

# The Ukrainian Week

International edition

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of truth about WWII

How & when Ukraine's Ancien  
Régime can strike back

Right-wing parties and  
movements in Ukraine

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Тижень



# Sinister Shadows

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Just before Easter 2014, when the whiff of war was barely in the air, Ukrainians were fed rumors that Viktor Yanukovich would come back, to Donetsk no less, on Easter Sunday. The most vulnerable grew scared, the most cynical among them laughed. The “legitimate president”, as he referred to himself in TV-interviews aired from the Russian Rostov-on-Don, did not, in the end, show up, merely growling “I’ll be back” on those records. A year has passed, Yanukovich still doesn’t dare go beyond Crimea. Ukrainians, it seems, can finally sigh with relief and forever let go of their cursed past, only...

When Ukrainians say “Yanukovich,” they mean the “Family.” Has it really disappeared without a trace? Has this mafia octopus not left any tentacles behind in Ukraine, through which it continues to siphon capital out of the country? Are there no more proxies around who are operating in the interests and on behalf of this criminal clan? Inspections continue, investigations multiply, and there’s no assurance that all kinds of little shell companies aren’t pumping profits through various fronts to those who see being in government as the universal tool of enrichment.

When Ukrainians say “Yanukovich,” they mean the regime. And not just infinite power in the hands of a semi-literate gopnik who depended on billysticks and pliant prosecutors. But the entire system of relations, closed circles and legalized crime rings that has access to the customs service, provides cover for business, places its minders in government offices, skews tenders in favor of its buddies, freely raids the public till and converts it into private profit. This is the part Ukrainians have not overcome yet. There continues to be demand and supply for bribes, and there continue to be politicians who are willing to defend private business interests as though they are the state’s.

In short, Yanukovich’s affairs live and thrive. The criminal system of government did not appear out of nowhere. Evil can and does

regenerate. It’s like the dragon-slayer fairytales where the hero chops off the monster’s head and a new one—or several more—appears. The regime survived, but not just on oligarchic flows of capital and the nostalgia of Red Directors for “order,” but also on the demagoguery and helplessness of those whom Ukrainians are referred to as pro-Western democrats. These politicians did plenty for the enemy not to take them seriously. In 2004, when Yanukovich & Co. supposedly said their last “good-byes,” those in power also seemed determined and threatened to “put bandits in jail.” But childishly, wagging their fingers. And just as childishly and naively, they lost, caving in when the comeback kids returned with the ace of “stability” up their sleeves. And after Yanukovich & Co. won, they began to go after their opponents seriously, actually jailing some of them.

And so, evil continues to regenerate today. We had Party of the Regions, we now have the Opposition Bloc which with a perfectly

the “junta” is not seriously going after the regime’s functionaries, lustration can be avoided following a number of “time-tested, honest methods,” and voters are exhausted between the war and the economic crisis. And so the golden era of populism, nostalgia for the dollar that was worth only UAH 8, and promises to “bring peace” has arrived.

On top of all this, we have the all-seeing eye of the world community. The same community that for years gave Yanukovich its hand, called on him to release Yulia Tymoshenko, and yet never got around to introducing sanctions against him. They might get nervous if Kyiv decides to sue the Mezhviria Master’s regime in a nationwide Nuremberg trial: What if true-blue Regionals find themselves behind bars or, God forbid, communists?

The reluctance of the West to call a spade a spade and to properly understand political processes in Ukraine is yet another significant basis for the restoration of a criminal dictatorship. After all, any uncertain situation can simply be chalked up to “respecting Ukraine’s choice” and “taking into account Russia’s interests in Eastern Europe.”

Still, the controlling stake remains in the hands of Ukraine’s voters: if they lose faith, tire of their own activeness, turn nostalgic over paternalism and decide to hand off responsibility for the country, no reformers, prosecutors, western instructors or investors will be able to save the country from catastrophe. Similar examples are plenty in Ukraine’s history and in Georgia not long ago where, despite the success of a pro-Western team, protégés of the generous oligarchs ended up with the country’s reins in their hands.

Ukraine’s press continues to be in crystal-gazing mode, trying to predict when Putin will resort to a full-scale attack. What they aren’t noticing is that Yanukovich is at the gate, setting up a game through his Ukrainian henchmen—both genuine and indirect. This is one game whose outcome we will have plenty of time to judge, if we don’t stop it in time. ■

**DEMAND AND SUPPLY  
FOR BRIBES CONTINUES.  
POLITICIANS ARE STILL WILLING  
TO DEFEND PRIVATE INTERESTS  
AS THOUGH THEY  
ARE THE STATE’S. AND SO  
YANUKOVYCH’S AFFAIRS  
LIVE AND THRIVE**

straight face presents itself as a political alternative today, buying its way out of criminal investigations with bail money, buying votes, and pretending to be the “voice of the industrial regions.” In short, it’s preparing for the next comeback. What’s more, Viktor Yanukovich himself is not needed for the purpose: the party rank-and-file turned their backs on him the minute he packed up his trucks and fled Mezhviria.

Back in Spring 2014, they lost their heads between the separatists and absurd candidates for president like Mikhail Dobkin and Oleh Tsariv. Now the worst is behind them,

# Dangerous Liaisons

How and when are Ukraine's reactionary forces most likely to strike back

Just as it happened after the Orange Revolution in 2004, the new Administration has been unable to properly neutralize reactionary forces and make the renewal of the nation's political elite irreversible. The lustration process has bogged down: functionaries from the Yanukovych Administration and agents representing the most influential oligarchic groups from that time continue to form the backbone of the mid-level civil service and enforcement agencies. Investigations against members of that regime are slowly grinding to a halt, while in those instances when cases actually come to trial, Ukraine's corrupted judiciary proceeds to undermine them. This corrupt system has always played a key role in the functioning of the corrupt oligarchic model. Lately it threatens to make the reincarnation of the Yanukovych regime in a new guise not only possible, but ever-more-probable.

## THE COMEBACK KIDS REGROUP

The most dangerous situation is with the replacement of managerial ranks and law enforcement units in eastern and southern oblasts. One year ago, precisely because they had not been replaced in time in the Donbas, these ranks largely went over to the enemy and catastrophic events followed. What's more, little has changed since then. The officials and police officers who were hired when Party of the Regions dominated what was then still Ukrainian-controlled Donbas and other eastern and southern regions are now merely tolerating the "Maidan" government in the current critical situation until the first opportunity arises for them to become the basis for a vengeful comeback.

Lately, this fact is more and more frequently being brought to

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**Oles**  
**Oleksiyenko**

light through scandals in public office. For instance, on April 20, Volodymyr Rzhavskiy, advisor to Donetsk Governor Oleksandr Kikhtenko, resigned "because he disapproves of the pro-Ukrainian and state-building position of the President." This came on the heels of a scandal over Kikhtenko's open lobbying of the interests of the terrorists running DNR and LNR: he had called for lifting restrictions on movement, transportation and communication, and of the financial and economic blockade of the territories currently under their control. Meanwhile, Kharkiv continues to be run by Ghennadiy Kernes. Separatist forces and steel magnate Rinat Akhmetov are also becoming more active in Zaporizhzhya.

Even in what was until recently a key line of defense against Party of the Regions in the east, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, the influence of another despicable functionary from Yanukovych days has

trovsk Governor, drawing their attention to a number of suspicious rulings by the Oblast Appeals Court, which in recent days began systematically setting free individuals who had been arrested for taking part in organizing the beating of Dnipropetrovsk Euro-maidan participants on January 16, 2014. These include men connected to Oleksandr Vilkul, such as the one-time Deputy Governor of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Rostyslav Botvinov and one-time Deputy Chair of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council Viktor Naumenko, as well as a slew of managers of state and community enterprises from that time. Meanwhile, Kolomoyskiy's other deputy, Borys Filatov, announced that the former deputy governor under none other than Vilkul has now been appointed advisor to current Governor Vadym Nesterenko.

In recognition of public demand to see the country cleaned of reactionary forces, the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast Council made a populist ruling on April 17 that prohibits the registration and activity of Party of the Regions, the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Opposition Bloc of former PR members, and the Development Party of Yuriy Miroshnychenko, another one-time PR member. The Council explained its decision as intended to make any comeback by "anti-democratic, criminal political forces whose founders and members are known to have been involved in criminal activities" impossible. It also ordered the regional justice department and state registrar to withdraw all registrations of branches of these parties by the Council's next session after the decision was published.

Still, this decision is in violation of Ukrainian law and the Constitution, which state that only a court can ban the activities of a political force. In short, other than bringing the problem to

**THE "DEOLIGARCHIZATION" ANNOUNCED BY THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION IS UNASHAMEDLY OPPOSED BY THE OPPOSITION BLOC'S PUBLICLY DECLARED INTENTIONS TO PRESERVE THE OLIGARCHIC MODEL**

been growing slowly, the man who contended with Serhiy Arbuzov to replace Mykola Azarov as Premier, Oleksandr Vikul. Indeed, during the Euromaidan, he was linked to the organization and financing of anti-Maidan rallies and bands of titushky or petty thugs, both in the regions and in Kyiv. Not long ago, the former Deputy Governor under Ihor Kolomoyskiy, Ghennadiy Korban, wrote an open letter to the President, Prosecutor General, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, and the current Dnipropetro-



public attention, this decision will not have any legal consequences. On the other hand, given that most benches were appointed during the Yanukovych regime, the classic mechanisms for banning reactionary parties that were the main supports of that regime are ineffective for obvious reasons: the protracted and so far fruitless process of banning the Communist Party of Ukraine in court has dragged on for more than 6 months.

## **PUSHING FOR A SNAP ELECTION**

At the end of March, one-time “Regionals” formed a shadow Cabinet headed by Borys Kolesnikov, a close associate of Akhmetov. They have begun to actively criticize the current Administration and to develop a clear alternative to its policies. To counter what they call the “coalition war,” they are calling for “peace at any

price” and proposing a moratorium on socially unpopular measures to reduce the budget deficit and bring utility rates up to justified market levels. Instead of the government’s plans to decentralize power by devolving it to the local level, they offer the putinesque model of “federalization,” which involved mechanically handing Kyiv’s powers to regional governments. For voters, this will not change anything, because it will simply set up each oblast as a quasi-state where it will be much easier to stir up separatist sentiments, leading to destabilization and the collapse of Ukraine as a country.

The “deoligarchization” announced by the current Administration is unashamedly opposed by the Opposition Bloc’s publicly declared intentions to preserve the oligarchic model. Among others, this is being openly lobbied by Serhiy Liovochkin, one of the

Bloc’s current leaders. Chief-of-Staff under Yanukovych and the younger partner of one of the leading agents of Russian influence in Ukraine for the last year, oligarch Dmytro Firtash, Liovochkin cynically interchanges the terms “oligarch” and “Big Business” as though they were identical. “The modern world has demonstrated that destroying Big Business is synonymous with the degeneration of an economy and the failure of modernization policy,” he has been quoted as saying. “On a civilized market, Big Business is the driver of economic growth and the source of innovation.”

What’s more, the Opposition Bloc makes no bones about the fact that their primary goal is to bring the ruling coalition down and to force a snap election as early as this fall, in addition to the local elections that are already scheduled. The reality is that the current composition of the Verkhovna Rada makes any serious comeback impossible, as the Opposition Bloc won only 27 out of 450 seats in the last election based on party lists. A further 71 former PR members or other members of the pro-Yanukovych coalition in the previous Rada gained seats in single FPTP ridings. In the current Rada, 40 deputies from the Opposition Bloc, the entire Vidrozhennia [Renaissance] 22-deputy faction, 15-18 “independents” and a similar number from Volia Narodu [Will of the People] could potentially form a reactionary coalition, but they don’t even add up to 100 foot soldiers. And although there is a sizeable number of fifth columnists in the current ruling coalition, they still don’t add up to more than 30-40 deputies. In short, there is no enough of the old guard to even form a “blocking group” of 151 deputies, never mind a majority. Unless something truly extreme happens, there simply aren’t enough potential crossovers for pro-Russian forces to come up with the numbers.

So the most realistic option for the reactionary forces in the legislature is to bring down the ruling coalition. Evidence of this can be seen in a spate of recent press commentary to the effect that “President Poroshenko no longer needs Arseniy Yatseniuk to govern the

**1. Ghennadiy Kernes, notorious Mayor of Kharkiv**

**2. Serhiy Liovochkin, Chief-of-Staff in Yanukovych’s Presidential Administration and currently one of the Opposition Bloc leaders**

**3. Borys Kolesnikov, a close associate of Rinat Akhmetov and leader of the shadow Cabinet formed by ex-Party of Regions people**

country,” based on a sharp fall in the PM’s ratings and corruption scandals hitting the Government. But if Yatseniuk’s Popular Front quits the coalition, it will collapse. The one possible alternative to the Front might be that same Volia Narodu faction, which is *de facto* associated with the coalition. But this means that all the other coalition members would have to agree to join forces with deputies who once voted for the draconian January 16 laws in 2014. Since that is highly unlikely, the break-up of the Poroshenko-Yatseniuk team would probably lead to a snap election—something that many of the minor parties in the current coalition might also be interested in seeing happen because their ratings have been steady or improved since the last campaign.

### PREDICTIONS FOR A COLD, HUNGRY ELECTORATE

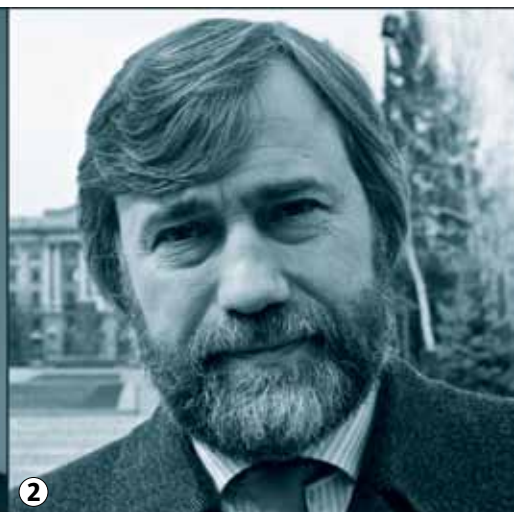
A snap election would be dangerous not only for some members of the ruling coalition, but also to pro-European parties, who may be unable to regain a firm majority or even fail altogether. Their success in the previous election was at least partly assured by the temporary demoralization of traditionally pro-Russian voters, leading to a low turnout in southern and eastern oblasts (32-42%) and a conversely high turnout in western oblasts (60-70%).

In October 2014, the five pro-European parties that went on to form the current Constitutional majority received only around 10.9 million votes from 30.4mn registered voters. If we add Svoboda, Hrytsenko’s party and Praviy Sektor, which did not meet the threshold to gain seats in the legislature, the number is 12.4mn. The fact that the pro-Russian trio (Opposition Bloc, CPU and Serhiy Tihipko’s Strong Ukraine) only had 2.6mn ballots does not guarantee that at the next election they won’t have two or three times more as the pro-Russian electorate mobilizes again. At the same time, disenchantment among voters oriented towards Europe could lead to a much lower turnout.

A snap Verkhovna Rada election called for spring 2016 would be the most timely for a comeback of the reactionaries and the most dangerous for the country’s



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1. Yuriy Boyko, ex-Energy Minister under Yanukovich involved in corruption scandals

2. Vadym Novinski, Russian-Ukrainian billionaire and business partner of Rinat Akhmetov

3. Serhiy Tihipko, leader of Strong Ukraine party and Deputy Head of the Party of Regions since March 2012

pro-European course. That’s the point at which most Ukrainians will have run out of surplus savings and patience alike, and when the impact of the (so far) triple decline of the hryvnia on prices and rates will be fully felt: two waves of electricity rate hikes will have passed and a third will be on the way for March 2016, while gas and heating rates will be maxed out after the winter. The pressure on consumer demand will be highest, leading to a collapse of domestic sales and services, which will affect small and micro-business the worst. At the same time, real and hidden unemployment alike will reach their peak.

The explosive potential of all these factors will become that much higher with an anticipated restructuring of the coal industry, leading to at least a few tens of thousands of dissatisfied miners alongside the expected demobilization of at least 70-80,000 Ukrainian participants in

the ATO at the beginning of next year. Returning home after a lengthy absence, these fighters are likely to feel the depth of the decline in living standards among their families and the absence of much-expected positive changes in relations between the government and ordinary Ukrainians far more sharply than if they had been at home all this time. On the other hand, their families and neighbors will hear from the proverbial lion’s mouth what the situation was really like in the war. Meanwhile, the government will be trying insistently to bring the economy out of the shadows by taxing savings and cash income affecting, not oligarchs, Big Business or the top officials who are determining the “logic” of the current reforms, but the middle class and SMEs, and radicalizing this driving force behind both of Ukraine’s “revolutions.”

In short, spring 2016 will be the ideal moment for reactionary

pro-Russian forces to strike and make a comeback at the national level. They are unlikely to succeed in unbalancing the situation enough to force VR elections to be scheduled with local ones in October 2015 because the protest potential is unlikely to peak by then. The key role will be played by the predicted “cold and hungry winter of 2015-2016.” So the local elections will more likely be a “test drive,” as actual election results provide the truest “opinion poll” results, as was illustrated more than once by the results of Party of Regions and Yulia Tymoshenko's BYuT in 2006, Svoboda in 2012, and Popular Front/Samopomich/OP in 2014, where the actual results were 1.5-2 times higher than the best predictions by pollsters prior to the vote. The same thing was seen with the disenchantment with Viktor Yushchenko's Nasha Ukraina in 2006, with Vitaliy Klitschko's UDAR in 2012 and with Serhiy Tihipko's Strong Ukraine and the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko in 2014. This means pushing for a snap VR election will be more to the point after the results of local elections are in.

## LOW RATINGS NOT THE WHOLE STORY

During the 2014 VR election campaign, OP, CPU and Strong Ukraine won around 57% of the vote in the districts in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts that were under Ukrainian control, 45% in Kharkiv Oblast, 39% in Zaporizhzhya Oblast, 38% in Odesa Oblast, 33% in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, 32% in Mykolayiv Oblast, and 25% in Kherson Oblast, covering the entire south and east of the country. The latest opinion polls show that support for the reactionary trio has fallen somewhat. For instance, in the East, of the 63% who have decided for whom they would vote locally, only 28% would vote for them today, which is half of what they had last fall. Indeed, only 18% would vote for OP. In the Donbas, these same indicators 46%, 20% and 11%. Still, an unusually large proportion of voters surveyed in Ukrainian-controlled Donbas (39%), southern (31%) and eastern Ukraine (20%) still don't want to exercise their electoral right, while 3%, 6% and 2% say they will spoil their ballots.

