues that Turkeltaub raised in his lectures had very unclear answers in reality.

The worst thing was that this "vulgarity", as critics understood it, found its reader, thirsty for genre fiction. The novels by Donchenko, Pluzhnyk, Pidmohylly and Tenet were reprinted the following year. The total print run for *Golden Spider* reached 10,000 copies. *Pidmo-*

hylly's City, which had conquered the hearts of literary critics, lagged behind by one thousand, but was nevertheless in second place: who would have thought this today! *Belladonna* and *Tale Without a Name* were never reissued, but 5,000 copies of each were printed outright. These numbers are sky-high for a country that was fighting illiteracy and in which only half the population could read and write (57.5% in the 1926 census). Even today's writers can only dream of such figures. And this was not only subsidised by the Ukrainian State Publishing House, but also the cooperative and private Syaivo, Ruch and Knyhospilka.

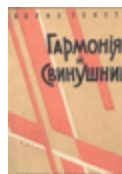
Contemporary Soviet critics did not notice the birth of popular literature before their very eyes: not only in terms of circulation (political leaflets had seen much bigger print runs), but also as a genre. In the second half of the 1920s, the first adventure and science fiction novels appeared, as well as detective stories and melodramas that can be safely be called romance novels. The latter are host to an expressive melodramatic intrigue with characteristic motifs of love, betrayal, villainy and hypocrisy, alongside conflicts in the search for genuine people and feelings.

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT IN THE 1920s, ROMANCE NOVELS DID NOT REVOLVE AROUND BANAL LOVE TRIANGLES, BUT WERE BUILT ON CLASS CONTRASTS

The genre of romance novel dictates certain requirements: it must be a romantic story about a relationship, inevitably with a happy ending. Jane Austen would have cried her eyes out reading Mynko's *Belladonna* or Brasiuk's *Donna Anna* with their dramatic twists and surprising, not at all joyous conclusions. This is what makes the 1920s romance novel interesting: not the repetition of genre clichés, which a modern reader is used to and expects, but the original and unexpected innovation, as well as the combination of melodramatic stereotypes with the new economic Zeitgeist and... eroticism. What now seem like innocent allusions to sex were blatant pornography for critics 90 years ago.

Various types of people appear in the romance novels of the time. The young and old; educated and barely literate; with different origins: commoners, intellectuals, villagers, party members, Young Communists; with various professions: officials, workers, prostitutes, engineers, artists, musicians, pilots. However, they are all subject to ordinary human feelings: they are able or unable to love, they are jealous, have fun and play with other people's feelings, flirt, intrigue, desire, cheat and are cheated on, hate and look for revenge. They can be funny or scary, pleasant or repugnant, but always evoke emotions. A sort of fanciful, capricious love, not subject to party guidelines on biology.

Romance novels of the 1920s also vary stylistically, as each author is endowed with different writing talents. However, they are not sentimentally sappy, and not even romantic, as is fitting for the genre. Nevertheless, they give us a more or less clear notion of the mass fiction that was popular at the time, in which romance novels played a leading role. ■



Harmony and the Pigsty
by Borys Tenet



Illness
by Yevhen Pluzhnyk



PHOTO BY REUTERS

“When I write a script for a film, emotions are the last thing that interests me at that given moment”

Interviewed by
Hanna Trehub

The Dutch arthouse film director came to Kyiv for the retrospect of his movies at the Molodist film festival. He spoke to *The Ukrainian Week* about his vision of freedom on theatre stage and filming location, the role and power of contrasts in films and the need to change.

All your films have a lot of long shot scenes, including landscapes. These create a sense of empty space with few characters or storylines. Is that your way to channel the viewer's attention on the main action by not allowing it to disperse on details?