Unfortunately, the key political positions of the Opposition Bloc mentioned earlier here match the expectations of a clear majority of residents in Ukrainian-controlled Donbas and neighboring Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts. To a lesser extent, they also appeal to voters in the remaining southern and eastern oblasts.

A March 2015 Razumkov Center poll showed that in the East, 38% of respondents say that DNR and LNR are not terrorist organizations but actually “represent the people residing in the territories they control.” This is less than the 41% that consider them terrorists, but given the internal differences registered earlier among residents of Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhya oblasts, it is likely that the proportion of those inclined to consider DNR and LNR as legitimately representative most likely dominates in the last two. Even adding in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, more than half the residents of Eastern Ukraine consider the conflict in the Donbas, not as defense against Russian aggression but as either a “civil war among pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian residents of Ukraine” or a “conflict between the RF and the US over spheres of influence, taking place on Ukrainian soil.” Fully 56% of residents of Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts living in Ukrainian-controlled areas think the same.

Only 24% of residents of eastern Ukraine, including Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, want to see the ATO continue until Ukraine has complete control over all the territories in Donbas currently occupied by Russian forces; only 11% of residents of Ukrainian-controlled parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts do. On the contrary, 58% of southern Ukrainians, 56% of eastern Ukrainians and 70% of Ukrainian-controlled Donbas residents want to see the conflict frozen by granting independence or “special status” to the occupied region. More than half the residents of the East and Ukrainian-controlled Donbas are against cutting socio-economic links with the territories occupied by DNR and LNR terrorists.

Moreover, the share of those prepared to suffer material hard-

ship for the sake of reforms for at least some period of time is far smaller than those who are not prepared to do so: 35% vs 54% in southern oblasts, 23% vs 74% in eastern oblasts and 34% vs 63% in Ukrainian-controlled Donbas. Should this electorate consolidate itself under a single anti-Ukrainian bloc with a name like “For peace and stability,” as the Kremlin is suggesting, and given the share of voters who did not cast ballots last time but might well vote for such a united opposition because of their dissatisfaction with the worsening socio-economic situation, this political force would likely take a majority of the vote. Or, which is no less likely, their support for this political force could be assured with the assistance of tried-and-true methods of vote rigging.

For a national comeback by reactionary forces, next year will be ideal for one more reason: to wait any longer would be dangerous. If current trends continue and no extreme situations arise, the situation will bottom out in 2016, both in terms of real decline in living standards and in terms of voter perceptions of this decline. By the end of 2016, beginning of 2017, utility rates will have all reached market levels,



## A SNAP VERKHOVNA RADA ELECTION CALLED FOR SPRING 2016 WOULD BE THE MOST TIMELY FOR A COMEBACK OF THE REACTIONARIES

economic growth will likely resume against a very low base, commercial activity should pick up pace and employment should begin to rise again. Some Ukrainians will have adapted themselves to the new realities better, others worse, but optimistic outlooks will begin to prevail—if nothing else because of a general feeling that “the worst is behind us.” By then, a growing share of voters will be less interested in reactionary rhetoric making hay over belt-tightening economic difficulties and driven by nostalgia for the past, than in those who will offer more attractive alternative strategies for growth—sprinkled, of course, with just a dash of populism. ■

PHOTO: UNIAN

# Shaking the Foundations

Cutting access to their financial resources is the most effective way to leave the representatives of the old regime with no chance for comeback

Author:  
Lyubomyr Shavalyuk

It looks as though in the war, which currently has two dimensions – of the fighting in the Donbas and of the “peaceful” battle over reforms by civil society and some representatives of the new authorities versus the old oligarchic-bureaucratic – a third front is emerging. This one is the fight against the ghost of Viktor Yanukovych’s regime, the representatives of which are quietly working to regain the power they lost after the EuroMaidan.

And as far as this intensifying struggle on the third front is concerned, it was Yanukovych himself, who in the late February provided the perfect sound bite to describe the present developments: “As soon as I get a possibility to return, I will. And I’ll do my best to ease the life in Ukraine”. For now many view such a return as implausible at best, but the preconditions for the regime’s comeback (even if in disguise and without the infamous ex-president) are being actively created as we speak. In fact this is being done in more ways than one. Serhiy Arbutov, ex-NBU Chief and First Vice Premier under Yanukovych, is active on Facebook posting articles to justify the actions of his pre-Maidan team and to slam the authorities currently in office over the current economic situation. And while his arguments hardly hold water, the more Ukrainians get disgruntled about their worsening financial position, the more of them will fall for such rhetoric. The Azarov-era Cabinet Minister of Income and Taxes Oleksandr Klymenko has spent the last six months criticizing the State Fiscal Service and sending out press releases to the media on a regular basis. As of late his criticism concerned the ever larger scope of



macroeconomic tendencies as well as every branch of state power. Some members of the old guard are working on getting the EU sanctions lifted to regain control over their assets. Take Yanukovych’s close business associate Yuriy Ivaniushchenko (**see The Azarov/Arbutov Government at [ukrainianweek.com](http://ukrainianweek.com)**), for example. In December 2014, he managed to get an official statement from the Prosecutor General’s Office (the latter had been taking a lot of efforts to backpedal the investigation of Ivaniushchenko’s wrongdoings until very recently) that he was not a party to any ongoing criminal case. A similar kind of paper enabled the Azarov-era Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Mykola Zlochevskyi to get Great

Britain to unfreeze his bank accounts with some USD 23mn. Eduard Stavitskyi, the ex-Minister of Energy, is getting his assets re-registered to third parties and battling in courts (with mixed success) over the fortune he accumulated under Yanukovych.

Examples of Yanukovych’s “Family” members and other oligarchic clans that were part of his regime, fighting to regain their power and influence, are plenty. This is beginning to resemble the time after the Orange Revolution, when some of the officials and oligarchs, including Rinat Akhmetov, fled Ukraine, but were later guaranteed impunity and returned within months. Eventually they not only regained power but led the country to another revolution and to bloodshed at Maidan.

To avoid repeating past mistakes and minimize the chances of such a scenario happening again the new authorities must act now. The revenge-seeking old guard must be denied access to resources, first and foremost financial ones. This will require action on several fronts.

First and foremost, the revanchists must have their money flows within Ukraine taken away from them. There are a few aspects to this. Firstly, it's common knowledge that the "Family" capital under the regime used to be formed to a great extent through outright extortion and corporate raiding with protectorate from law-enforcement agencies. Most of such deals could easily be declared void in court (that is if Ukraine had an adequately functioning judicial system). Therefore putting things in order in the judiciary is an indirect way to prevent the comeback of the old regime. The creation of an efficient court system would allow the current government to make a register of assets illegally seized by representatives of the regime. The government could then assist the original owners in restoring their rights through a transparent judicial process. Such a step would not only strip Yanukovich's cohorts off their financial base, but also grant public support for the authorities in power, as justice has been in high demand in Ukraine for some time. However, launching re-privatization of the assets privatized in 2010-2013 would be a step too far. The experience of other countries shows that large-scale re-privatization campaigns tend to scare investment away, and these days investment is in short supply in Ukraine even as it is.

Secondly, an important part of the "Family" income used to come from the state budget. And it wasn't limited to public tenders, in which the current authorities have demonstrated notable progress by implementing a transparent e-auction system (meanwhile the dodgy schemes that are still in place are probably filling new pockets, for the most part, rather than those of the revanchists). Other elements include budget subsidies, for example, in the coal industry, which enriched the

"Family" with hundreds of millions every year. The subsidies have now been done away with, while the industry itself awaits radical transformations. Not to mention that with the war in the Donbas very few of the coal mines left on the Kyiv-controlled territory are worthy of any state investment. As far as natural gas is concerned, one can go at lengths criticizing the soaring utility bills, but as soon as the tariffs reach the market price the vast flow of government subsidies filling the pockets of the old guard, from the Firtash & Liovochkin oligarchic group to certain members of the "Family", will dry out. This will once again take away a considerable source of income from those, whose political orientation is anti-Ukrainian.

Thirdly, another factor of revanchists' economic influence is monopoly that they created for their businesses during their time in power. Unfortunately, the idea to break up the monopolies and to remove the hurdles hampering other players from entering certain markets isn't part of the pub-

sentatives of the Yanukovich regime were the banks they own. They provided the means to launder the money and transfer capital overseas. Currently the National Bank of Ukraine is revoking licenses of such financial institutions. As a result the "Family" has been deprived of many pet banks, which undoubtedly complicated their task of creating fertile economic grounds for the comeback. NBU's efforts in this area are indeed commendable, as transparency in the financial system is one of the key factors for eliminating shady schemes along with the operators incapable of surviving in a fair competitive environment.

While working away at destroying that economic foundation under the old oligarchic elites the current authorities and the civil society will time and time again encounter sabotage by the corrupt policemen and judges paid out of the billions of dollars, which the regime funneled abroad. They will do their utmost to torpedo transformations and to "wind back" reforms. Hence we can conclude that without fair judiciary and effective reform of law enforcement Yanukovich's odds are looking considerably better. Until Ukraine has judges, prosecutors, investigators, etc. that can be bought, they will defend the material interests of the revanchists bankrolling them. Therefore the more successful Ukraine becomes at conducting reforms, first and foremost in judiciary and law enforcement, the further this apparition of Yanukovich will roll with its foundation kicked from under it. However, should the reforms stall, the revanchists will pounce at the first opportunity to extensively feature in Ukraine.

At the same time, for as long as the Kyiv-controlled territory of Ukraine does not include Crimea and the Donbas, no matter the economic influence, the revanchists don't stand a chance in free and fair elections (the access to nonelected positions is blocked for them by the lustration law). The significant enough portion of the population residing in Ukraine's current boundaries remembers the exploits of the Yanukovich regime all too well. ■

## THE MORE SUCCESSFUL UKRAINE BECOMES AT CONDUCTING REFORMS, THE FURTHER THE APPARITION OF YANUKOVYCH AND HIS REVANCHISTS WILL ROLL

lic discussion right now. This guarantees the representatives of the old regime monopoly in certain industries. More broadly, currently oligarchs have some degree of control over the majority of the population by either being proprietors of businesses that provide employment, or controlling state enterprises that employ Ukrainians. This gives oligarchs their social and ideological influence. Such a monopoly must be destroyed by creating favorable conditions for small and medium business or a powerful influx of foreign businesses. Both options would provide an alternative to the oligarchs and the revanchists among them, an alternative to the economic force, on which so many Ukrainians are financially and therefore psychologically depend.

Fourthly, one of the pillars of economic influence for the repre-

# Roman Bezsmertny: "Yanukovych and his "Family" will never give up their dream of returning to Kyiv Olympus"

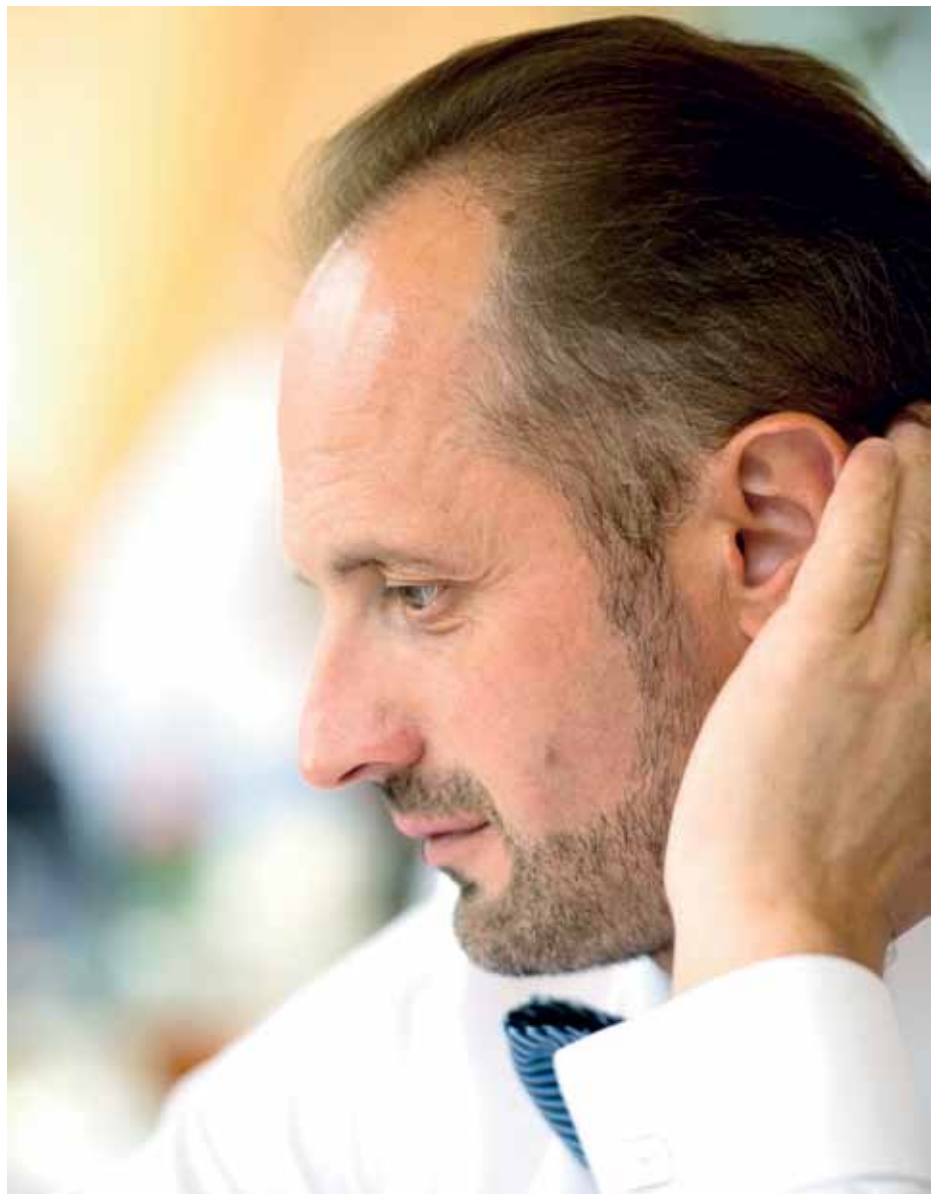
Politician Roman Bezsmertny spoke to *The Ukrainian Week* about Yanukovych's possible revenge and the current President's fear of follow the path of his predecessors

Interviewed by  
Roman Malko

**U.W.:** After the victory of the Orange Revolution, few could imagine that Yanukovych would return to power and become President, but it happened. How realistic is the revenge of the previous regime today?

There is the rule of the pendulum in politics, and we cannot repeal it. The only way to get around it is to re-establish the state on the basic, fundamental level. When less than six months ago, a large-scale public opinion poll was conducted, which showed how ordinary Ukrainians and politicians perceived the current crisis, and of which only 12% covered the things I'm talking about, it occurred to me that, unfortunately, the law of the pendulum is likely to work this time as well. The proof is the numerous criminal cases that were never taken to court and very often were not even initiated. The most striking example in recent days was the withdrawal of charges against Andriy Kliuyev (National Security and Defense Council Secretary at the time of the Maidan and violent police crackdowns on protesters – **Ed.**) over his involvement in the massacre on Maidan.

This apparent helplessness in criminal cases, these withdrawn charges and these news of Interpol removing someone from the wanted list are only the evidence that somewhere outside of Ukraine, some money is being transferred from some accounts to



some other accounts. I have to say this, because this pendulum rule is corrupting us, destroying us as a country, as a state, as a nation, and the worst thing is that we simply acknowledge our own impotence. Although in fact, it all comes down to one thing: all these court rulings have just been paid for. At the same time, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Tax Police and other state agencies are wallowing in bribery. The pressure put today on businesses that are barely surviving and on new political forces that are just emerging is overwhelming. They are simply being crushed by this mill. And there are many more things like that. I can understand why the public keeps silent. People are immediately hushed by the allegations of being Moscow agents.

When I'm saying this, I want you to get me right. I have no claims against Petro Poroshenko, Arseniy Yatseniuk, or Arsen Avakov. Each of the cases that I quoted has an actor behind it, a person who made the decision, who gave orders or fulfilled ones. I strongly object to blaming everyone for everything today, claiming that everything is bad, and so on. I just want to do justice to everyone playing a role in this process. Poroshenko does not go ahead because he's afraid of the fate of Saakashvili. No one here in Ukraine, when talking about the success made by Georgia, understands the tragedy of Saakashvili's fate. And he is not just close to Poroshenko, they are friends. And this cannot but torment the Ukrainian President.

### **U.W.: What can be done to save the situation and not to repeat the mistakes made by the Orange team?**

It is obvious that Ukraine needs reforms involving amputations. Some fifth wheels have to be eliminated urgently. Some of these fifth wheels include the staff of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Presidential Administration. We need at least to turn to constitutional principles, strict ones, as they are defined in our fundamental law. Because, no matter what we think of the Constitution, it is the basic law, which was written by well-wishing people, and which has many things in it that simply need to be complied

with. Not to mention that the tool for resolving the situation in Ukraine is changing the constitutional framework. The Constitution needs to be changed, not superficially, as this would rather be a quick fix, but profoundly. Local elections will take place in the fall, and before that, the entire power structure needs to be changed radically, which is only possible by changing the Constitution. We should hurry, as we are running out of time. Such administrative measures and active constitutional processes would give people hope, despite the hardships of life.

In foreign policy, the problem is that in the geopolitical conflict, of which Ukraine is a side and the object, it, as always, overestimates its capabilities and tries to deal with matters that it cannot manage. The role that Ukraine should assume has to do with solving its internal problems in its relations with Russia and the EU. Here, Ukraine should answer the following questions: what is it fighting for, with whom, and in which way will it proceed further? Either Ukraine says: this year we are on the defensive, and builds its entire framework accordingly, making it clear to Europe and the US how they can help; or it keeps producing tanks, making the world perceive us as savages, because never and nowhere in the world tanks were considered to be weapons of defense. They are offensive weapons. In this sense, there is enough evidence that neither the Commander-In-Chief, nor the Defense Ministry or the General Staff actually defined the task for the Armed Forces of Ukraine during this conflict. I'd like to stress that I do not distinguish between the conflict in Crimea and the one in the Donbas. It is one and the same thing, and that is how it should be treated. The fact that the Minsk agreements don't mention Crimea at all is already a huge failure. This creates two vectors that will be separated in the long run. But since this has already happened, we have to understand how to bring them back together, or just draft two possible strategies right away. I would like to say once again: today, Ukraine cannot win either in the conflict in the Donbas or in the conflict in Crimea, but it has to win tomorrow. And this future vic-

### **BIO**

**Roman Bezsmertny**, born in 1965 in Kyiv Oblast, got his degree in History at the Kyiv Pedagogical University. He lectured in history until the early 1990s. Mr. Bezsmertny was Member of Parliament in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> convocations, and Advisor to President at the Verkhovna Rada. He run the office of Nasha Ukrayina (Our Ukraine), a party led by Viktor Yushchenko, and was Deputy Head at the election headquarters of the Power of People, the coalition of Viktor Yushchenko's and Yulia Tymoshenko's forces. During the Orange Revolution, Mr. Bezsmertny was the Maidan commandant; Vice Premier in Yulia Tymoshenko's and Yuriy Yekhanurov's Cabinets in 2005. He is one of the founding fathers of the People's Front – Our Ukraine, the initial title for what later became Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine. In 2010-2011, Mr. Bezsmertny served as Ambassador to Belarus. Head of the Third Ukrainian Republic party founded by Yuriy Lutsenko in July 2014

tory should not be achieved through an armed conflict; it can be won by very different means, and the people who currently have the power know that, because it is not their first day in politics.

### **U.W.: Can these failures also be explained by fear?**

This is more likely to have two components: fear and unpreparedness to be in such situation. But fear comes first.

### **U.W.: Is the parliamentary coalition capable of lasting, without repeating the mistakes of the Orange coalition? Are the Prime Minister and the President united in understanding their mission?**

Frankly, the coalition in the conventional sense did not exist then and does not exist now (see **tReasonable Doubts at ukrainianweek.com**). Based on the traditional model, not the constitutional, but the traditional one that emerged during the years of independence, we have two options: the situation à la Yanukovich, when the "Family" controls everything, or the situation à la Yushchenko, that is, quicksand. You try to deal with it, but it just slips through your fingers. Today, Ukrainian politicians are only learning how to behave in a coalition. This is likely to be just the pains of development. And they hardly deserve harsh criticism for that. They look, just as all of us for that matter, like freshmen when it comes to forming a coalition. This is clearly visible. In the times of Yushchenko, this was manifested in the public conflict of political forces. The conflict that exists today has been pushed under the rug, as if it didn't exist, even though it actually continues. This is evident from staff appointments, delays with appointments, progress of reforms, financing of state-funded sectors, etc. Look at the distribution of control over the banking and financial sectors and production. Everything is divided among the key players. The situation with Ihor Kolomoisky and around Rinat Akhmetov's business is exactly the same. What we are witnessing is, to put it mildly, a redistribution of property or, rather, not the redistribution, but a confiscation from some people for the benefit of some other peo- ➤

ple, that manifests itself on the surface. This is done by manipulating with the legislation, manipulating with tariffs, by changing customers and contractors, etc. We can see all of this today.

**U.W.: Can this low-down behavior of high-ranking officials in times of hardship be explained by their not understanding the situation and being irresponsible, or by their lack of self-preservation instinct? In general, what is the scale of all this?**

This is happening on the scale of people's animal instincts. A bird in hand is worth two in the sky. That's it. A person that gets into this system and makes two steps forward gets hit hard. And stops, preferring to rather leave, or play the role of a dummy, just to have sustainable income and not to have to fight against the wind blowing in his or her face. I read shy interviews with foreigners working in the Ukrainian government. You can see that they are embarrassed of being part of this.

**U.W.: Going back to the beginning of our discussion, how crucial was the movement of cash between accounts of powerful Ukrainians in foreign banks in the first return of Yanukovich after the Orange Revolution?**

Such money always plays a big role in politics. Not only in Ukrainian politics, but in politics overall. This is the ultimate tool that can never be used within the country. But it is being used nevertheless. By and large, this is a payoff providing a way out of deadlocked situations. When it comes to a dead-end, this tool is used somewhere at some point.

**U.W.: Can it be assumed that Yanukovich bought his first revenge in this manner?**

— You see, I find it difficult to talk about who gave what to whom... But, definitely, such mechanism has been used for the last 23 years. The evidence of this is the fact that in Ukraine, there has only been one high-profile corruption case that was brought to court, even though in a foreign country — that of Pavlo Lazarenko (Dnipropetrovsk-based ex-Premier of Ukraine convicted and imprisoned in the US for money laundering, wire fraud and extor-

tion in 2006 — Ed.). I analyze the situation from the contrary, and having studied possible schemes, I can see exactly this mechanism. Say, a person was detained and then suddenly released. What happened? We can conclude that some arguments were provided that, even though they are not invisible in principle, are invisible here in Ukraine and cannot be documented. This mechanism is used very often. Who can know about it? Anyone who sees these transactions and understands who the ultimate beneficiary is. But how can this be documented?

**U.W.: Yanukovich and his team are now playing for high stakes and seeking revenge. What are these stakes, after all that happened in the country: war, ruins, and lost lives?**

I'll start with some basic things. Yanukovich lost his son, and he will avenge to his last day. So, we must understand that we have only acquired additional problems here, rather than solving them. I am deeply convinced that the step that Putin made would have been made in any case. It's just that the events of the Maidan and Yanukovich's flight accelerated the process. We have to understand that Yanukovich, and especially the people



## POROSHENKO DOES NOT GO AHEAD BECAUSE HE'S AFRAID OF THE FATE OF SAKASHVILI

around him, primarily his "Family", will never give up their dream of returning to Kyiv Olympus. Therefore, we will be witnessing time and again the events reminding us of this dream. It is unlikely to come true. But in today's open world, of which Ukraine is a part, we will always see evidence of their desire to return. It is difficult to say in which form. But I can say, judging from the precedents, that this will continue. Yanukovich will not give up his fight for Ukraine. Even if everything prevents him from this, he will still think about it. And we have to bear in mind that he has people around to inspire him.

**U.W.: Is reconciliation possible?**

This process is already underway. And one of the exams is the

approaching government crisis. This will bring up the issue of the coalition crisis. And it can reveal to us what kind of new configurations can emerge in the coalition. However, parliamentary elections may put an end to this.

If the current parliamentary coalition were a coalition as it is understood conventionally, we would already have a media explosion from there with all the relevant consequences. But you can see no signs of this happening, although everyone realizes that some of the coalition's top officials should have resigned already given the slow pace of reforms. Excuses, such as the war being not the best time for top resignations, no longer work. I think what we have is attempts of top actors in the coalition to look for the right arrangement of chess pieces that could save the situation, which means that there is no conventional coalition. Instead, we are dealing with insider arrangements and deals — not consistent conventional coalition agreements, but secret deals that are legitimized in the eyes of the external world through the young newly-elected daydreamers who, not being aware of all that mess, with their romantic revolutionary blah and open sincere wishes are covering the corrupt collusions taking place behind their backs. When I meet them, I tell them all the time to take good care of themselves. People believe them, they still believe them, so they should be careful. Careful with what they say.

**U.W.: Is this treason, or are these just the animal instincts that you mentioned earlier?**

No. All these accusations are trumped up. I occasionally read the allegations politicians pour against one another: Yatseniuk is sold to someone, and Poroshenko to someone else. This is nonsense. There is no treason, and I can tell you honestly that I believe in the patriotism of the 70% of Ukrainian politicians. I believe in their honesty and their patriotism with respect to the social role that they are playing. Actual treason is fear to lose voters' support and rejection of reforms for that purpose. Politicians should work to the benefit of their people and its future, not their own. ■



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# The Yushchenko Syndrome

Author:  
Yehor Firsov

Dmytro Kolesnikov, former Head of Oblast State Administration, "master" of the attack on the Dnipropetrovsk Euromaidan, still active in politics



Oleksandr Peklushenko, the man behind the beatings of activists in Zaporizhzhya, died under mysterious circumstances one year after the Maidan. Was never indicted over the beatings



Still fresh in our memories is the avalanche of mistakes made by Viktor Yushchenko during his term as the president. The man's biography could easily be titled "How Not to Govern the Country". It was his inept and gutless policy that not only failed to fulfill the promise of putting the criminals (read "corrupt former elites" – **Ed.**) behind bars, but allowed them back into politics, and come

back they did. With a vengeance! Eventually they allowed the country to slide into a war. Hopefully Viktor Yushchenko realizes that there's a considerable portion of his guilt in every today's victim.

Alas, today we witness the very same mistakes being made by the new authorities. The Prime Minister, the President and the members of Parliament, all those unwilling to put an end to the criminal, utterly klepto-

cratic regime built by Viktor Yanukovych show worrying symptoms of the Yushchenko Syndrome. And the next revenge of the old elites is already looming on the horizon. Should the authorities in Kyiv allow it to happen, the consequences will be far more horrifying than those of Yushchenko's errors from ten years ago.

So why should we take the return of the old guard seri-

ously, is that a real threat? There are several reasons, the main of which being the unwillingness of the authorities in power to pursue obvious crooks, thieves and out-and-out criminals connected to the old regime. Those, who not only shamelessly misappropriated the taxpayers' money, but went as far as organizing attacks on their political opponents, including assassinations, are at large. Moreover many are still engaged in politics and are hatching plans to come back to power.

The current state of affairs is indeed alarming. While the Valentyn Nalyvaychenko-led Security Service of Ukraine, SBU, is actively catching and arresting separatists, the rest of the law-enforcement seems to be stuck in idle. Here is just one example.

In January 2014, when clashes broke out on the streets of Kyiv, when the reins were slipping out of Yanukovich's hands, and new local "Maidans" appeared in one town after another, the then Head of Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration Dmytro Kolesnikov sent titushky, the hired thugs, to carry out a brutal attack on the pro-European integration protesters.

Bats were given to these criminals right inside the building of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast State Administration. What ensued was a gruesome bloodbath on the streets of the city. Many still remember the shocking scenes of people, even the ones already lying on the ground, being beaten with bats and steel rods. Those, who forgot, may refer to the footage, which is available on the internet. So who has been punished? Nobody. Dmytro Kolesnikov, the oblast's former top official and the organizer of this bloodbath appears to be having a merry time on the election campaign tour of the Dnipropetrovsk region together with Oleksandr Vilkul, who also had his hand in the aforementioned atrocities. These two have the cheek to look people in the eye organizing meet-ups with local factory workers. They are setting their sights at winning the

local elections and brining into the local councils another gaggle of renegades ready to sell out and surrender the region at first opportunity, just like their fellow party men surrendered Donetsk and Luhansk. Something like this would be unthinkable in any other European country, but in Ukraine Dmytro Kolesnikov has somehow managed to attain immunity, even not being an active official elected or otherwise.

The man behind similar beatings in Zaporizhzhya Oblast Oleksandr Peklushenko also escaped justice. Unfortunately, the chance to see this figure in court is now gone: Peklushenko is no longer with us. The official version of the Interior Ministry is that the former Head of Zaporizhzhya Oblast State Administration shot himself, but many find this hard to believe. In all certainty it wasn't the terror unleashed upon the citizens of Zaporizhzhya that cost him life, but some of his other "business" matters. It has been a full year since the attacks on Maidan and neither Peklushenko, nor Kolesnikov have been indicted.

As we remember, the "orange team" showed remarkable mercy towards the defeated Party of Regions in the past. This resulted in Yanukovich's return to power with ensuing persecution of political opponents. Several of Yushchenko's officials, namely the Ministers Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko ended up in prison. One would imagine that they had enough time behind bars to look back at their mistakes and learn their lessons. Today, however, we witness history repeating.

The old political elites, now behind the Opposition Bloc banner, are clearly determined to return to power. And in order to achieve this they employ the same old populist rhetoric hoping to grab the low hanging votes and boost their ratings making the most of the society's discontent about the pace of reforms and deteriorating social standards. But as soon as these "statesmen" regain power, we'll see the all too familiar policy being revived: all criminal cases against Yanukovich and his associates being swept under the

carpet; sanctions against individuals, who plundered Ukraine of billions of hryvnias, lifted. And then they'll proceed fulfilling the instructions from Kremlin to put the country back under Putin's protectorate.

In the nearest future I'm going to make a number of inquiries in order to get the former Head of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast State Administration to be held responsible for the crimes committed. But, unfortunately, fighting the bureaucratic leviathan is an uphill struggle, even for an MP. Therefore, once again all hope is resting on the conscientiousness of the citizens. I'd like to call on civic ac-



## THE "ORANGE TEAM" SHOWED REMARKABLE MERCY TOWARDS THE DEFEATED PARTY OF REGIONS IN THE PAST. THIS RESULTED IN YANUKOVYCH'S RETURN TO POWER

tivists to work more with the population in order to prevent the return of Yanukovich's henchmen, to prevent Ukrainians from walking into the same trap once again. Granted, helping the army at the frontline is important, but it may turn out to be in vain, if at the rear traitors take over the reins. The civic volunteers already proved to be a force to be reckoned with, a force capable of carrying the country through hard times. This potential must be channeled into working with the population to build true civil society.

At this stage the revenge of former elites can and has to be prevented. Otherwise we are in for more tragedies, the consequences of which are so far hard to predict. ▮

### BIO

**Yehor Firsov**, aged 26, is currently Member of Parliament (Bloc of Petro Poroshenko). He got into the Rada in 2014 as member of Vitaliy Klitschko's UDAR and head of its branch in Donetsk Oblast (since 2012), focusing on counteraction to separatism in his home region, then actively engaging in the organization of the May 2014 presidential election in parts of Donetsk Oblast freed from Russian-backed separatists. Member of the VR European Integration Committee in the 8<sup>th</sup> convocation

# Political Redesign

Shifts in electoral preferences in the countdown to local elections

As the fighting in the Donbas seems to have subdued slightly, this spring brings once again to the forefront the political tensions within the ruling coalition. In March, Yulia Tymoshenko's Batkivshchyna and Oleh Liashko's Radical Party threatened to leave it, refusing to vote for the bills necessary to get IMF loans and to implement the Minsk agreements. Samopomich party also excelled in selective and unpredictable voting on the coalition bills.

The President's conflict with Ihor Kolomoisky and offensive against the interests of Dmytro Firtash and Rinat Akhmetov in sectors that they traditionally believed to be their own fiefdoms urged them to engage in politics more actively. In April, internal squabbles reached a new level: the Batkivshchyna party rushed full tilt into the coal-and-coalminers conflict and joined the chorus of accusations of the inflated new tariffs for housing and communal services. Anton Herashchenko, advisor to Interior Minister Arsen Avakov, demanded that the head of Donetsk Oblast State Administration Oleksandr Kikhtenko, who has long lobbied for lifting the blockade of the Russian-occupied regions of the Donbass, be dismissed.

However, the climax of the confrontation was a high-profile corruption scandal with the alleged involvement of the government in general and Premier Arseniy Yatsenyuk in particular, amounting to billions of hryvnyas. The key role in the attack on the Prime Minister was played by the members of the Batkivshchyna party, his former partners in the alliance that his own political force, the Front of Change, once formed with Tymoshenko's party. The accusations were supported by the members of Svoboda party, as well as by Liashko's Radical Party and UDAR's Serhiy Kaplin, who are allegedly linked to Serhiy Lyovochkin, former head of Viktor Yanukovich's Adminis-

**Author:**  
**Oles**  
**Oleksiyenko**

tration and current leader of the Opposition Bloc. Yatsenyuk's Popular Front then started publicly accusing Batkivshchyna and its other critics of being Putin's agents who are implementing Moscow-written scenarios to destabilize the situation in Ukraine.

For the moment, the attack on Premier Yatsenyuk was bogged down primarily due to the fact that the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko (BPP) and his Presidential Administration realize far too well that they are in the "same boat" with Yatsenyuk's Popular Front, and the collapse of the coalition and political instability would play against the government and the country in general. The Premier is primarily blamed for the negative implications of the belt-tightening policy, but the President and his political muscle have not escaped criticism either. For instance, according to the public opinion poll conducted in March by the Razumkov Center, Yatsenyuk's performance were fully supported by only 7.8% of Ukrainians and Poroshenko's by 12.6%,

Mykhaylo Volynets and the Trade Union of Mine Workers led by a former Party of Regions MP Viktor Turmanov, in fact, stood together against the government's attempts to restructure the coal mining industry by canceling state subsidies to loss-making coal enterprises and closing unprofitable mines. It is important to note that Deputy Energy Minister in charge of the coal sector was appointed from Batkivshchyna's quota.

As Ukrainians grow weary of deteriorating living standards and slow reforms, populism and the ability to dissociate from the government's actions in the eyes of the voters brings good electoral results.

According to the above survey of the Razumkov Center, as of March 2015, the share of the population willing to vote for the BPP decreased compared to November 2014 from 19.2% to 14.1%, and for the Popular Front, from 15.0% to 4.6%. Only 6.8% of the respondents improved their opinion of the Popular Front, 8.5% - of the Radical Party, 9.3% - of the BPP, and 15.9% - of Samopomich. The attitude of 48%, 41.4%, 45% and 24% of the respondents, respectively, changed for the worse. That is, more positive dynamics are clearly visible for the coalition's minority stakeholders by contrast to the President's and Premier's political forces, which, with a little helping hand from their coalition partners, are being made accountable for all negative aspects of the situation in the country. For Batkivshchyna, 6.5% of respondents improved their perception of the party, 37.3% changed their opinion for the worse, while more than 50% did not change it.