— As a director I don't particularly like to fill the location with actors. Sometimes the script has more characters than appear in the film, mostly in crowd scenes. When I want to shoot a street with people, I have only some 2-3 appearing in the distance, not 10-15 walking back and forth. Why so? Because I, as director, have this weird

obsessive idea that the scene should be empty. Sometimes I feel like there is too much focus on the crowd: when people in it are dressed a certain way or carry something in their hands, it all looks unauthentic to me. Eventually, it kills my intention to focus attention on what is really the central, significant element in the film. A director's disease, if you will.

When I started working on *Borgman*, I was thinking about the world I'd show in the film. I asked myself: will it feature neighbors of the main characters? The answer was: if they appear, they will change the story I want to tell. The neighbors might see something they find disturbing, call the police, and that will be the end of my story. The thought of people around us tired me so much that I simply brushed it aside, and focused on the essence of my story instead. Empty space appears in my every film, and I can't overcome it. But is it really an issue?

– If we talk about a certain degree of theatricality in my first films, I can admit to that. Yet, time passes, and it evaporates gradually. My latest film, *Schneider vs Bax*, is pure form: landscapes, almost complete absence of dialogues, light and action. So, nothing theatrical, I would say. Sometimes, I have this dilemma about close-ups in films. Many see the definition of cinema as close-ups. I disagree.

So films are not only about structuring cinematographic space for you. What would you add to this definition you mentioned above?

– To me, a movie is when you insert film into a camera and go shoot. That's how you do it. In average conversation of various people about cinematography one can encounter many other definitions of what it is. The way you operate the camera, tell the story, of course, is an attribute of cinematography. But I use a different, original system of things in my films. There is nothing directly theatrical in them. Yet, I don't deny that theatre has had an impact on the films I have shot. When I need to film a dialogue of two people, I make it as short as possible, don't spend much time shooting close-ups, faces, expression. You can think of this as something borrowed from the theatre, but for me, this is an element of cinematography as well. Even when you shoot one cadre or one scene, it's already cinematography. Take *Borgman* – it's not theater shot on film, but a full-fledged film.

One of the most visible contrasts in your films is the one between the forest and residential terrain, particularly urban streets. Does this visual image accentuate the story you tell?

– A forest is a symbol, because what's happening or can happen there is different from what happens on a city street. I showed this not only in *Grimm*, but in *The Northerners*. Moreover, it gives you a beautiful contrast, because the forest is a place where a series of strange and dangerous things happen. A Dutch street is an antipode to it, particularly when the sun is shining and the windows in the house are open. These are two different worlds. But a human can unite them through traveling.

As to me, I used to live on a similar rural street when I was a child. But I had to go to school through a forest. So the stories told in the films are partly tied to my memories from young years. My earlier studio works are dominated by other themes, though: closed space, limited number of characters – five at the most. Later films were shot with the opposite idea: wide shots of landscapes, a forest – open space. That was the sense of searching for something new. To make your imagination work, you need to find space where it can unfold.

Modern directors engage psychological elements, a whole range of human emotions in an attempt to get to their audience. Is this range of themes an acceptable practice for you, or a field where you follow someone?

– When I write a script for a film, emotions are the last thing that interests me at that given moment. In fact, I'm interested in everything but emotions. When I work on a script, it's not about having a clear plan of the story, the order of things from the very beginning. More often, I just write down a couple of moments and develop the storyline around them.

When my children were little, I would tell them bedtime stories. Whenever I started them, I never knew how they would end. They emerged in the process of storytelling. One phrase flew into another, the story evolved on its own. That's how I write now. The story becomes better, more interesting. However, I do have to correct things from time to time.

When I worked on the script for *Bergman*, there were elements in which I didn't believe, so I deleted them. There were also other things that really spoke to me, made my imagination work. Sometimes imagination created horrible moments, and very funny at other times. In fact, I didn't write jokes on purpose. They were all the result of my character, the things I like – brutal and funny. It's the product of who I am.

THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU CAN'T DENY OR CAST AWAY YOURSELF AND THE THINGS YOU DO WELL. IT IS MUCH HARDER TO BE HONEST ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN'T DO

Now I'd like to go back to the question about emotions. *The Northerners* is a film about a group of people in north-eastern Denmark waiting for a bus. A viewer sees a street, a distant forest, a bus stop amidst sand, and people sitting on the roadside stones. When the bus eventually comes, they start to cry. That is the moment I find interesting. These things touch everyone. I'm happy when a viewer finds something of his or her own in my films, something that touches on him or her. But these are not things that are inserted into the films on purpose. If I have emotions in my films, I don't realize that. In a straightforward sense, my films are on the colder side – about 10°C, not warm. When emotions come, I kill them because I don't feel comfortable in their presence. Yet, this does not mean that I don't find it interesting to experiment with them. Obviously, I'll do that in my next works.

You act in your own films. Is this practice justified? Because a director's mission is first and foremost about directing the work of outside actors, camera people and the rest of the crew, not acting...

– There are often good reasons for it. When I was shooting *Abel*, it was not only about me writing a script for it, but about playing one of the characters. I really wanted to play the postman. In the next movie I played a railway man. In *Grimm* I didn't act. The older I got, the more I thought that I was done with acting in my films. In *The Last Days of Emma Blank* I was a director and

Alex van Warmerdam is a Dutch film director, actor, scriptwriter, producer and composer. He works in the genre of art house. He is the scriptwriter and actor in almost all of his films, the winner of the FIPRESCI award from the Venice International Film Festival in 1996. In 1980, he and his brother Marc founded De Mexicaanse Hond (Mexican Dog), a theatre group that is active till present. Alex van Warmerdam is the author and director of 15 theatre productions. In 1986, he shot his first film, *Abel*, where it played the main part. His films include *De Noorderlingen* (The Northerners, 1992), *De jurk* (The Dress, 1996), *Kleine Teun* (Little Tony, 1998), *Grimm* (2003), *Ober* (A Waiter, 2006), *De laatste dagen van Emma Blank* (The Last Days of Emma Blank, 2009), *Borgman* (2013), and *Schneider vs Bax* (2015).

scriptwriter. In *Borgman* I had to act, despite my own will, because the actor chosen for one of the roles was engaged in other projects at that time. As I was looking for a replacement, my wife asked me: why don't you play in the film? To be honest with you, I hate walking around in an actor's suit, with make-up on my face, all day long. I want to be free from all this, I want to be a director. In fact, that's what was supposed to happen in *Schneider vs Bax* where I, again, saw myself exclusively as director and scriptwriter. Yet, I had to play in it. The thing is that there are very few good actors in the Netherlands. They are engaged in several films at the same time. With the actors I wanted to play Bax, their schedules didn't match mine, or they had no time for other reasons. Again, my wife asked me: what don't I play in it? Eventually, the benefit of it exceeded the damage. I'm always at the filming location anyway, so I don't have to adjust my own schedule based on when I can play and when I can't. I wrote the script myself and played the role the way I envisioned it. I can't say it came effortlessly. Though acting is not something new to me, because I also write, direct and act for my theatre group De Mexicaanse Hond. Of course, some directors find it uneasy to act in the films they direct. I'm not one of them, even if I sound a bit arrogant saying that. Take the role of *Abel* in that film. I believed that I could play it exactly the way it should be played, that's why I did it.

You are well known beyond the Netherlands as a top contemporary art house director. At home, you are a well-known and respected theater director. How is your work in the theatre different from that in cinematography?

— Over my entire theatre career, I have never directed or acted in a play written by someone else. As a rule, theatre directors in the Netherlands make three new productions a year based on pieces by classic playwrights. I produce a new theatre play once in three years, and I am the playwright myself. I can't imagine what I can do with plays written by others. For instance, I love Shakespeare — who doesn't? Yet, I couldn't stage the pieces by this prominent British author, because I don't understand what I can do with them, and how. Inventing new interpretations of plays familiar to everyone is not my thing, I don't have

enough talent for that. That's why I write my own thing and don't depend on anyone in it. The theatre is my work that brings me permanent income, unlike cinematography. To make a new film, you need to look for funding for it. After I shot *Abel*, I didn't only work as film director, but continued working in the theatre. Now I would like and plan to stop working in the theatre. I've already staged 15 of my own productions. I don't know whether it will all work the way I intend, but I've had enough of this kind of activity.

Every theater production causes certain problems. This year, my *Het Gelukzalige* play premiered. It was performed and accepted very well. Yet, I couldn't get rid of one thought: the next times when the play is staged won't be as good as the premiere. I returned to that work again and again, looking for the tempo and the way, the manner in which the play should be staged. *Het Gelukzalige* is a very abstract story, a music sheet of sorts. And I don't like going back to what's been done and revising it over and over again. With the film scene, once you shoot it, it stays for eternity. It's a finished cause. Once you shoot a film, it stays like that for good. The next day after the premiere it will remain the same as it was before. With the theater play, it's different. And of that I've had enough. The stage changes all the time, and the play is open and flexible. If I wrote that play, I can't leave it just like that. Yet, this obsession has to be cut out at some point.

Sarcasm, irony, dark humor — that's what you have shown in the films you've shot already. Will these themes remain key in your next movies? If not, why?

— I would really like to know the answer to that question myself. Before I create a film and start writing a script, I note down some ideas. I think about what I should do and show, and why in that specific manner. First and foremost, I choose a central idea and consider all pros and cons. The thing is that, once the idea is chosen, I don't return to it, don't change the chosen. When I ponder an idea for several years, I find it hard to stop. Yet, I've noticed that I get more and more doubts with years, because my future becomes shorter. I have an idea to shoot half a dozen films yet, but I doubt about the idea I'd like to put in each of them. It's hard. I still have a hangover of sorts from the theatre activity, and I need to rest. For instance, I've started to paint again. And, of course, I fight with myself, with my own doubts.

I ask myself: will there be dark humor and original sarcasm like in those I've done already? Maybe not. Everyone has limits. But I find it boring to repeat one thing over and over again. I will try to take a step in a different direction. Yet, this step can only be taken when I no longer have the concern about avoiding to go on a painful split. So I'm now deciding which direction to take. The truth is that you can't deny or cast away yourself and the things you do well. It is much harder to be honest about what you can't do. I'm trying to determine the future vector of my work. All directions remain open to me. ■

The banality of evil: The case of Vladimir Bortko

Leonidas Donskis

That evil can be banal we learn from Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: The Report on the Banality of Evil* published in 1963. As we all know, Israeli intelligence, the Mossad, caught the chief architect of the Holocaust in Argentina, and brought him to Israel where his trial took place.

Arendt reminds the readership of the fact that everybody expected to see a monster, a beast of prey, a sinister psychopath, or else deranged and disturbed individual. Instead, as she writes, people saw a nobody – physically, Eichmann looked much like a petty bureaucrat of the Third Reich who then turned out a sinister bureaucrat of death.

More than that, a group of the most eminent psychiatrists was commissioned to determine as to whether Eichmann was a pathological person. What a disappointment it was when the experts unequivocally stated that Eichmann was perfectly sane. Moreover, he appeared as a frighteningly normal person who, according to the conclusions, could have made a loving husband, a caring father, and a sweet neighbor.

That was how the banality of evil came about as a critically important concept. Zygmunt Bauman suggests that what happened to us in the twentieth century was democratization of evil. In other words, evil ceased to be exclusive and otherworldly; instead, it happens here as something quite this-worldly, ordinary, and even banal.

Yes but evil can be profound and limitless as well – just like treachery, turpitude, malevolence, and other disturbing phenomena within our reach. It is critically important as a reminder of how unpredictable, destructive and dangerous some talented and creative people can be.