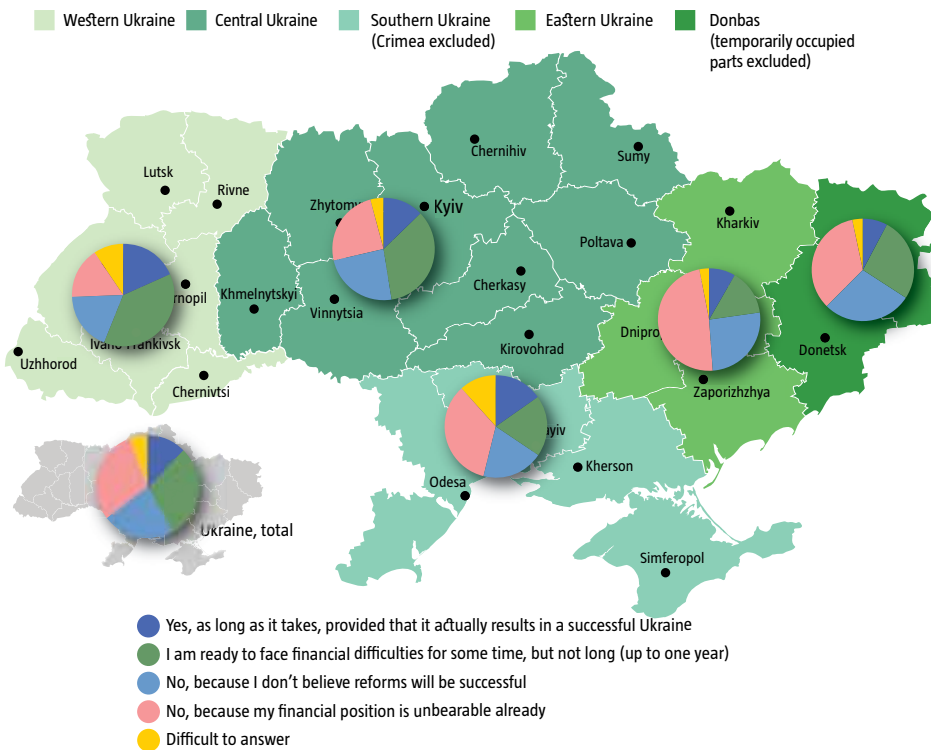
Thus, a de facto opposition has emerged within the formal coalition in the Rada. On the one hand, its representatives, with rare exceptions, are unable to influence the government's decisions. Therefore, they have to either support the initiatives of the Popular Front and BPP as the coalition's majority

**WHOEVER WINS THE LOCAL ELECTIONS WILL GET ENGAGED IN THE FIGHT FOR EARLY PARLIAMENTARY AND, POSSIBLY, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN A LONGER RUN**

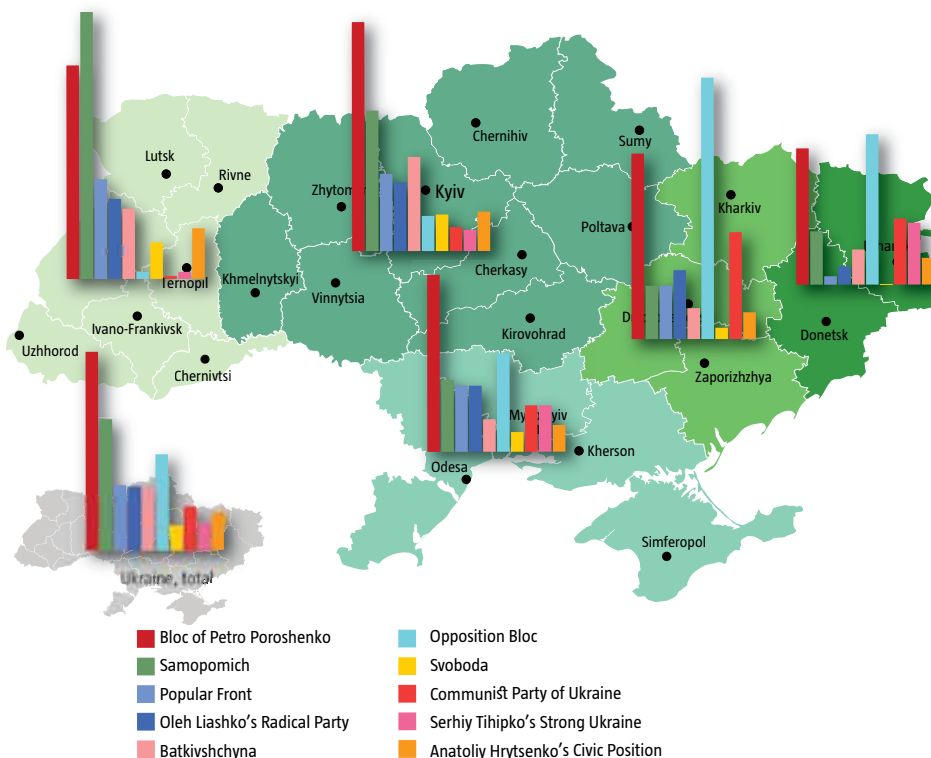
while some individual moves of the Premier were supported by 29.3%, and of the President by 40.7% of Ukrainians. 56.7% of respondents did not support the initiatives of the Premier, and 39.9% of the President.

Another sign of the heated conflict within the coalition was the confrontation around the coal industry reform, leading to a de facto ad hoc alliance formed by the Batkivshchyna party and the Opposition Bloc. The Independent Trade Union of Miners headed by Yulia Tymoshenko's long-time ally

## Reforms will most likely lead to temporary difficulties in everyday life. Are you willing to face some belt-tightening?, %



## If the general election took place next Sunday, what party would you vote for?, %



Source: polls by the Razumkov Center held on March 6-12, 2015

stakeholders, or to oppose them, but this has little effect on the outcome of the votes. On the other hand, Batkivshchyna, Radical Party and Samopomich have a chance to publicly criticize the actions of the government and the President, taking the opposition niche in the eyes of the voters.

## TIRED OF AUSTERITY

Being seen as opposition can be very helpful in times of rapid socio-economic degradation with real reforms barely there. The cost of living, even according to the official figures, has grown 1.5 times over the last year (according to the State Statistics Agency, price increase from March 2014 to March 2015 was 45.8%), while nominal income of the Ukrainians remained the same. In April, the government dared to take the long-needed steps to raise public utilities tariffs to economically justified levels.

According to the March survey conducted by the Razumkov Center, the share of citizens who believed that the situation in the country is going in the right direction (17.5%) nearly halved compared to 32.3% in March 2014, immediately after the Maidan. Only 21.8% of the respondents believed that Ukraine is capable of overcoming the existing problems within the next few years, while 30.7% expected a total social and economic collapse in the near future.

In the South and East, this figure is close to 50% (East - 46.1%, Ukrainian-controlled part of the Donbas - 43%, South - 38.9%). In the Center and West, the share of the respondents who stated that the situation in the country is developing properly was much larger. The results of a poll conducted in early March by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology confirmed that people in the West and Center assessed Ukraine's mid-term prospects more optimistically: 52.5% and 50.6% expected improvements while 17.6% and 19.4% believed the situation would deteriorate.

According to the March data collected by the Razumkov Center, today only 12.7% of Ukraine's population are "ready to sacrifice whatever it takes if this can result in the country's success," 28.7% are "ready to suffer for a short while, but not for long (not more

than a year)," and 53% are not ready to suffer because they either do not believe in the success of the reforms or their financial situation is already intolerable. In the Western region, the total number of those ready to suffer at least for some time exceeds the number of those who aren't (56.2% vs 34.5%, respectively), while in the Center these figures are almost equal (47.7% vs 48.2%, respectively).

However, high levels of optimism about the country's prospects of changes for the better and the consequent willingness to endure hardships for some time, which can be observed in the West and Center, are no less dangerous. Failure to meet the voters' expectations will lead to bitter disappointment, apathy and growing protest sentiments, not necessarily the constructive ones, that can be used through political manipulations by anti-Ukraine forces to destabilize the country.

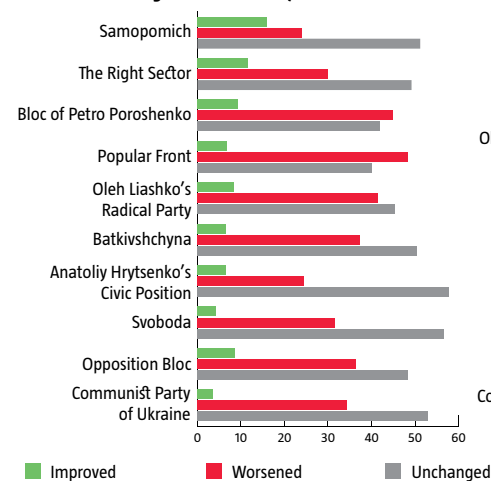
### WAITING FOR THE ELECTIONS

The formula of today's broad coalition was initially just a ritual tribute to Euromaidan. The public expected all the political forces that supported democracy and European choice to unite in a coalition following the victory of the Maidan. However, the resulting constitutional majority allowed provided ample opportunities to its stakeholders to ignore not only fellow party members, but also entire partner factions, wage internal wars, shift responsibility to the coalition partners and grab the neighbor's piece of the electoral pie.

More than 300 seats held by the five coalition factions, plus Ihor Yermeyev's group of MPs actually associated with the majority, excoordinated by almost 100 votes the quorum necessary to pass the Parliament's bills. A number of key decisions were passed by 227-230 votes, 15-20 out of which belonged to MPs that formally were not part of the coalition. This allowed it to keep ignoring the lack of consensus among its members when making difficult decisions and not to notice the resistance of the above mentioned "minority stakeholders."

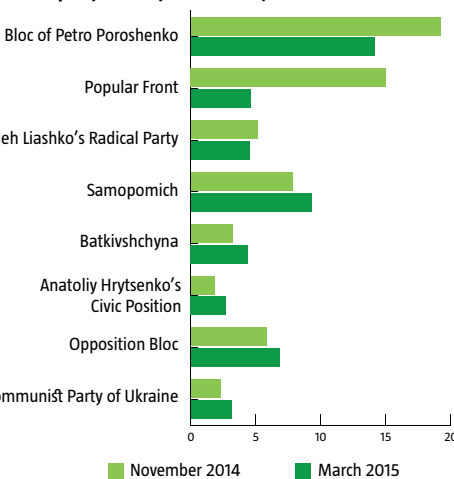
With the current majority configuration, the opposition niche has actually been left to the reactionary Opposition Bloc. However,

How has your attitude to the parties listed below changed since the October general election?, %



Source: polls by the Razumkov Center held on March 6-12, 2015

If the general election took place next Sunday, what party would you vote for?, %



Ukraine would benefit much more from an opposition initially formed of democratic, pro-European political forces that would oppose the majority only in matters pertaining to the tactics of the European reform course. This would have made the implementation of the EU integration and the necessary reforms the main focus of the political struggle in the country, rather than questioning whether to continue down the chosen path, as the Opposition Bloc does. Leaving the opposition niche to it basically helps promote it, giving it the op-

## SURVEY RESULTS SHOW THAT SOUTHERN AND EASTERN UKRAINE ARE NO LONGER PRO-RUSSIAN, BUT HAVE REMAINED EUROSCEPTICAL

portunity to claim being the only alternative to the entire pro-European political camp.

The situation will escalate further as Ukraine enters the season of local elections. Even if they are not accompanied by early parliamentary elections, the local ones will still be a very important indicator of change in political preferences. Another important question is how the protest votes will be distributed: how many will go to the pro-European opposition, including new political projects, and how many will be given to reactionary projects, primarily, the Opposition Bloc.

Whoever wins the local elections will get engaged in the fight for early parliamentary and, possibly, presidential elections in a longer run. Besides, local elections on their own will be very important. Decentralization is very likely to ultimately take place under the pressure from both internal and external sources, thus significantly increasing the authority of local governments and whoever controls them. The newly elected local governments may turn out to be much more ambitious in trying to influence the state policy than the current ones that were formed five years ago basing on the results of the 2010 elections largely rigged by the Yanukovich regime.

The data of the recent polls indicate that the BPP is still the most popular political force in the Center and West, with support figures in the South approaching the average across Ukraine. The situation is similar for the Popular Front, except that in the South and East it has significantly lower support rates compared to the average. Samopomich already today enjoys electoral sympathies at the same level as the BPP in the West, where it will soon be able to come out on top. At the same time, its support in the Center of the country is equally high, while in the South and East it is popular enough to overcome the electoral threshold in local elections. The Popular Front, on the contrary, has no such chances in the South and East.

Batkivshchyna's support are higher than average in the South and Center, as well as in the West.

However, its popularity is not sufficient to get into local governments, both in the East and in the Donbas. Oleh Liashko's Radical Party has a good chance of entering local governments all over the country, enjoying the highest popularity in Western and Central Ukraine. In the West and Center, Anatoliy Hrytsenko's Civic Position has rather high chances of getting into the local governments, while the Right Sector stands good chances in all regions, except for the East and the Donbas. Svoboda, however, today has a chance to enter local authorities only in Western Ukraine and in some areas of Central Ukraine.

The Opposition Bloc currently has no prospects to enter local governments on party lists in the Center and West. However, they could remedy the situation by sending their well disguised candidates to first-past-the-post constituencies, who could end up making their way into local governments in other regions as well. Besides, its members could run in local elections in different regions under the disguise of several new parties with neutral names. At any rate, it is an

uncontested leader in the Donbas and in the East, also having considerable support in the South.

### UNCOMMITTED RESOURCES

The situation remains utterly uncertain in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, where the majority of the population are still hesitating or have no intentions of going to the polls. In the Donbas and South, about 50% of respondents are either not planning to vote at all or have not yet finalized their sympathies, for various reasons.

KIIS survey results show that the South and East are no longer pro-Russian, but have remained Eurosceptical. According to the poll, 32.2% of the population in Southern Ukraine support joining the EU, 31.4% support joining neither the EU, nor the Customs Union, and 21.8% support joining the Customs Union. In the East, these figures are 32.2%, 32.7% and 19%, respectively, and 28.5%, 28.5% and 23.6% respectively in the Donbas.

The respondents are rather indifferent with respect to internal polarization of Ukrainian society. For example, when asked about

whom they would support if the Maidan were taking place today by the Razumkov Center, 25.4% of respondents in Eastern Ukraine supported Maidan, 21.1% supported Antimaidan and 41.9% were against both, while in the South these figures were 23.1%, 10.6% and 52.8%, and in Ukrainian-controlled Donbas, 19.6%, 10.1% and 63.6%, respectively. This creates a favorable environment for promoting new "centrist" political projects and self-nominated candidates for first-past-the-post constituencies.

Local elections are a real chance to secure, consolidate and even extend their influence in Southern and Eastern Ukraine for Rinat Akhmetov's group, thus increasing its weight in political bargaining with the President and the ruling coalition in the Rada, especially in light of the potential parliamentary and presidential elections. The same goes for the Dnipropetrovsk-based Ihor Kolomoisky, for whom winning the local elections would mean a chance to translate his increased influence into control of the lower echelons of power. ■

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# Akhmetov's Losing Bet

**Author:**  
**Denys**  
**Kazanskyi**

One of Ukraine's most influential oligarchs, Rinat Akhmetov is beginning to lose his position today. Placing his bets on Viktor Yanukovich, who became drunk with power and made a number of fatal mistakes, has turned out, ultimately, to have been a mistake. His next bet, on the 'separatists,' which he made immediately after Yanukovich fled Ukraine, has only brought him greater losses. Still, this does not mean that the powerful Donetsk billionaire is broken or defeated. Akhmetov is not the kind to give up and he is more than ready to defend his interests. As in 2004, the Donetsk clan is counting on a comeback.

## AN EXPLOSIVE RISE

Rinat Akhmetov's thorny life differs considerably from the success stories of other Ukrainian oligarchs. While Andriy Kliuyev was doing his Masters, Hryhoriy Surkis worked as a foreman for a building trust, and Viktor Pinchuk defended his dissertation on manufacturing steel pipes, Akhmetov was studying at a completely different "university." People who knew him when he was growing up in the village of Oktiabrsk say that he earned his living playing cards and hung out with criminals. His tight relationship with Donetsk mafia boss Akhat "Alik the Greek" Bragin makes it very clear what Akhmetov did prior to becoming a bigwig businessman and politician.

Rinat Akhmetov's star began to rise after Bragin was assassinated during an underworld war. Rumors that Akhmetov himself was behind the explosion that killed Bragin and his six bodyguards at the Shakhtar Stadium in Donetsk in October 1995 persist to this day and the incident certainly cleared the path to Akhmetov's rise in the criminal world. Needless to say, no evidence has been found linking him—just as none has been found to link Akhmetov to any number of other high-profile murders in Donetsk. One

piece of evidence is quite indisputable, however: all the assets belonging to murdered businessmen and criminal bosses ended up becoming part of Akhmetov's business empire upon their deaths. One way or another, all those deaths around Akhmetov certainly proved profitable for him.

In fact, most contract killings in Donetsk in the 1990s were never exposed and, at this point, are highly unlikely to be so, given how much time has gone by. After the gangland-style slaying of Donetsk's most influential MP, Yevhen Shcherban, in 1996, an obscure local by the name of Viktor Yanukovich was appointed governor of the oblast, something that would never have happened while Shcherban was alive. This is the point at which the swift rise of the Donetsk clan to the very top of political power in Ukraine began.

## STEERING THE SHIP

For a long time, Viktor Yanukovich was seen as Akhmetov's man and was completely dependent on him. This only changed in 2010, when Yanukovich finally won the presidency. The fourth president of Ukraine was, in fact, Akhmetov's longest and costliest investment project. But catastrophe struck just when everyone was least expecting it. Yanukovich was merely acting the way one might expect of a small-town bumpkin who had come to enormous power: intoxicated with an excess of permissiveness, he began to make one mistake after another. When the crash came to the president, it also hit his partners. Akhmetov continued to support Yanukovich to the very end, but that could not save a sinking ship.

With Yanukovich gone and the change of government in Kyiv, Akhmetov could see which way the wind was blowing—and chose to dive headlong into a new game. There's little doubt that he was one of the architects of DNR, the Donetsk People's Republic, and was

After the gangland-style slaying of Donetsk's most influential MP, Yevhen Shcherban, in 1996, an obscure local by the name of Viktor Yanukovich was appointed governor of the oblast, something that would never have happened while Shcherban was alive



close to the source of the separatist putsch in Donbas in Spring 2014. Although any number of facts point to this, it's quite unlikely that he will ever face criminal charges for sponsoring separatism. Clearly, the Donetsk oligarch did not personally marshal the militants from the barricades. His involvement was much more subtle, more a matter of pulling the strings backstage.

Those who have only a vague idea of how things work in the Donbas might think that the situation in Spring 2014 evolved quite naturally. But Donetsk residents themselves don't need anyone to tell them that things could never have evolved the way they did spontaneously. Local clans have tightly controlled the region since the 1990s and there have never been any "surprises" without their approval. So that when it became obvious that Akhmetov was doing nothing to stop the "chaos" but was pretending that the situation was out of his control, there could be no doubt at all that, in fact, he failed to act, not because he had no power to stop the unrest, but because he had no desire to.



PHOTO: AP

Rinat Akhmetov has always had complete control over the situation in Donetsk Oblast and it's a fairly open secret that all officials of any real significance in the oblast were generally appointed with his approval. This was even the case in the last few years, when Yanukovych was president and had taken virtually unlimited power into his own hands.

Andriy Shyshatskiy was also an Akhmetov man: he was appointed Governor of Donetsk in 2011 and remained in his post until early 2014. Another Akhmetov henchman was Donetsk Mayor Oleksandr Lukianchenko, who held his post for many years, always granted easy victory at every election. Many deputies on both the city and oblast councils represented Akhmetov's interests, as did the mayors of several other Donetsk Oblast cities, including the second largest, the port city of Mariupol. Akhmetov also controlled the police.

### THE FINE ART OF PLACING A BET

As one of the pillars of the Yanukovych regime, Rinat Akhmetov

had unlimited power and could easily have suppressed the unrest that began in the Donbas in Spring 2014. Did the oligarch really have the power to stop the conflict? Absolutely yes. For one thing, Akhmetov could have done in Donetsk exactly the same as Ihor Kolomoyskiy did in Dnipropetrovsk: set up a defensive territorial battalion, and order local officials and the police to work in emergency mode and not allow illegal actions.