Vladimir Bortko, who will turn 70 in May 2016, developed a reputation through successful film versions of Mikhail Bulgakov's masterpieces. Born in Moscow, raised and brought up in the family of the Ukrainian playwright Aleksandr Korneychuk, Vladimir Bortko then lived and studied in Kyiv.

His infatuation with the genius of Mikhail Bulgakov is hardly accidental, as Bulgakov was inseparable from his hometown. No matter how important Moscow becomes in Bulgakov's later works, such as *The Heart of a Dog*, and *The Master and Margarita*, his earlier masterpiece, *The White Guard*, would be unthinkable without Kyiv, the city that maps the world of that novel.

What can we say about Bortko's version of *The Heart of a Dog* made in the late 1980s? It was a genuine film of the Perestroika era – people immediately felt its redeeming effect. The family name of Shvonder, masterfully



played by the Ukrainian stand-up comedian Roman Kartsev, has swiftly become a general term to describe the type of a militant homo sovieticus.

In addition, the film proved a success story due to the great work of actors – first and foremost, by Yevgeny Yevstigneyev's unforgettable rendering of the role of Professor Preobrazhensky. All in all, Bortko won the reputation of a fan of Bulgakov capable of translating his masterpiece into the language of cinema and handling it in a decent manner.

However, his film version of *The Master and Margarita* was far more risky an

HOW IRONIC THAT BORTKO SHOULD HAVE BETRAYED EVERY SINGLE TRACE OF HIS WORK ON BULGAKOV BY SIGNING THE INFAMOUS LETTER OF RUSSIAN MASTERS OF CULTURE WHO WELCOMED THE OCCUPATION AND ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

experiment. One way or another, Bortko did not fail. Even if there were some iniquities and shortcomings in some segments of the film (after all, the film must satisfy mass audience), the scenes with Woland and his accomplices were excellent. Yet little doubt was left that Bortko's film was about Woland, rather than the Master.

How ironic, then, that Bortko should have betrayed every single trace of his infatuation with, and work on, Bulgakov by signing, in March 2014, the infamous letter of Russian masters of culture who welcomed the occupation and annexation of Crimea.

And how ironic that the letter signed by Vladimir Bortko was turned down with contempt by Oleg Basilashvili – the great Russian actor who played the role of the Devil Woland in the film. His role was about the monumental, Shakespearean depth of evil. Bortko did not live up to this dimension of evil, though.

Bortko's latest statements about Stalin as the hero of Russia leave us wondering if we are dealing with that same person who made his films. Was it necessary to make a film on Sharikov to end up as a Sharikov? Was he enchanted by evil? Did he fall in love with Stalin before or after he made a film on evil?

It is with good reason that actors warn each other that not everybody can touch *The Master and Margarita*, as this masterpiece can ruin the life of a weak, cowardly and disturbed individual. Whatever the case, Bortko appears as a perfect example of the banality of evil. ■

Useyn Bekirov:

“Jazz is the music of the people.
It has a place for Crimean Tatar sound”

Shortly before the presentation of his new album *Taterrium* in April, jazz pianist and composer Useyn Bekirov spoke to *The Ukrainian Week* about ways to present his native culture in his music, jazz clubs in Ukraine, and the history of Crimean Tatar jazz since Soviet times.

Crimean Tatar culture is represented in the world not only through the folklore format, but in jazz as well. What is the foundation of Crimean Tatar jazz tradition, and where does it start?

— Jazz came to Crimean Tatars after the Soviet authorities deported our entire people into Central Asia. The place and time played a role in this. The Uzbek city of Fergana was a powerful jazz center in the mid 1970s with its own club and a bunch of bands. It hosted great festivals. It saw outstanding workshops and musicians, including Valeriy Kolesnikov, a well-known trumpeter and jazz teacher of Ukrainian origin, or Russian jazzman Yuri Parfionov.