Every single Ukrainian oligarch has always had something akin to a small private army that, if necessary, could be called on to protect their interests. The fighters in these "armies" typically worked for different security agencies or trained in sports clubs that were funded by one moneybag or another. When the time came, these fighters came to the side of their boss. During the Maidan in Winter 2013-4, they played the role of *titushky*. Prior to that, they had formed the ranks in raider attacks.

All Akhmetov had to do was to issue a few orders, talk to the leaders of any separatist groups, engage the forces under his control—and

DNR mercenaries guarded Rinat Akhmetov's home in Donetsk when the locals rallied in protest to it during the Maidan

the March 2014 putsch in the Donbas would have been over just as soon as it started. The people of Donetsk remember very well with what speed local officials crushed any rallies by those in opposition to Party of the Regions over 2011-2014, when Yanukovych and Akhmetov wanted it.

In November 2011, the police violently dispersed a protest rally by Chornobyl liquidators in downtown Donetsk, even killing one of the demonstrators. To prevent locals from joining an opposition rally in 2012, Horlivka officials had the Donetsk-Horlivka highway blocked off, stopping all traffic on this major artery for over an hour. In early 2014, local officials did everything they could to stop the Donetsk Euromaidan from spreading.

Yet the organizers of anti-Ukrainian rallies and riots in Donetsk in the spring of 2014 were given the green light at every step. No one stopped them from bussing people in, blocking roads with checkpoints, or setting up barricades on the highways. In early spring 2014, when the anti-Ukrainian putsch had relatively few supporters, this could have been done fairly easily. Later on, of course, the situation went out of control.

So what did Rinat Akhmetov need all this for? Perhaps, like most Ukrainians, the billionaire assumed at first that the unrest would never turn into anything more serious and figured he would make use of the situation to keep the pressure on Kyiv. Once Yanukovych fled, however, the Donetsk clan scrambled to at least maintain control in its home region. According to various reports, Akhmetov, Boris Kolesnikov, Yukhym Zviakhilskiy and other representatives of Donetsk clans initially paid off the militants, persuading themselves in this way that they would continue to manage the anti-Ukrainian insurgency. But by Summer 2014, when control over the militant groups had clearly been established by diversionary groups from Russia, the Donetsk oligarchs understood that they had lost any possible leverage against the anti-Ukrainian movement. And it was too late to do anything about it.

### LOCKSTEP WITH THE PROXIES

Today, relations between Rinat Akhmetov and the DNR are based »

on mutually beneficial cooperation. The oligarch doesn't control the terrorists, but coexists with them symbiotically. Not long ago, the one-time leader of DNR, Aleksandr Borodai, explained this situation in great detail at a meeting with Russian nationalists in Moscow.

"Let's imagine that we nationalized Mr. Akhmetov," said Borodai. "Companies belonging to him that are located on DNR territory have continued to function with miraculous normalcy this entire time. Given that all this time Mr. Akhmetov was the root and branch of Ukrainian politics, that is, the person who has informally but effectively 'controlled Ukraine,' the current situation is very convenient. Let me explain why.

"He has too many enemies among the current administration in Kyiv, the Ukrainian establishment..." Borodai claimed. "And chief among these is a certain Kolomoyskiy. So, for Akhmetov, it's convenient that his enterprises are located on DNR territory and continue to manufacture products. It's also convenient for him that these products are exported and they need to be shipped. Where? To Italy. How can they be shipped there? Through ports. Which ports? The only port he has access to is Mariupol."

Borodai quite explicitly stated that Mariupol was not taken by the militants only because a deal was basically cut between them and Akhmetov. The Russian proxies left the oligarch a Ukrainian port so that he could ship his companies' products from the occupied territories in return for supplying them with food.

"So, guess why we didn't take Mariupol in September, although the opportunities were there," Borodai went on. "Because how is he supposed to get his production from the territory occupied by DNR terrorists—as the western world sees it—to Italy? There's no way. He can't get it out of there. He has to be exporting it from Ukrainian territory and the only port he has access to is Mariupol. Odesa is not available. Kolomoyskiy controls it and he will never allow Akhmetov in there. So the only way for Akhmetov's businesses to continue to function successfully is for Mariupol to remain under the blue and yellow flag of Ukraine."

In return for this supposed favor from the DNR militants, Borodai explained, Akhmetov promised to supply food to the Russian proxies. That's what his humanitarian convoys to the self-proclaimed republic are all about.

Borodai's revelations did not create much of a stir. After all, the arrangement between Akhmetov and the terrorists was a bit too obvious not to be noticed. Still, this bold admission once again raised the question of the Donetsk don's role in assisting the militants.

The billionaire's assistance to DNR recalls what Ostop Bender once called "a relatively honest way of taking money from people." Officially, Akhmetov is shipping food to local civilians in occupied Donetsk

broadcaster of infomercials about the achievements of the Donetsk oligarch and his satellites. Live broadcasts regularly feature deputies from the Opposition Bloc, the rump Party of the Regions group, giving prepared answers to prepared questions. Every news program includes commercials for the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation, which helps the DNR terrorists not to starve the residents of occupied Donbas to death. This flow of information is intended to get the masses to once again trust the Donetsk clan, to support it in elections, and to save Akhmetov's business empire.

The next elections will be the decisive game for the once-powerful Donetsk oligarch. And how well he places his bet will determine whether his empire dies or he succeeds in multiplying his power bases once more and regaining control over the country. This time, Akhmetov's main ally is the Russian Federation, which is also keen to see the Donetsk mafia, its familiar old partner, return to power.

Russia needs a fifth column in Ukraine to keep the country in its thrall. And Ukraine's fifth column obviously needs Russia, without whose support success would be hard to imagine. So even if Akhmetov himself is no fan of Putin or the Kremlin, he has no other powerful partners. For the time being, Akhmetov's interests and those of Russia coincide.

In short, it's early to celebrate victory over the Donetsk clan. Its comeback is still quite possible and will depend primarily on how powerful Akhmetov remains. For Ukraine, the only way to eliminate the threat posed by internal enemies is to finally punish the Donetsk clan for its many crimes. There's no question that punishment has been merited. All that is needed is political will—and that's where the real problem lies. We may not be privy to the deals cut between the Poroshenko Administration and Rinat Akhmetov, but there's hardly doubt at all that deals have been cut.

At one time, Viktor Yushchenko also cut a deal with the Donetsk clan, as a result of which he became a political corpse and a laughing stock. We can only hope that the current President of Ukraine has not forgotten this mistake. ■

## **EVEN IF AKHMETOV HIMSELF IS NO FAN OF PUTIN OR THE KREMLIN, HE HAS NO OTHER POWERFUL PARTNERS. FOR THE TIME BEING, HIS INTERESTS AND THOSE OF RUSSIA COINCIDE**

Oblast, not to the militants. But this aid allows the terrorists to save on salaries and pensions, and to use the tithes they collect from Donetsk business to buy arms and ammunition. Every package of buckwheat Akhmetov brings to DNR is transformed into a bullet that, sooner or later, is aimed at Ukrainian troops.

### **PLAYING BOTH SIDES AGAINST THE MIDDLE...**

At the same time, Akhmetov is not keen to lose his positions in Ukraine, either. And so he continues to support his much-reduced faction in the Verkhovna Rada—and makes plans for their comeback. The current situation does little to encourage optimism: too many sharks are circling the oligarch these days, all of them with an eye to his assets and chief among them Ihor Kolomoyskiy, the Dnipropetrovsk oligarch. Still, poor economic conditions do suggest that a comeback might be possible. All that is necessary is to survive until the next elections.

Clearly, Rinat Akhmetov is preparing very carefully for this eventuality. The Ukraine television channel has turned into a 24/7

For a long time, Viktor Yanukovich was seen as Akhmetov's man and was completely dependent on him. This only changed in 2010, when Yanukovich finally won the presidency

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# 1945

## The crush of Europe

# The Second Birth of Europe

**T**he year 2015 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Therefore, it invites a closer look at postwar Europe and its brief assessment. What happened to Europe then? Historically and politically speaking, Europe changed beyond recognition. For centuries, war was as unavoidable in the old continent as clashes over faith and (dis)loyalty to the king or the queen. After WWII, it became obvious that peace came as a new political identity of Europe. This was the second birth of Europe. Needless to say, this applied for a long time exclusively for Western Europe.

When the Iron Curtain was drawn, Europe found itself fundamentally split and divided. Whereas Western Europe laid the foundations of peace through NATO and historic reconciliation of old adversaries, first and foremost, Germany and France, Eastern and Central Europe melted into one in the political sense assuming the generic and stigmatizing name of Eastern Europe. To put it simple, for Western Europe, WWII ended on 8 May 1945. For the (re)occupied and (re)annexed lands of Eastern and Central Europe, with its states and peoples, this date signified the second phase of war, the latter assuming the form of George Orwell's prophecy. From then on, war was peace, and peace was war.

Czeslaw Milosz and Milan Kundera had an extremely sensitive grasp of this transformation. In his groundbreaking collection of political essays, *The Captive Mind*, for which Karl Jaspers wrote the Foreword (a symbolic gesture of a great antitotalitarian German philosopher who understood that the humanism of Communism as seemingly opposed to the exclusive barbarity of the Nazis was just a fraud and a naïve illusion of Western Europeans), Milosz wrote about the inability of Americans and Western Europe to understand the tragedy of half of Europe only due to the fact that they chose to believe that Eastern Europe was a natural zone of Soviet ideas, geopolitics and influence. They chose to forget Eastern Europe for the sake of their own convenience, safety, and security. This Western European strategy of forgetting was especially exposed in Milosz's essay *The Baltic Lessons* as early as 1953.

Milan Kundera raised his voice later than Milosz – with an historic essay *The Tragedy of Central Europe* published in 1984. He mentions for the first time a curious fact that putting someone into the category of an Eastern European becomes an act of political stigmatization and betrayal, rather than a move toward an accurate political geography. He wrote that although Bratislava is merely 60 kilometers away from Vienna, Bratislava is in Eastern Europe, and Vienna in Western Europe. Prague is more westward geographically than Vienna, and yet it is Prague that solemnly joins Bratislava as a sister in the congregation of Eastern European capitals. This is to say that the concepts of East and West in Europe ceased sig-

nifying geography, history, and culture; instead, they have become purely political, since Vienna, Prague, and Bratislava are all Central European cities par excellence. (I would also add from myself here that 70 kilometers from Tallinn to Helsinki before 1991, curiously enough, drew the dividing line between the East and the West in the political sense.) Kundera warned the West that Eastern Europe has become the term referring to alienation and despair of half of Europe, also exposing self-deception, complacency, and hypocrisy of the West unwilling and unable to take its Significant Other, Central Europe, otherwise than Eastern Europe.

The USSR remained for decades what it has been from its inception: namely, the gravedigger of Eastern and Central Europe, and a mortal threat to democracies and free nations of Western Europe. Challenged by protests in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland in 1980, the USSR was doomed to inexorable failure. The Helsinki Accords in 1975, whose 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary we mark in 2015, was as instrumental in a gradual discredit and moral bankruptcy of the Evil Empire as Ronald Reagan who coined that term for the USSR. The Soviet Union assumed responsibility for human rights which gave new impetus and *raison d'être* to Russian, Ukrainian, and Baltic dissident movements. 1989 was truly the *Annus Mirabilis*, or the Miraculous Year, as Adam Michnik called it. The fall of the Berlin Wall sent the message to the world about the imminent demise of

the USSR. In fact, the end of the war for Eastern and Central Europe was nigh. 11 March 1990, exactly twenty five years ago, marked Lithuania's independence and its becoming the first breakaway republic of the USSR, which dealt a blow to the Empire. In 1991, it seemed that Europe began to live in the new political time zone.

Europe has become a different continent. The EU and NATO have provided a unique window of opportunity to over-

come old traumas, uncertainties, and animosities.

Central Europe and the Baltic States joined the exclusive club fundamentally changing the pattern of their history and politics. 2004 marked the point of no return for the Baltic States – accession to NATO and the EU. Franco-Germanic animosities, just like British-French tensions, were relegated to the margins and history becoming a joke. Equality between men and women, life without borders, and a humane attitude to LGBT people have become trademarks of European life.

Two nations should be mentioned here as both were left out of this picture. One of them chose to turn down everything that present Europe is standing for – Vladimir Putin's Russia which may well be described as being about everything Europe is not, from xenophobia and overt forms of fascism to the denial of human rights and political liberty. Another nation will sooner or later join the EU – for neither Europe nor peace is complete without Ukraine. ■



**Author:**  
**Leonidas Donskis,**  
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**MILAN KUNDERA WARNED THE WEST THAT EASTERN EUROPE HAS BECOME THE TERM REFERRING TO ALIENATION AND DESPAIR OF HALF OF EUROPE, ALSO EXPOSING SELF-DECEPTION, COMPLACENCY, AND HYPOCRISY OF THE WEST**

# From Munich to Yalta

The beginning and end of World War II brought about political collusions that greatly discredited the leaders of Western democracies



**Author:**  
**Ihor Losev**

**T**he Munich Agreement of 1938 that sacrificed the Czechoslovak state to Hitler is often called a conspiracy because the Western democratic leaders, Chamberlain and Daladier (from Britain and France, respectively), gave parts of Europe to the totalitarian leaders of Germany and Italy in order to avoid confrontation with these criminal regimes. Some analysts are still trying to excuse the Western leaders, saying that they had no other choice but to pursue realpolitik. Yet by choosing not to fight with them, they found themselves in far worse conditions when the war began. The Munich Agreement became a symbol of the great powers' immoral consensus at the expense of the weak.

However, in this context little mention is made of the Yalta conspiracy of 1945 (it would later be solidified at Potsdam), where Roosevelt (USA), Churchill (Britain), and Stalin (USSR) agreed to give half of Europe to the Führer of Moscow for the next 45 years,

divided spheres of influence, and laid the weak foundation for the United Nations (still no more effective than the League of Nations, which at least managed to expel the Soviet Union for its aggression against Finland).

Churchill visited Moscow in October 1944, even before the Yalta Conference. He made proposals to Stalin that made the division of Europe, as well as decision of the fate of many peoples without their involvement, quite possible. As he admitted in his memoirs, the British Prime Minister told the Soviet dictator, "Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?" Churchill went on to propose that Britain and the USSR should split their influence in Hungary fifty-fifty, while giving the Soviets a 75% stake in Bulgaria. Stalin was generally ame-

The peace conference in Potsdam, similarly to those in Yalta and Tehran, resulted eventually in a mere division of spheres of influence between Stalin and Western leaders

nable to this, though he did haggle a bit more, to which Churchill yielded. The poor Greek Communists, who would continue to fight for many years in the ranks of the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), had no idea that the "great leader" had sold them out to the cursed bourgeoisie.

Equally frustrated were millions of citizens of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, who believed that the Western democracies would not betray them and free them from the Nazi yoke only to hand them over to the Soviets. Polish Prime Minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk in his memoirs described how Churchill twisted his arm, forcing him to agree to Stalin's plan for the post-war resettlement of Poland. And Roosevelt did not object. Mikołajczyk was so outraged that he asked Churchill to have him parachuted into Poland so that he could join the anti-German resistance. When Churchill asked why, Mikołajczyk replied, "I prefer to die fighting for the independence of my country than to be hanged later by the Russians in full view of your British ambassador!". Churchill later admitted to his physician, "It's very one-sided. They achieve their demands through deceit, flattery and strength".

Thus, Soviet-Russian diplomacy remains loyal to its traditions...

Churchill and Roosevelt became the architects of the UN in its current form, trying to maintain a controlling stake for their 'club of privileged states', reminiscent of the classic dystopian text: "All creatures are equal, but some are more equal than others." Of the UN, historian Jonathan Fenby wrote, "Churchill reassured Stalin that, while the behaviour of the great powers could be criticised verbally, the veto system would make it virtually powerless for the organisation to act against the US, the USSR, Britain, or China. Stalin asked if it would be unable to

move against Britain over Hong Kong or British interests in Egypt. Churchill told him this was so. Still suspicious, Stalin recalled how the League of Nations had expelled the USSR after its attack on Finland in 1939. That would now be impossible, [British Foreign Secretary] Eden said”.

It is unlikely that Churchill and Roosevelt had illusions about Stalin and his regime, especially since he did not try to make a “democratic” impression on them. When, at Yalta, Roosevelt pointed toward Lavrentiy Beria and asked, “Who is that man wearing glasses?” Stalin quite seriously replied, “That man is our Himmler”. Thus, in the fight against Satan, Roosevelt and Churchill entered into an alliance with Lucifer. And they were certainly well aware of it. For this very reason, today’s Western Europe does not sympathize with the desire of the East to prosecute communism on the same basis as Nazism.

Having agreed once to a division of Europe, the US and Britain were forced to continue to bend to the demands of the communist dictator. These concessions clearly affected the reality of the Nuremberg trials that occurred shortly after the Yalta Conference. At that time, Stalin created a top-secret agency that is named differently in various documents: “Government Commission for the Nuremberg Trials”, “Government Commission on the Organization of the Court at Nuremberg”, or “Commission for the Management of the Nuremberg Trials”. Stalin appointed Andrey Vyshinsky, the famous “conductor” of the Moscow political trials of the 1930s, to head the commission. The committee included Procurator General Gorshenin, Supreme Court Chairman Golyakov, People’s Commissar of Justice Rychkov, and Beria’s deputies Abakumov, Kobulov, and Merkulov. The commission’s primary task was to prevent any discussion at the Nuremberg trials pertaining to Soviet-German relations in 1939-1941, the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the joint Soviet-German attack on Poland, and Moscow’s occupation of the Baltic states.

Beria sent a special investigative team led by Colonel Likhachev to supervise the Soviet judges,

prosecutors and investigators. Russian historian Irina Pavlova, who now lives in Boston, writes: “Stalin feared public opinion in Europe and America, and worried that he would find himself in Nuremberg sharing a bench with Nazi war criminals. But he had serious grounds for such fears”. That is why the Soviets took such extraordinary measures. Though it is unlikely that the Western allies would have insisted on condemning the Stalinist regime as equally culpable in kindling Second World War. They preferred to turn a blind eye to even the most incriminating statements, such as that of former German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, who after the announcement of his death sentence made the final statement: “When I went to Marshal Stalin in Moscow in 1939, he did not discuss the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the Polish problem against the background of the Briand-Kellogg Pact. Rather he let me understand that if in addition to half Poland and the Baltic States he did not receive the harbour of Lithuania I might as well pack my bags and go home. War in 1939 was not considered an international crime against peace”.