My father Riza Bekirov is a jazz pianist. I followed his footsteps. He used to play in the Fergana band Sato. It was a unique band of sorts – the first Crimean Tatar ethno jazz group. It consisted of guitarist Enver Izmailov, clarinetist Narket Ramazanov, bass guitarist Leonid Atabekov. They started experimenting back in Soviet times and even managed to make a couple of records. One, titled *Efsane*, is still available online. What they did was play jazz versions of Crimean Tatar melodies. The Bolshevik authorities were very rough about jazz or Crimean Tatars, but these people managed to make two records. As to me, I don't only make Crimean Tatar music – I turn to Azerbaijani and Armenian melodies too. My friends are musicians of various ethnic backgrounds, we all experiment in a number of styles.

Jazz is the music of the people and it has a place for Crimean Tatar sound. I create arrangements of our folk songs, compose my own tracks in the folk style. If you look at it in detail, Crimean Tatars don't have too many extremely professional musicians. Their number has increased in the past few years, but with the annexation of Crimea and the need to leave the peninsula music education and conservatories have become a secondary issue again. I remember my young years – music lessons in a house with no electricity or running water. This memory is somewhat similar to what we are going through today. 80% of Crimean Tatars lived that way.

Enver Izmailov is a world renowned musician. We used to be neighbors in Crimea and I had a chance to communicate with him. Back then we didn't have as much access to music as we have now, and he brought home tons of jazz records which we could listen to. It was extremely important.

Interviewed
by **Hanna
Trehub**

As Ukraine regained independence, Crimean Tatars began to return home. This process unfolded in the atmosphere of active construction of houses back in Crimea. Everyone was obsessed with that. What conservatory could we possibly think of? I was probably the first Crimean Tatar to enter a higher music education facility to play violin. The first three years were extremely difficult. I'm still deeply grateful to those people in Kyiv who helped me and supported me.



PHOTO: UNIAN

Useyn Bekirov is a Crimean Tatar jazz pianist and composer. He graduated from the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine. He plays with well known jazz musicians in Ukraine, including Bohdan Humeniuk, Dennis Adu, Ihor Zakus, with Ethnovation and Oakmen bands, as well as in his own jazz quintet.