Due to the compromising position of the USA and Britain at Yalta, Stalin took control of seven Eastern European states and East Germany, pressured Finland, and threatened Turkey. Churchill’s famous “Iron Curtain” speech at Fulton was an attempt to protect at least Western Europe from forced communization. Though this attempt was somewhat belated because Moscow had already launched a furious political and propaganda war there, now popularly known as a “hybrid” war.

Meanwhile, the countries of Eastern Europe found a strictly conditional sovereignty under the heel of the Kremlin. Their leaders were appointed and removed from office with the approval of the Soviet Union, but they were formally sovereign states, members of the UN and so on. Moscow’s approval was needed even to repress someone in the capitals of the “socialist camp”. Representatives of the Soviet KGB sat as “advisers” (and secret bosses) to the special services of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and other countries. These

countries all suffered under the Red Terror—though not on as large a scale as the USSR—and their peoples were excluded from history for nearly fifty years.

According to Jonathan Fenby, “The Yalta Conference was later demonized for excluding the French at the moment when the Big Three were cynically defining the contours of Europe and laying the foundation for the Cold War. The Yalta Conference became the main item on McCarthy’s list of accusations against Roosevelt, for which the former urged Republicans to accuse him of betraying state secrets. Half a century later in Warsaw, George W. Bush declared: “There will be no more Munichs, no more Yaltas”. Really? There is a widespread idea in the West today—especially in the European Union—that spheres of influence still exist and that Ukraine belongs to the Russian sphere. Consequently, there is always the danger of a new Munich-Yalta conspiracy. However, it is possible that its effects will be even worse; Yalta left us balancing on the edge of nuclear war for



## **HAVING AGREED ONCE TO A DIVISION OF EUROPE, THE US AND BRITAIN WERE FORCED TO CONTINUE TO BEND TO THE DEMANDS OF THE KREMLIN**

45 years, and this time we might actually fall. This is not only a result of the further expansion of Russian nuclear blackmail, but also the realization by the entire “non-elite” world (i.e. countries that are not nuclear giants) that, following the West’s betrayal of Ukraine, it is not the worthless promises of big states that can guarantee a state’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, but one’s own nuclear weapons.

Russian political analyst Stanislav Belkovsky argues that Putin is opposed to the Western world in the name of a new division of the world, Yalta-2. But such a division does not give the West any guarantees; on the contrary, the more concessions the “Western enemies” (as seen in the Kremlin) make, the more emboldened Moscow will feel. ■

# A Struggle for Peace

The veterans fought for freedom and a better life in Europe. Can that peace and prosperity now endure in the face of so many new challenges?

**T**hey still parade through the streets, straight-backed, proud, bedecked with medals, honouring their comrades who fell in countless battles across the continent. But the veterans who won victory at Stalin-grad, on the beaches of Normandy or in the ruins of Berlin are few in number now, many are in wheelchairs and most are in their 90s. It is now 70 years since VE (Victory in Europe) Day. And Europe has changed beyond all recognition for the men and women who fought for the continent's freedom.

The Second World War left two important legacies that still endure. After the horrors of Nazi rule and the brutalities of the concentration camps, it underlined the vital importance of upholding human rights and individual liberty. The result was the founding of the Council of Europe in 1949. This body, based in Strasbourg, now includes 47 members and enacted the landmark European Convention on Human Rights in 1950. Its court in Strasbourg is the highest court of appeal on human rights issues for all the European signatories, creating a common European legal space for 850 million people.

The second legacy of 1945 was the universal determination that European states should never go to war with each other in the future. Leading statesmen of the day resolved to bind the core countries of Western Europe together in a common economic community to strengthen political links and lead, in the end, to some form of political union. This became the core of what is now known as the European Union. It began as a treaty between France and Germany to

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form a European Coal and Steel community, to prevent the two countries becoming political and economic rivals again. This led to the founding of the Common Market in 1957, comprising six core members: France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg with a secretariat and headquarters in Brussels.

Seven of the countries left out, including Britain, Austria and Scandinavia, formed a rival European Free Trade Area. Europe was divided into sixes and sevens. But gradually most applied for full membership of the Common Market, which soon changed its name to the European Economic Community. This, in turn, became much more than just an economic arrangement, was renamed the European Union and adopted a commitment to work towards political union. In the past 20 years, since the fall of communism, the

**EUROPE, ESPECIALLY THE  
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OF RUSSIA**

EU has opened its doors to the states of Eastern Europe, and now comprises a total of 28 members.

But there was one other all-important result of the Second World War: the rise of the Soviet Union, the spread of communism into Eastern Europe, the division of Germany and Europe and the beginning of the Cold War. Stalin's determination never to allow



any future military threat to arise from the West and his insistence on the political domination of neighbouring countries meant that Moscow engineered a series of revolutions and coups in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia, assisted by the Soviet presence in all those countries liberated from the Nazis by Soviet troops. These coups established communist governments in all Eastern Europe and totalitarian dictatorships in every Soviet "satellite" country.

Western Europe was increasingly worried by this Soviet expansionism. Stalin had already attempted to upset the post-war arrangements for the occupation of Germany by trying to force the allies out of West Berlin with a blockade. But the success of the Berlin airlift in 1948 showed that if the West stood firm, Moscow would back down. And with the help of America, which increasingly saw the Soviet Union as a military rival intent on world domination, the west Europeans decided to form a collective defence treaty to protect themselves from Russia. This landmark treaty, signed in 1949, became the basis for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation – NATO. Its key pro-



vision was that any attack on one of its members would be seen by the others as an attack on all of them, so that all would come to the aid of any country threatened with a Soviet attack.

The next 40 years were marked by the stalemate in Europe caused by the Cold War. The communist countries formed the Warsaw Pact, as a Soviet rival to NATO. But every so often the longing for freedom led to spontaneous uprisings – brutally suppressed by the local governments with Soviet help: in East Germany in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968. East Germany erected the Berlin Wall in 1961 to try to stop the flight of Germans to the West. Berlin was cut in two. The attempt by the Polish trade union Solidarity to challenge communist power almost led to another Soviet invasion; instead, the Poles themselves introduced martial law.

Change did not come until Gorbachev came to power in Moscow. Poland again led the way, and when it was clear that Moscow would not intervene, change accelerated rapidly. By 1989 all Eastern Europe was in revolt against communism. The culmination came with the opening of the Berlin Wall in November.

One legacy of 1945 was the universal determination that European States should never go to war with each other in the future. Leading statesmen of the day resolved to bind the core countries of Western Europe together in a common economic community to strengthen political links. This became the core of what is now known as the European Union based on the Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992

From then on, communism in Eastern Europe was doomed. It collapsed also in the Soviet Union after the attempted coup against Gorbachev in 1991. Suddenly, Eastern Europe was free. Germany was swiftly reunited. Countries long cut off from their western neighbours rediscovered their historic links. Europe was made whole again, politically and culturally, and people began flocking across the borders in their millions.

The Eastern Europeans then discovered other massive changes that had been going on in the West since the 1950s. First, the West had become richer than it had ever been before. West German industry led the world. Italy, despite poor government, prospered. Spain and Portugal threw off fascist dictatorships. France and Britain both lost global empires, which caused considerable political pain, but were modernising their traditional societies. There was a massive movement from the countryside to towns across Western Europe, and huge advances in education and health care. By the mid-80s most countries had developed social security networks, with unemployment payments and health care systems that were either free or paid for through insurance.

The other big change was the huge increase in personal freedom. Class divisions became less marked, and educational and employment opportunities were open to all. People had money to buy cars, and car ownership increased tenfold. People began travelling much more, and the vast growth in tourism saw millions of Europeans taking summer holidays in foreign countries. Spain was receiving about 40 million foreign tourists every year.

In the 1980s East Europeans also suddenly discovered the sex revolution that swept the West in the 1960s. Traditional attitudes and taboos were being broken. Young people were having sex regularly before marriage. The contraceptive pill was freely available to women and completely changed women's attitudes, making them less worried about getting pregnant. Advertising, films, television and theatre regularly featured sexual themes. Abortion was legalised, with cer-

tain conditions, in many countries despite opposition from some church groups. Homosexuality, which was once a criminal offence throughout most of Europe, was no longer illegal and the younger generations were tolerant of gay people. Indeed, by 2010 many countries, including Britain, France and Spain – usually traditional in social attitudes – had passed laws allowing gay marriage.

But demographic changes have also changed the face of Europe in 70 years. Millions of migrants have arrived, especially in Britain, Germany and France, from Africa, the Caribbean and Asia, many coming in search of work in the 1960s. Black, Indian, Arab, Turkish and others from minorities, once rare in Europe's cities, now account for almost half the population in some areas. There have been tensions and riots in some countries, but most West European societies are now multicultural. Even Scandinavia, once peopled by blond Nordic races, now has large numbers of dark-skinned citizens.

The elderly veterans have seen progress in all areas of life in Western Europe. But things may not be so smooth in future. Europe is now facing economic challenges from Asia, and has had to cut back its generous social security arrangements. There is widespread disillusion with the European Union, local nationalisms are growing, and many countries, especially Britain and Spain, have seen the growth of separatist movements. The Muslim population of Europe now numbers around 15 million people, but is being shaken by radicalism and extremism, and Europe is having to fight a global wave of terrorism. Above all, Europe, especially the former Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact nations, are again feeling challenged by the resurgent nationalism of Russia. The "peace dividend", widely anticipated after the fall of the Berlin Wall, may not be so easily cashed.

The veterans fought for freedom and a better life in Europe. They gave the continent 70 years of peace and breakneck change and development. But can that peace and prosperity now endure in the face of so many new challenges? ■

# The “Normal Life” Argument

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**A**mong the criticisms raised by the “decommunization bills” passed by the Verkhovna Rada in April, there is an interesting argument worth reflecting upon. It says that the soviet era cannot be reduced to the crimes of the soviet regime, that it had positive aspects or, at least, that it allowed millions of people to lead a normal life, to be happy, to go to school, have a job, etc. The argument is flawed but has a partial truth which makes it plausible. Let’s unfold the thing.

There were indeed, marriages and divorces, ordinary crimes, fair trials (there must have been some!), scientific discoveries made, artistic masterpieces created, joy and sorrow experienced, as in any normal society. They left recollections and traces one cannot mistake for the misdeeds of the regime. In the academic discussion, some scholars argue that communist societies were complex, that one should not reduce them to ideocracy, to the power of the Party. There would be something inaccurate and misleading in the very concept of totalitarianism: first, it mistakes the party-state for the society as a whole, and therefore ratifies the self-image built by the regime, that is a unanimous society, without conflicts, merging with the power that leads and controls it. The totalitarianism theory ignores then that despite all the efforts of the “organs”, there was an independent civil society, which imposed its own agenda and dynamics to a reluctant ideology. Second, this theory ignores history and time: soviet rule lasted for 74 years and included very different phases. After Stalin’s death, the Thaw relaxed the vice, liberty or at least normality appeared to some ex-

tent. Contradicting the view that totalitarianism cannot amend itself, there were economic and cultural changes, even under Brezhnev (one of the foremost pro-Putin lobbyist in France, Jacques Sapir, is a fan of Alexei Kosygin), even more under Gorbachev. From an individual

point of view, one can say that honest people lived happily, had a decent life, were stirred by Gagarin’s achievement, by the victories of the Moscow Spartak (not to mention the Kyiv Dynamo). There were members of the nomenklatura, and they don’t understand the global



bashing of the soviet legacy. One should respect their feelings.

This is flawed but very persuasive, both at the academic level (complexity etc.) and at the common level of discussion (the normal happiness). It looks sound because long lasting changes everything. By becoming a long-term routinized regime, "socialism in one country" did not amount to the end of totalitarianism, but it created a special unheard of system, different from "normal" totalitarianism, if I may say so.

To put it briefly, the secret of soviet totalitarianism, is its survival by withdrawal of its revolutionary dimension. Meanwhile fascist and Nazi totalitarianism were revolutionary from begin-

ning to the end. Communism managed to stabilize, to rationalize itself so to speak, by shifting from world revolution to the world communist system. This makes communism a bewildering

## WE HAVE TO GO FURTHER IN THE STUDY OF ROUTINIZED TOTALITARIANISM TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS AT STAKE IN "DECOMMUNIZATION" IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

ing political experience. The power of the party was omnipresent but softened. Nepotism and cynicism replaced frenzied politization and revolutionary faith, so that the board between party-state and civil society, between oppressed or corrupted sectors of society, and the growing sectors of more or less autonomous activity, went blurred. Did the hormonal manipulations of female Olympic swimmers affect the whole practice of sports in GDR? Did the mandatory study of Marxism-Leninism prevented universities to produce good engineers and good physicians? One cannot answer either "yes" or "no" period. Daily life under "socialism" entailed small cowardice, small corruption, small fear, which can be easily forgotten, downplayed or even idealised. They were intertwined in the honourable or glorious features of soviet life, as for instance the lies and silences of the myth of the Great Patriotic War are intertwined in the genuine heroic deeds and sacrifices of soviet population and army during the war.

At this point, the obvious analogy between totalitarianisms may be misleading. The Nazi type, apocalyptic and brief, does not suffice to understand the communist type, routinized and never ending.

Everybody knows that Mussolini dewatered the Pontine Marshes and that Hitler equipped Germany with a remarkable highway network, but this does not affect much the judgement of history on their regime. On the other hand, the

least "achievement of socialism", be it the building of vacation villages or the soviet supremacy concerning great pianists (Richter, Gilels... one born in Zhytomyr, the other in Odesa, both Ukrainian cities) seems able to mitigate the failures and crimes of the communist regime. Such a binary accounting leads nowhere (or to the idea of a "globally positive assessment", as used to say Georges Marchais, Secretary General of the French Communist Party in the 1970s). We have to go further in the study of routinized totalitarianism to understand what is at stake in "decommunization" in Central and Eastern Europe. Treating as separate facts political oppression on the one hand, and daily life and positive achievements on the other, is not the right way of understanding what it is about. The pockets of daily normal life, the admirable achievements, notably in arts and science, are not a quantity to put in balance with the quantity of oppression and corruption, because oppression and corruption were diffused and infiltrated in the normal life. Some domains, such as press, university and literature, were more affected than others, but none escaped from the totalitarian routine. This is the meaning of the third term coining the Maidan: revolution of freedom, of dignity, and of truth.

I am not a Ukrainian citizen and my purpose is not to urge the President to sign or not to sign the four bills of April. There may be concerns regarding freedom of speech although I do not detect them until now. Some great scholars, in Ukraine and abroad, like David Marples or John-Paul Himka, did detect them; others did not - the discussion is legitimate. My point is to stress the specific dimension of communist ideology and experience and the long-lasting global lie surrounding and protecting them (the ban on comparing Nazi and Soviet regimes is central to this global lie). This calls for specific understanding categories and specific policies of liberation, which should match the European standards of free speech, but are nevertheless specific. ■



# Victory-Over-Freedom Day



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...A Land Cruiser with an orange-and-black striped St. George ribbon hanging from its rear-view mirror and a bumper sticker saying “Thanks to Grand-dad that we won!” is parked in the yard on the only pathway leading to the building entrance. This same “grand-dad” is limping home from the nearest grocery store with a pack of kefir and a loaf of the cheapest bread, muttering curses under his breath as he tries to squeeze by to his apartment entry. The driver whose patriotism has sent him into such transports looks on lazily, giving the old man a bit of advice now and then how not to scratch up his expensive car in passing.

...Russian neo-freedom fighters—cossacks decorated with intricate, imaginative knots of the same orange-and-black stripe—are in the process of raiding night-clubs to determine whether Orthodox traditions are being upheld there.

... Here and there, kids in camouflage with the same St. George’s ribbons on their chests march through the streets of Moscow.

...The Minister of Defense in a surfeit of patriotism tweets a cute joke about riding into Europe, not on bikes, but on tanks. The vassals roar with laughter. The Night Wolves bikers’ club that was refused entry into Europe growls “We’ll get you.”

...The handful of heads of state who have confirmed that they will attend the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “Pobeda” include North Korea, Cuba, Mongolia, Vietnam, India, and China. The rest will find out where crabs spend their winters in the not-too-distant future, as soon as these kids in camo grow up...

Tied up in orange-and-black ribbons, the country is going mad, grimacing and hooting in an absolute frenzy of patriotism. Well and truly fertilized with 18 months of hatred towards Ukraine, Europe and America, Russia has locked itself around its new spiritual yoke, the jubilee of Victory. The luminous yet sad commemoration that this day deserves to be has turned into a Night on Bald Mountain that has drawn every imaginable and unimaginable foul thing to itself. The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory has blown away any doubts and shreds of common sense, laying bare the main component of Russian “patriotism”... the Great National Pride of Great Russians mixed up with a harsh contempt for all that is other and alive.

The upcoming anniversary, instead of being a demonstration of peaceful aspirations has been transformed into its opposite. Not long ago, the “granddads’ fight” meant the memory that served as a foundation on which would be established the peaceful life of the grandsons who promised not to betray what their granddads had achieved. Today, the “granddads’ fight” is a stoplight, a break that threatens to stop any movement in the wrong direction.

Meanwhile, the word “allies” has pretty much disappeared from the victorious lexicon: this is our celebration and ours alone. And when officials do somehow mention allies in passing in their speeches, it’s

to note that they fought only for their own convenience, for their own liberation from Nazism, while the Soviet Union was concerned about the entire world. By and large, the allies were not the victors, but rather the heirs of Hitler, and European liberalism is really the younger brother of Nazism. And their American and English “granddads’ fight” was strictly to save their own skins, while soon after the war their sons and grandsons quickly went down the wrong path.

The obedient Russian people really do not want to see or know any of this. National memory is a strange creature: where it should be long, it turns out to be short, and where it should be shortened, it stretches endlessly. For instance, try telling the average Russian citizen that the St. George ribbon was never a symbol of victory, that it was invented by Vladislav Surkov as a huge PR project launched in 2006—they simply won’t believe you. Explain that this ribbon was introduced by Catherine II in 1769 during the Russo-Turkish War and that afterwards it was added to the Order of Glory and the Medal “For Victory over Germany,” and they will laugh at you: “What have you been eating? What does Surkov have to do with this? Our granddads fought with this ribbon.” But if you tell them that veterans will not be included in the Victory Parade in Moscow on May 9, and the average Russian will take it completely in stride. “I mean, Moscow’s not exactly elastic.”

Among freedom-loving folks in Russia—yes, yes, there still are some around, strange as it may seem—, you can hear more and more concern being expressed that Russia is turning, slowly but surely, into the USSR at the height of Stalinist repressions. And although mass executions have not started, it seems like the situation with brainwashing is far worse. All permeating terror, born in 1917 during the civil war, then the dekulakization and finally repressions. Soviet citizens chanted “Glory to the Great Stalin!”

and “Shoot them all like rabid dogs!” Everyone knew: if you don’t shout today, tomorrow you will be screaming in the underground cells of Lubianka. There was simply no choice. The least hint of dissent meant death.

Today, Russia is governed by a generation that never felt that fear. Today, no one will shoot you if you aren’t with everybody claiming your great love of Putin, if you don’t wear the black-and-orange ribbon and if you sing Ukraine’s national anthem of Ukraine instead of Russia’s. Today, the people of Russia are doing everything voluntarily. And that’s far scarier than the 4 million denunciations of 1937. This is the unforgivable betrayal of memory that has suffocated to death, hanged on that same St. George’s ribbon that is now a symbol of treason.

The “Great State” is preparing to celebrate 70 years of Victory. Russia’s own, personal, not-to-be-shared-with-anyone, privatized—and trampled—victory. ■

**THE UPCOMING  
ANNIVERSARY, INSTEAD OF  
BEING A DEMONSTRATION  
OF PEACEFUL ASPIRATIONS  
HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED  
INTO ITS OPPOSITE**

# How Poland Made It.

## Notes of a Businessman

I go to Poland on a working visit every year. And every time I see a sharp contrast with Ukraine. Our western neighbor today is different from what it was only two or three years ago, at least for an observant business traveler. The progress is manifest almost everywhere: in transport communications, financial services, investment opportunities, real sector, and small businesses.

It fills me with contradictory emotions. No, it's not because a Ukrainian, as the saying goes, would envy that his neighbor's cow is alive when his cow dies. It's just that our state, compared to Poland, seems to be a land of missed opportunities, even though we started on the path of capitalism from approximately the same starting point.

So, I decided to investigate in more detail the nature of the "Polish miracle." Why did Poland succeed, while we are still lagging behind not only the European countries, but also the post-Soviet states? And what experience of economic and administrative reforms would be beneficial to Ukraine in its strive to overcome the crisis and become a truly independent, business-oriented and prosperous nation?

### DENATIONALIZATION

Probably the most important thing is that the Poles under Balcerowicz and Mazowiecki, at a stroke of the pen, eliminated everything that is still a stumbling block for Ukraine. Firstly, they let the unprofitable state-owned companies that had no market-oriented production policy to go bankrupt. Secondly, they mandatorily passed the management of the entire state-run utility sector to the homeowners. Thirdly, they eliminated the state banking system.

According to Polish reformers, the state cannot be the subject of commercial relations, ei-

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ther in the housing and utility or in the monetary and financial area. Can a transparent market exist alongside government monopolies or banks that enjoy preferences of the Ministry of Finance? The Polish answer was a conclusive "no," so all state-owned financial institutions were turned into private ones. Fifteen years later, Georgians did the same. But not Ukrainians.

Ukraine has, as we know, a huge subsidized state-run segment of the real economy. Infrastructure management has been monopolized by all kinds of state agencies and other bottomless sources of budget siphoning.

**IF YOU WANT TO SAVE  
THE COUNTRY FROM  
THE ECONOMIC COLLAPSE,  
MAKE THE PROTECTION  
OF SMALL AND MEDIUM  
ENTERPRISES A NATIONAL IDEA**

Moreover, there are three state-owned banks, which last year showed astronomical loss figures of over UAH 20bn, according to official statements. They are recapitalized using treasury funds, that is, at the account of the tax payments.

In Poland, however, during just two years of reforms, the state was completely taken out of the real economy in 50% of industrial facilities. Privatization took place at public auctions, with cash payments instead of voucher schemes that were used in Ukraine.

By the way, despite a galloping inflation, the government of Balcerowicz-Mazowiecki did not let the exchange rate to float freely, the move that the National Bank of Ukraine proudly announced a few months ago. On the contrary, the Poles resorted to strict monetary regulation, introducing a

fixed and unified exchange rate of the zloty against the dollar.

These and a number of other measures served as an anti-inflation anchor for the country, minimizing the imbalance of the economy and providing the basis for establishing an effective money market.

Already a few years later, in early 2000s, Poland turned from an eternal debtor into a respectable player on the global investment market, with 2.4–2.9% inflation and over USD 80bn of own foreign exchange reserves. After just one year of shock therapy (I want to stress it: one year!), the government achieved GDP growth that has been stable ever since. In 1992, it was at 2.6%, and in 1995 it was already 7%.

Why? I would identify several reasons that are directly related to the Ukrainian format of transformation and, in my opinion, were quite unjustly neglected by the "post-Maidan" Cabinet during its first year.

### SMEs RULE

The Polish reformers realized that they had to make the most of whatever their compatriots' cultural code had preserved: entrepreneurship and natural respect for private property. So, SMEs became the locomotives of the government's anti-crisis campaign and minimized the social implications of the mass scale liquidation of the state-owned sector of the economy.

Creating an enabling business environment became one of the embodiments of the Polish national idea and took place under the national revival slogan.

By the end of the 1990s, Poland had about 3.5 million SMEs, that is, one business per 10 citizens, including minors. Proportionally, it is more than in the home countries of modern entrepreneurship: Switzerland and the Netherlands.

### BIO

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**Popereshnyuk**  
was born in 1975. He graduated from the Zhukovsky Kharkiv Aviation Institute and earned his MBA from the International Institute of Business in Kyiv. He is Operations Director and co-founder of the Nova Poshta courier service group

The contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises to Poland's economic recovery really cannot be overemphasized. Today, they account for about half of the national GDP, that is, more than USD 200bn.

By comparison, before the last year's crisis, their share in the Ukrainian economy never exceeded 10% of GDP, amounting to only USD 14bn. That is despite the fact that the economic potential of the Ukrainian SSR in late 1980s was twice higher than that of the socialist Poland. The older generation of Poles still remembers going to Ukraine to buy consumer goods, tea and fertilizers, similar to today's Ukrainian shuttle traders going to Polish wholesale markets to buy a whole variety of products.

As long as our country holds the "honorary" 96th place in the World Bank's Doing Business index, with the 150th position in Trading Across Borders category and the fourth from the bottom (among 189 participants) in some other categories, such as, for instance, Getting Electricity, the problems with the national currency exchange rate and capital outflow are not surprising.

Today, foreign business has no motivation to come to Ukraine and to invest money in its economy. Domestic metallurgy and chemistry keep losing global export markets, and the supply of foreign currency is increasingly dependent on migrant workers alone.

The Polish experience in this sense is like an icon for us: if you want to save the country from the economic collapse, make the protection of small and medium enterprises a national idea.

### OPEN MARKETPLACE

Balcerowicz's anti-crisis government saw the task of opening the domestic market to foreign capital as one of its highest priorities. Foreign Investment Law was one of the first government decrees. It completely abolished any restrictions on the share of equity capital owned by foreigners and established tax incentives for foreign investors.

In provinces where due to real sector privatization, labor market suffered the worst collapse, these benefits included tax

holidays for a period from several months to several years.

Most import licenses were canceled. Obtaining the remaining ones was made as easy as possible. Likewise, with just one stroke, all export quotas without exception were eliminated. There are no restrictions on taking revenues out of the country and on investment volumes. Nothing like that exists in Ukraine.

As a result, already by 1997, foreign direct investment in Poland reached USD 20.6bn. Ten years later, this figure exceeded USD 160bn. This is almost five times more than in Ukraine during the same period.

### LAFFER CURVE

During the industrial crisis of the early 1980s, American economists identified a fatal pattern: tax increase at a certain point does not increase budget revenues, but reduces them instead, because fiscal pressure destroys business, which is the donor of the treasury.

The Ukrainian government, despite the collapse of the economy and finance, failed to drastically reduce the tax burden on the corporate sector over the last year. In Poland, such reform also was not carried out immediately, but only in the early 2000s. However, its results could be for us a vital lesson in efficient economy.

Following the reduction of the income tax for businesses from 27% to 19% during the very first year after the adoption of the new budget code, Poland's budget received more than USD 1bn of additional tax revenues. Using the Laffer curve principle gave the economy a chance to flourish, despite a significant reduction in the tax rate.

Today, the median income of an average Pole is much higher than USD 1,000 per month. Poland is one of the six largest economies in the European Union. The EU keeps investing in it. Why? Because the money is used to enrich the country, not to increase the wealth of the individuals close to the channels of foreign aid reception and distribution, as it is in Greece.

### PAIN SHOCK

The rapid deregulation of the economy was a difficult social



Ukrainian officials study Balcerowicz's reforms but hardly rush to apply them

challenge and a pain shock. Hundreds of thousands of workers of different skill levels found themselves in the labor market. Unemployment that affected one in five economically active Polish citizens had the potential of splitting the country and stirring up a wave of leftist protests.

However, the Poles persevered. They had been waiting too long for liberalization, both political and economic, and were not ready to give up their freedom for the sake of the socialist welfare myths.

Polish reformers realized that the radical transformation was an extremely painful process. They had to launch the reforms flywheel immediately, while the nation still lived in the atmosphere of a patriotic



PHOTO: UNIAN

enthusiasm in the years following the elimination of Soviet dictatorship.

History has shown that the government was right. Already in three or four years, the country's economy started generating far more jobs than were lost after the elimination of the subsidized public sector.

About a third of migrant workers returned to the country, including former employees of the liquidated public sector companies. It was not because the crisis was raging in Europe in the late 1990s, and not because working in Germany became unprofitable, but because German production began to move to Poland en masse. In Poland, a business environment was created that was more favorable in terms

of corporate taxation, proximity to commodity and sales markets, as well as with respect to state regulation.

The reformers made full use of the Polish sense of national dignity while the nation was highly euphoric. This helped suppress social pain, minimize protest aftermaths, and leave leftist populists without their grateful audience, with the exception of obvious outsiders.

What about Ukraine? Our reformers apparently slept through this "heroic" period. Over the year, when the enthusiasm ignited by the Euromaidan events naturally increased the society's ability to endure sacrifice, there has been almost no radical change in judicial, fiscal or administrative area. The

faces and party banners have changed, but the methods of managing the wheels of state have remained the same.

At least, business felt no significant liberalization. As a consequence, the results of the last year for Ukraine were the drop in GDP by 35%, 70% devaluation, and 50% investment outflow from the real economy. Taking into account the exchange rate fluctuations, we lost investments of non-residents amounting to about USD 13.6bn. The effect was exactly the opposite of what was observed in Poland already in the first year of reforms.

This means that the shock therapy was without doubt the right step made by the government of Mazowiecki and Balcerowicz. The gradual and prudent approach in this case would have obviously exhausted the impatient (in a good sense) Polish society, reviving the leftist and conservative moods.

It's like removing a court plaster from the body: you can do it slowly and carefully, over-

**POLES DID NOT SAY:  
"GIVE US MONEY, FOR WE  
ARE POOR." THEY SAID:  
"GIVE US MONEY, BECAUSE WE  
ARE IMPLEMENTING REFORMS  
AND CHANGING THE SYSTEM  
FROM WITHIN"**

coming pain and discomfort, or you can do it in one lightening-speed operation, requiring considerable willpower. In Poland, everything happened in the most resolute manner.

Poles did not say: "Give us money, for we are poor." They said: "Give us money, because we are implementing reforms and changing the system from within." Europeans know that providing funds does not mean solving systemic problems, let alone starting the flywheel of transformation. Today's Greece is a striking example.

Which scenario Ukraine will follow, Polish or Greek, will be clear in the coming months. If the government opts for the default, there will be no chance to go ahead on the Polish path. ■

# Margrethe and the Bear

The European Union's trustbuster turns her fire on Gazprom—marking a big change in European policy and the gas business



**G**azprom revelled in its untouchability. It was the main supplier of imported gas to the European Union, benefiting both from close Kremlin patronage (the Russian state is its largest shareholder) and from a web of business and political relationships in countries it sold gas to, notably Germany. Alternatives to Russian gas were scant, as was customers' willingness to resist Gazprom's dominance.

Now the EU is taking on the Russian gas beast. The first blow

fell on April 22 when the EU's competition commissioner, Margrethe Vestager, sent the company a long-expected "statement of objections" (Euro-parlance for a charge-sheet) alleging market abuses. The unpublished document runs to hundreds of pages. They detail the murky world of Russian gas exports, featuring lucrative intermediary companies with unknown beneficial ownership, deals struck by politicians not businessmen, and a hefty dose of geopolitical favouritism.

The EU claims Gazprom is "pursuing an overall strategy to partition central and eastern European gas markets." It curbs customers' ability to resell gas, which allows it to charge "unfair prices" in five countries: Bulgaria, Poland and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Moreover, the EU says, Gazprom abused its dominant market position to try to keep control of the Yamal transit pipeline across Poland, and to bully Bulgaria into supporting South Stream, a now-cancelled

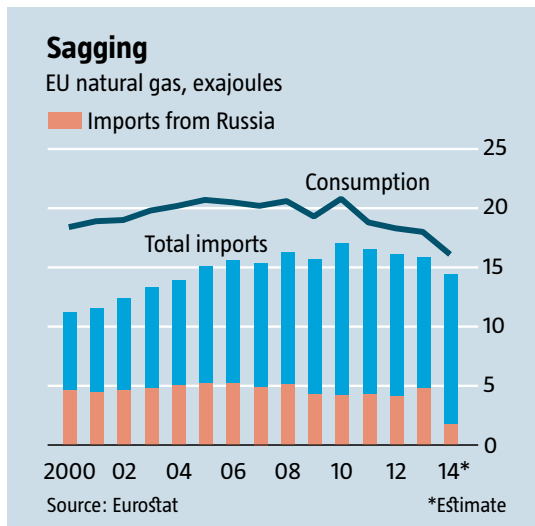
Kremlin project to bring gas across the Black Sea into the EU.

Gazprom had put out feelers to Brussels in previous months to see if it could reach a settlement. But those talks broke down amid the freeze in East-West relations over Ukraine. Now Gazprom has 12 weeks to deal with the charges—by rebuttal, concessions or both. If it fails to satisfy the commission, the next stage is enforcement. This could mean fines of EUR1 billion (USD1.1 billion) or more—in theory up to 10% of its turnover—and legally mandated changes to its business model. Such options are still in reserve. “All roads are open,” says Ms. Vestager. “We would like Gazprom to answer and we would like to talk.”

Gazprom’s initial response was icy. It said the EU’s complaint was “unfounded”, insisted that it already abides by international law and the domestic legislation of the countries where it does business, and argued that the dispute should be settled at a governmental level. Gazprom was established “beyond the jurisdiction of the EU”, it noted. Revealingly, it said that Russian law gave it “special, socially significant functions...and the status of a strategic government-controlled business entity”. Back in 2012 President Vladimir Putin banned such “strategic” companies from disclosing information to foreign regulators or obeying their orders.

The EU began its move against Gazprom with the launch of the “Third Energy Package” in 2007. That was a deceptively bland title for a series of measures that “unbundled”—in fact, upended—Europe’s energy market. The main effect was to ban the same company from owning both the gas pipelines and the molecules that flow through them. Russia objected harshly to this, seeing it as a politicised, unprovoked and confiscatory attack on Gazprom’s assets and business model.

However, rather like Microsoft, which fell foul of EU competition law for bundling its Internet Explorer browser with its Windows operating system, the company and its political masters did not grasp the EU’s fero-



cious prosecutorial powers. And the more the EU looked at Russian gas imports, the less it liked what it saw. In 2011, in the biggest antitrust raid in the EU’s history, officials with search warrants seized documents and computers from dozens of offices belonging to Gazprom and its affiliates. In 2012 the EU followed this up by opening a formal investigation.

The statement of objections has been largely ready since 2013, but was subject to a long and timorous delay. Ms. Vestager

## RUSSIA IS LOSING MARKET SHARE IN EUROPE ALREADY, AND CANNOT AFFORD TO ANNOY ITS CUSTOMERS

er’s predecessor, Joaquín Almunia, repeatedly promised to launch charges, but left office in November with that pledge unfulfilled. Senior people in the commission thought a deal would be better than worsening relations with Russia.

Now Europe is in a more robust frame of mind. Ms. Vestager, a steely Dane, insists that her directorate is part of the justice system and acts without fear or favour. The move against Gazprom came only a week after it launched a statement of objections against another corporate giant, Google.

For Gazprom the most petulant option would be to ignore

the EU. That brings speedy penalties—and also potential lawsuits from customers who have been overcharged, notes Alan Riley, a British law professor. Another option is to mount legal challenges—including ones claiming abuse of property rights. Vaclav Bartuska, the Czech Republic’s energy envoy, forecasts a climbdown, masked by a showy but empty deal on future exports to China to show the Russian public that the Kremlin is punishing Europe for its impudence.

Russia may also press ahead with Turk Stream, a Black Sea pipeline which would deliver gas just as far as the Turkey-Greece border, to avoid the EU rules that stymied South Stream. The Kremlin is wooing Greece to support the project, with a USD5 billion sweetener. More such divide-and-rule tactics in Europe are likely: Russia’s pipelines export political influence even when they are still mere lines on a map.

But turning off the gas taps, to punish the EU, seems unlikely. Russia is losing market share in Europe already, and cannot afford to annoy its customers or endanger its USD40 billion export revenues.

### A COLD CLIMATE

Worries about dependence on Russian gas have in any case diminished. Not only is the winter over but Europe is generally in better shape to withstand a Russian tantrum. It has improved storage, and built north-south gas links, so that a cut in shipments across, say, Ukraine, can be made up with other supplies. Lithuania, once wholly dependent on Russian gas, has built a terminal to import liquefied natural gas (LNG), gaining a swift price cut from Gazprom. This year America will start LNG exports, creating yet more supply options.

For Mr Putin, the commission’s move underlines the scale of Russia’s isolation. Trust and patience have ebbed, even in Germany. His friends are fewer in number. By using energy as a weapon, he has prompted defence and counter-attack. The bear is not as feared as it was. ■

# Time to Wake Up

Europe “whole, free, and at peace” was the mantra of the glory days of Euro-Atlanticism, when Russia was docile and history was ending. It was never a statement of reality

**Author:**  
**Edward Lucas,**  
**UK**

Europe was not whole (countries such as Moldova were indubitably European and clearly not where they wanted to be). It was not free (Belarus). It was not at peace (half-frozen conflicts scarred the map of Europe from Cyprus to Azerbaijan).

Now that aspiration is in tatters. Europe is not marching toward prosperity and freedom. It is retreating to a harsh world of power politics, where might is right, truth withers in the face of propaganda, and the ethnos—old ideas about blood, language, and soil—matters more than modern rules of democracy and international cooperation.

The Kremlin clock is sounding the death knell of Euro-Atlanticism. Not because Russia is strong—it is not—but because the rest of Europe is weak and the glue that holds the United States to the continent’s security arrangements has aged and grown brittle.