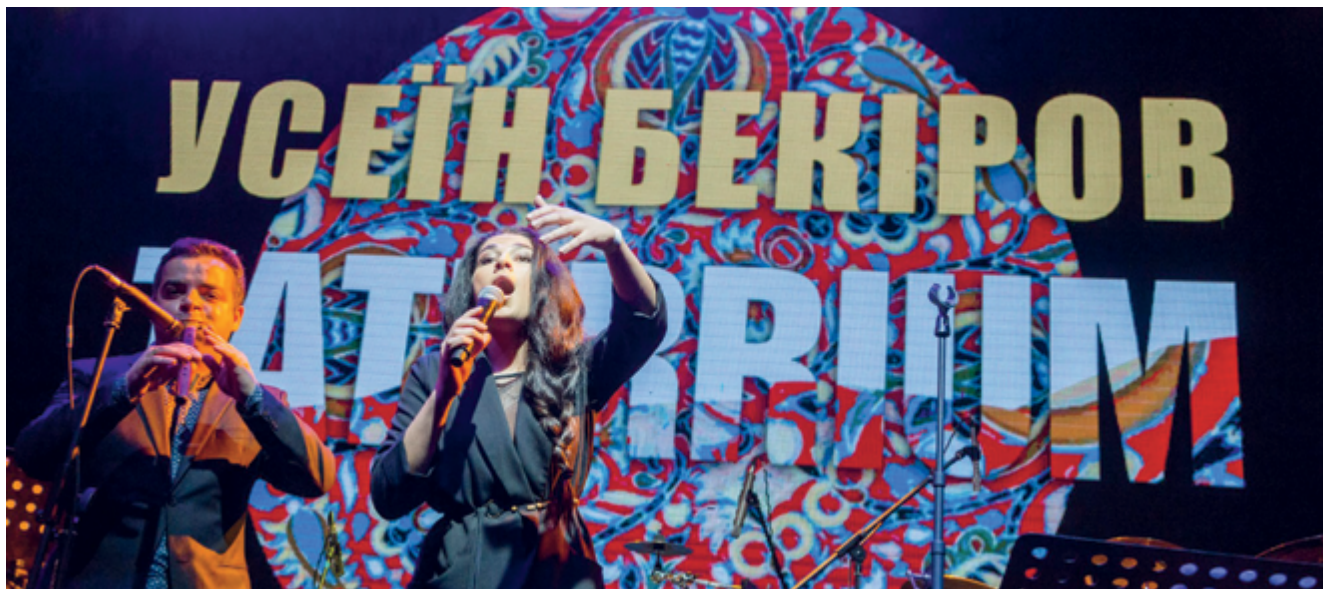


PHOTO: UNIAN

The long-overdue debut. Armen Kořtandian on duduk and Laura Marti as lead singer helped Useyn Bekirov present his album *Taterrium* in Kyiv this April

With the annexation of Crimea Jazz Koktebel had to change its location. Did it affect the festival? Does Ukraine have anything similar in terms of the quality and variety of performers?

— I played at this festival for a number of years together with Jamala, bass guitarist Ihor Zakus and his quartet. Odesa Jazz Festival has a somewhat similar scale to that one today. In any case, for me as Crimean Tatar, such platforms are a chance to introduce to the wide audience the music of my people, to remind them that a culture like mine exists. Koktebel festival moved to Zatoka in Odesa Oblast after the annexation of Crimea. It changed the address but preserved its atmosphere. As to the location, it is true that Crimea and Koktebel are hardly replaceable in that regard.

Professional path of a jazzman starts with club, not big stages. Does Kyiv have enough such venues where musicians can gain experience and the audience can hear them in a chamber format?

— There are very few jazz clubs in Kyiv, though it is nice that they exist. Unfortunately, Art Club 44 closed down. That was a place where 90% of Ukrainian jazz musicians started their career. At one point, getting to play there was regarded as sort of maturity test: a young jazzman from a provincial town could come and jam there, and get noticed eventually. Young musicians had a place to grow and move forward. Take saxophonist Bohdan Humeniuk — he started at 44, and now he's a respected teacher at the academy in Montreal.

If there more venues like 44 where musicians could share their experience, Ukrainian jazz would have faster and better progress. In the past 3-4 years, we've had very good new teachers who can pass on performance experience to the younger generation. That's why young musicians are playing completely differently today than they would have 10 years ago.

A jazz club is about chamber format of performing and consuming music. A bigger concert requires more spacious concert halls. I can name three or four jazz clubs in

Kyiv where people just come and play. And we are talking about the capital, a big city of several million people. Take Istanbul — it has tenfold more jazz clubs in Kyiv. Let alone the EU or USA. Even Dubai has more than Kyiv, although it's a desert and a culture that seems to be completely different from that of Europe. And it's not only foreigners that go to listen to jazz, but the locals too. This leads to a powerful flow of musicians and exchange of music.

***Taterrium* is your debut album, although you have long been performing and composing jazz music. How did you work on this record?**

— Back when we were students, Jamala and I recorded our first album together. So much time later I am issuing it into the wide world. I just didn't have a chance to finish it earlier. I've recently found these records, listened to them. Dmytro Korovin, director of Chernihiv Jazz Festival, heard them and asked me what that cool music was. He suggested that I issue it as an album. He insisted that people should hear what had been on the shelf for many years. At the same time, I gathered everything I recorded and played in the past ten years — it would make three full albums. Out of all this, I made one mix tape. Unfortunately, this had some negative effect on the quality of the sound because the records were made at different times and different studios. My first idea for the title was *Tatarium*. Jamala suggested that I change it a little. That's how the combination of two words appeared: *Tatar* and *terra* for land. "Tatar land" together.

This new album is a collection of folk music and my own compositions, plus those by trumpeters Yevhen Didyk, Maksym Koshelev. It also features the music by Armen Kostandian who plays the duduk. I gathered Crimean Tatar, Armenian and Moldovan tunes in jazz arrangements. The mix is very interesting.

Music folklore of my people of the 20th century builds around the theme of the lost motherland which they grieve. These tragedies don't disappear. Take Jamala's 1944 about this — the peninsula was just annexed and Crimean Tatars are once again forced to leave their motherland. ■

May 19–22, 3 p.m.**Ethno World****Art Arsenal
(vul. Lavrska, Kyiv)**

On the occasion of the Europe Day, Kyiv will host Ethno World international festival of traditional cultures. The program will present different folk cultures of the world, from traditional crafts and folklore to film art and cuisines. Artists and musicians from Estonia, Poland, Georgia, Belarus and Lithuania will visit this year's festival of cultures. Space of Clay program including a number of master classes and exhibitions will be a key feature of the event.

**May 21, 7 p.m.****Classics in the Forest****Check ticket for location
(Kyiv, meeting at the parking lot
across Syrets Metro Station)**

The first classical music concert to be held outdoors in the forest of Kyiv, rather than indoors as usually, is a real surprise for classical music lovers. Organizers urge Kyivites and guests to escape from city hassle and enjoy music outside. Virtuozky Kyeva orchestra will perform musical composition by Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Vivaldi and other famous composers. Svitlo Concert has prepared buses to take visitors to the location of the concert. Find more detailed information when buying tickets.

**May 22, 6 p.m.****Cabaret de Charite****InterContinental Kyiv, Grand
Ballroom
(2A, vul. Velyka Zhytomyrska, Kyiv)**

Special ambiance of French cabarets could be found not only in Paris, but also at the French party to be held Kyiv. Guests are in for many pleasant surprises, including French performance by Oleh Skrypka with musical accompaniment of Freedom jazz band, various shows and a special celebrity guest In-Grid. All the guests will be able to take part in the draw of the trip to France from Feyeriya Mandriv Company and taste the best dishes of French cuisine.

**May 26, 7 p.m.****Nino Katamadze and Insight****International Center of Culture
and Arts
(1, vul. Instytutaska, Kyiv)**

Legendary Georgian folk-jazz singer Nino Katamadze will visit Ukraine to present her new Yellow album together with Insight band. The album features traditional folk jazz rock performance by Nino as well as new lyrical interpretations. It includes eight tracks, in particular *Yellow Dogs*, *The Side of the Sun* and others. Incredible quality of Nino's voice accompanied by guitar, percussion and keyboard instruments makes this performance a special event and gives crazy drive to the audience.

**May 28, 8 p.m.****The Night of the AD Eaters****Cinema City
(176, vul. Antonovycha, Kyiv)**

This year selection of The Night of the AD Eaters is dedicated to the planet Earth. Jean Marie Boursicot, author of the show, has selected the best relevant advertisements from all over the world for the new program. Lovers of advertisements will get to see famous sports and show business people in different situations, as well as fiction characters, including Dart Weider, in unexpected and funny stories. In addition to the non-stop demonstration of advertisement videos, the program includes draw games, trivias, photoshoots and music.

**June 2, 7:30 p.m.****DakhaBrakha****KPI Palace of Culture
(37, pr. Peremohy, Kyiv)**

Ukrainian ethno-house band, famous for its originality and unique performance of Ukrainian folk songs, will present the best tracks from the Mystic Ukraine series. The project includes three performances based on plays by Shakespeare, in particular *Macbeth Prologue*, *Richard III* and *King Lear*. Musical performance of the band adds Ukrainian mood and more profound meaning to the events described in the plays. The band was founded by Vladyslav Troyitsky in the frames of Mystic Ukraine theater project in 2004.





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