At first sight, it is perplexing that Russia—a country of 140 million and with a USD 2 trillion GDP—can threaten Europe (with a population of 600 million and a USD 20 trillion GDP), let alone NATO (950 million and USD 40 trillion). But Russia has three advantages: It is willing to accept economic pain; it is willing to threaten (and use) force; and it is willing to lie, prolifically and expertly, about what it is doing.

The Kremlin’s arsenal includes economic pressure (especially the use of gas, oil, and nuclear energy), corruption, subversion, propaganda, and military saber rattling. Russia deploys these weapons against the frontline states in Europe’s new cold war.

The new arc of instability reaches from the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) across Ukraine and Moldova to southeastern Europe (Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia), through Central Europe (Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia) to



the Baltic littoral (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden). All these countries face Kremlin attacks on a spectrum ranging from clandestine influence peddling to direct Russian military pressure.

The elements of the problem have long been clear, but we have failed to see how they combine. We bemoaned the thuggish and repressive behavior of some supposed allies (the Aliyev regime in Azerbaijan, and the hot-headed and heavy-handed Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia), the Bulgarian feebleness toward gangsterdom, the disrespect that Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Robert Fico in Slovakia showed for the rule of law, Czech weakness on corruption, and the persistent Polish failure to deal with overbearing and incompetent bureaucracies.

But we assumed, wrongly, that we were in competition with the ghosts of the past, not the demons of the future. And we failed to see how Russia was stoking and exploiting these weaknesses. After the spectacular failure of the Soviet empire in the late 1980s and the chaos of the 1990s, it was hard to imagine that the Kremlin could ever again call the tune in the old “bloodlands”—the swathe of territory between Tallinn

in Estonia and Tbilisi in Georgia where totalitarian ideologies had wrought such havoc in past decades. But the Cold War did not end. It just took a few years of recess. Russia remains a geopolitical contestant and antagonist.

The situation of each country is unique, but the overall picture is that the West is in retreat and Russia is winning. The sharpest conflict is over Ukraine. Russia decapitated and dismembered its closest and most important neighbor without firing a shot. It so demoralized and confused the leadership in Kiev through a mixture of subversion, propaganda, and special operations (sometimes called “hybrid war”) that it was able to seize the strategically important peninsula of Crimea in March 2014.

Ukraine failed to play its diplomatic cards. It could have raised an international storm over Russia’s actions. It did not. Moreover, Ukrainian forces in Crimea could have resisted. They could have blocked the airfields and ports used by the Russians, paralyzed their communications, taken control of road junctions, and knocked out the Russian-language media. They could have made it impossible for Russia to seize the territory without waging a

full-scale war. But they didn't. Ukrainian military commanders had no orders, no contingency plans, inadequate supplies, and no secure communications. One even contacted me on Facebook asking for advice. They retreated with their morale in tatters.

That set the scene for Russia's next offensive, in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Donetsk. Here, Russia raised the stakes, using its regular forces (disguised lightly or not at all) in a more traditional war. The conflict in eastern Ukraine rumbles on, largely ignored by Western news outlets, which hew to the idea that the "cease-fire" declared in February in the Belarusian capital of Minsk marks the end of the conflict.

Russia has by now achieved its main goals in Ukraine. It has shown it can destroy the European security order that dates back to the Helsinki agreements of 1975. It has repudiated the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, in which Russia, along with Britain and the United States, solemnly promised to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and refrain from any kind of coercion, in return for the Kyiv authorities' agreement to give up their Soviet-era endowment of nuclear weapons.

Those promises are now revealed as worthless paper. That opens a broad and inviting avenue of attack for Russia in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Snap drills—often involving nuclear weapons—have been met with a puny Western response. If America is not willing to risk World War III with Russia over a provocation in the Baltics, NATO will be over by breakfast. That is a huge and tempting prize for the Kremlin.

Vladimir Putin knows this. So do America's European allies. The question is not whether Russia menaces the Baltics, but when and how. Already Estonia has experienced the humiliation of having a senior official kidnapped on its territory and abducted to Moscow, only days after President Obama, speaking in Tallinn, vowed that an "attack on one is an attack on all." But after the seizure of this official—Eston Kohver, a high-ranking police officer in Estonia's internal-security agency—the West did nothing.

Russian warplanes regularly intrude into Baltic airspace. One recently harassed an American reconnaissance plane flying over the Bal-

tic Sea. When the United States protested, Russia replied menacingly: "America is not a Baltic power. Russia is"—laying the rhetorical foundation for a no-fly zone should the United States wish to reinforce its NATO allies in a hurry.

The military security of north-eastern Europe hangs by a thread. Russia has carried out dummy nuclear attacks on Sweden and Denmark. Both countries, having reduced their defense capabilities below the threadbare, are now scrambling to restore the naval, aviation, armored, and intelligence assets that they so recklessly discarded. Estonia—the only country in Europe to spend even 2 percent of its GDP on defense—is grimly waiting for its allies to follow suit. Poland, Lithuania, and even laggardly Latvia are scrambling to increase their defense budgets. Poland—the only economic heavyweight in the region—is following Finland's lead in buying TASM stealth missiles, the closest thing to a nuclear deterrent for a non-nuclear country. It is also buying the American-built Patriot missile-defense system.

But Poland stands almost alone. NATO plans require Poland to take the brunt of reinforcing the Baltic, deploying a third of the Polish army there, pending the arrival of other allies. But arrival with what? After

hardened steel and high explosives, is what matters most in the new cold war. Russian money buys politicians, political parties, think tanks, media, academics, and officials—not just in the frontline states but also in citadel countries. Some is public—such as the 15-million-euro loan to Marine Le Pen's National Front in France, or the hefty stipend paid to Germany's Gerhard Schröder, who as chancellor endorsed deals with Gazprom and, after leaving office, took a job with the Russian gas company. America applies higher standards: amid stormy controversy, former Congressman Curt Weldon was investigated by the FBI over his ties with Russia and lost a re-election bid. No public figure anywhere in Europe has yet paid a price for taking money from the Kremlin.

Even the most powerful politician in Europe, Angela Merkel, is struggling to maintain European solidarity on sanctions over Ukraine. Politicians in Cyprus say openly that they share confidential European Union documents with Russia: Brussels is faraway, but Moscow is a friend. Hungary, despairing of EU solidarity on energy, has signed a sweetheart deal with Russia for nuclear-power stations.

The tide is slowly turning. Germany, for example, is changing its post-WWII pacifist posture, bringing 100 tanks out of storage and tweaking its defense plans. Ireland, which has no air force, is worriedly awakening to its dependence on the aging warplanes of Britain's RAF to intercept the Russian bombers that buzz its airspace. Russia does not seem to care that Ireland is not a member of NATO—any more than it has refrained from bullying non-NATO Sweden and Finland. Those two Scandinavian countries, together with their Nordic partners Denmark, Iceland, and Norway, have issued an unprecedented joint declaration, decrying Russia's war games, military buildup, and dangerous aviation stunts. That prompted a rebuke from the Russian foreign ministry. Russia is offended when foreigners do not take it seriously. It is even more offended when they do.

The hard truth is that Europe won't bear the cost or the risk for the defences it needs. That won't change until Europeans are a lot more scared or angry than they are now—which may be too late. ■

 **MONEY IS WHAT MATTERS  
MOST IN THE NEW COLD WAR.  
NO PUBLIC FIGURE ANYWHERE  
IN EUROPE HAS YET PAID  
A PRICE FOR TAKING MONEY  
FROM THE KREMLIN**

20 years of scrimping on defence budgets, no European country has enough deployable, mobile, high-readiness forces to fill this role. NATO has ditched its taboos about Russia and now talks a good game about rapid-reaction forces, but its real capabilities are painfully reduced. The United States is indispensable to Baltic security. But is Baltic security indispensable to the United States?

For all NATO's weakness, it still retains a symbolic power that may be enough to deter Russia. But Russia does not need to outgun the West militarily. It just needs to outspend it on other fronts. That is the Kremlin's real victory. Money, not

# Vytautas Landsbergis:

## "Ukrainians are now undergoing a long endurance test"

*The Ukrainian Week* spoke to the first Speaker of the Seimas of the independent Lithuania and the recent Member of the European Parliament about the way Europe is changing its perception of Russia, the shifting "center of Europeanness", and why it is crucial for Ukrainians to resist disenchantment

Interviewed by  
Anna Korbut

**U.W.:** It has been over a year since Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine, and de-facto against the West as well. Prior to this the East Europeans, and in particular the ones from the Baltics, who voiced their concerns about the Russian threat used to be dismissed as alarmists. In your opinion, how much has the assessment of the situation by the EU and their approaches changed since then?

It was a big surprise for Europe to see someone dying for the EU. That was the moment they began to appreciate Ukrainians. The reassessment of the events by Europe is gradual and partial. They are already willing to admit that we were right in forewarning them. But nobody wants to get involved in a war, so they turn a blind eye to the fact that war is indeed taking place. They are too afraid to face the truth and to start working on a strategy. Unfortunately, it will take some kind of an unprecedented blow for them to realize this. They need to regain their sense of dignity like Ukrainians did. And Ukrainians should be reminded that in spite of all the hardships and letdowns one shouldn't get disenchanted with dignity, because choosing enslavement would be a disaster.

Even if the EU gets divided into those who have the sense and dignity and those, who are willing to be bought, there will still be the first group and they are on your side, because you are on their side. The center of "Europeanness" will shift towards Ukraine despite all the prob-



lems of external and organizational democracy. But the spirit of freedom and dignity has to be preserved. And this brings us to the importance of the rule of law: without it dignity is lost.

**U.W.:** Actually, this is a very hard task for Ukrainians, because after the Maidan, more than a year of emotionally exhausting war they are now dealing with economic problems and have mounting unresolved questions for their new government. Your society experienced a somewhat similar situation in the 1990s. Is there a particular way to avoid disenchantment?

The situation in your society is in part typical, but what is untypical about it is the extreme spiritual uplift. Russia has faced a choice of holding on or letting go of its former colony. When Ukraine decided that it wants to change, it had military force used against it. That was the first phase of confrontation, which perhaps might have looked somewhat embarrassing, but in fact it was a historical triumph – the establishment of Ukrainian nation. That is how I see it. That's how Ukraine established itself, not in terms of geography or some population of certain territory, but the general will, the conscientiousness that united people regardless

of their language or religious differences. This triumph is still felt, but new challenges arise, challenges to the psychological fortitude and the faith in building own state. What is crucial is whether the disgruntlement or, perhaps, anger comes to dominate. If this does happen, it will be bad news, as this is exactly what the enemy is counting on. We had a similar situation, albeit on a smaller scale. We found ourselves in a blockade designed to destroy everything so that the people would rise against those, who sought independence. It didn't happen, though, as the collapse (of the Soviet Union – Ed.) was inevitable. We managed to avoid chaos (chaos meaning freedom without democracy), while Russia didn't. Striving towards freedom and experiencing partial freedom in the first years of the Yeltsin term, but not experiencing justice and the rule of law left people disillusioned. This is what happened in the 1920s in Germany and Italy, and after the Cold War it happened in Russia. It was the arrival of populism in the shape of fascism already familiar to us. Ukraine should strive to be very different to Russia both in terms of the state system and the type of economy. You should move away from dictator economy, the system that's in a way much alike the Latin American one with extremely rich generals. The local generals, that is oligarchs, can have certain preconditions to be allowed into the government. But there should be some scrutiny to determine whether that person is to become a rich dictator or not. It wasn't the case in Russia and the dictator did come to power.

Ukrainians are now undergoing a long endurance test. What Ukrainians received when they broke free is a chance for democracy. And it shouldn't be lost, it has to be maintained. I'm hearing that democratic transformations are taking place in Ukraine, the new government is taking the steps, so Putin and his cohorts are now having to wreak frustration before Ukraine manages to reform itself. Therefore it should be explained to Ukrainians that they are now moving towards changes they've been anticipating for 25 years. The Maidan was merely a key that opened the door, and now what lies ahead is not just a happy jog towards the finish, but hard work on tenacity and power to resist frustration, when the ones struggling in

Ukraine will be shown how enjoy a better life in the meantime. But one can have golden loafs of bread on the table, like Yanukovych did, or have a well-earned loaf of bread on your table. There is crucial difference.

In order to wreak frustration tremendous work is being conducted for brainwashing, and this skullduggery is effective. The Russian media is an instrument of mass brainwashing. But people must be able to tell the difference between that and the real media and information.

**U.W.: The general public is so far not able to tell the difference, because of the lacking "information hygiene" and critical reflection about what they see in the media. And this problem is not exclusive to Ukraine. How can one fight against this in the current circumstances?**

One shouldn't repeat Putin's tales. I remember when Lithuania was making its decision about the course towards the EU (the referendum on joining the EU took place in Lithuania in 2003. 90% voted in favour and in 2004 Lithuania joined the EU – Ed.) we had Romano Prodi visiting (President of the European Commission in 1999-2004 – Ed.). He was told about the public movements against Europe and then speaking in the Seimas he said that he had never seen a single EU tank forcing us to join the united Europe. On the other hand there was Russia, quite a terrifying alternative. It's hard to convey this to other countries that never experienced living under Soviet communism. They escaped the Stalin's curse, they never really experienced being "under Stalin".

Today Russia's information warfare is mobilizing people to an extent. There are countermeasures being taken. For too long have we turned a blind eye to the necessity of doing this work, but now it is being talked about openly, we're getting to real action like banning the lying TV channels with propaganda of war against Ukraine. The indoctrination, however, is carried out using the old paradigm: "This is a righteous war. They must be destroyed because they are different. Different means fascist". So we should be more responsible when talking about this. And we must

**BIO**  
**Vytautas Landsbergis** is Lithuanian politician and public figure, first head of Lithuania after it regained independence from the USSR. He served as Speaker of the Seimas in 1992 and 1996-2000, being one of the founders and leaders of the liberal-conservative party Homeland Union. In 2004-2014, Mr. Landsbergis was Member of the European Parliament, member of the European People's Party group

constantly bring up examples of brainwashed people believing in a Russian boy being crucified in Ukraine just because he spoke Russian or something along those lines. People must be shown that this is what Hitlerites did, saying "Let's go kill Jews because they drank blood of our children". It's the same thing.

Keep reminding the brainwashed people that what is being done to them is a crime. Turning people into bloodthirsty animals is a crime.

In January 1991, when Russian tank crews pushed forwards the people, the latter would yell "fascists" at them. And it worked. And so it will work today. Seeing the threat of Russian fascism the Ukrainian society is faced with will be unifying. In case the Russian fascism is depicted as partially righteous and justified, there will be no Ukraine. It will be destroyed.

**U.W.: In your opinion as a former EU parliamentary, is Europe really prepared to defend itself and its values?**

One should always rely one himself first and foremost. That much we've learned already. We have lost a lot thinking that the defence didn't necessitate much investment and that the NATO would protect the country and all would be taken care of. Now we've realized this. We brought back military conscription in Lithuania and there are a number of other programmes.

**THE MAIDAN WAS MERELY A KEY THAT OPENED THE DOOR. WHAT LIES AHEAD IS HARD WORK ON TENACITY AND POWER TO RESIST FRUSTRATION**

Even if there is no war, we'll have good defence capability in few years. We've had socialists and communists in power for almost eight years. Everything went into decline, just like for you during the Yanukovych era. We were also told that we don't need that (defence capability – Ed.) because it makes us angry. So it turns out to be okay for them to be hostile, but it's somehow not okay for us to be pre-cautious? ■

# Mastering Warfare

Ex-US Marine volunteer on his training course for Ukrainian Marines and crucial aspects of effective military

Interviewed  
by Anna Korbut

The website of US Marines looks like a portal of a high-end publication. Hollywood-like videos show the marines bringing aid to the victims of Hurricane Sandy and floods in Pakistan, opening schools in Afghanistan and training Somalians to fight against the Al-Shabaab. “No Marine passes through our gates without gaining leadership traits that can be called upon throughout a lifetime. Judgment, integrity and tact are a few of the leadership traits that not only make for outstanding Marines – they make for outstanding citizens” – this is the portrait of a US Marine. The recruitment website also provides information on preparation to become a Marine, career opportunities, benefits and a proud history. “The military in the US definitely have more patriotism after service than before it. There will be more appreciation for the United States after being in the military than before,” says Mike Wilson, a former US Marine who has come to Ukraine as a volunteer to hold a two-week marksmanship training for the Ukrainian Marines. Mike spoke to *The Ukrainian Week* about motivations that encourage young Americans to join the military, benefits of it, and why discipline is a key element of success in the military.

**Motivations** There are a lot of reasons to join the military in the US. It can be a career. It’s not the best-paying job in the world, but the pay gets better as one grows in rank. The serviceman receives all kinds of benefits, from medical to food, clothing and housing. Plus, one can still live a normal life. On top of that, one gets education. Recruiters motivate many young men and women, many of them not knowing where they want to go after they finish school, with education opportunities.

Future officers have an option to join the ROTC (Reserve Officers’ Training Corps) program that can prepare the student to become an officer. Officers have to graduate. Prior to university, an individual can enlist for the officers program, but he or she must have grades good enough to do

Mike Wilson doing tactical ground training with Ukrainian Marines

this. Once the person is on the program, they go to the military academies (they are very highly-accredited schools) and can instantly become officers. That officer has to serve for six years. After that time, he is guaranteed the rank of captain or major. After that, the person can quit the army, or continue.

When a military person completes his or her contract of three or four years, the company where he used to work before joining the military has to hire him back provided that he wants that job. If he doesn't want that job, he's on his own. Benefits stop after military service, unless the person is injured or retired.

Basically, being in the military is a job. It just has stricter rules. One can either make a career there, or go for other professions.

**Discipline** Military service in the US is based on a contract of three years minimum. If the contract is broken within that time span, the one who breaches it goes to military prison.

There is a huge difference between discipline in the Ukrainian army and the American one. The Ukrainian military don't have a discipline structure. When I walked down the hallway at the base, there were officers and enlisted people walking around. Nobody saluted one another. It can't be that in the US. If you walk past an officer there, you salute him because you respect his position.

Nobody likes to get disciplined. But when you join the military, in time of war or peace, you subject yourself to that kind of discipline. When I joined the Marines, I was going to do what I was told, I was going to listen, and I was going to take my punishment for failure to do that. The punishment came for silly things, such as not moving fast enough or not making your bed right. But when everyone is getting punished, you are not singled out. Say, it's morning time, and you were dead asleep but now up, standing in front of your bed, which was supposed to be made and you were supposed to get ready to go in just one minute. The officer comes down to a barrack where sixty beds stand. If just one bed is made wrong, not only will he tear that bed apart, but he will do so with everybody's

bed. He is going to make you put that bed together again as fast as you can. When he says "done" and you're not done, he will do that again and again, until he is satisfied. The military teach servicemen history, order, rank, respect, keeping clean and looking nice.

The way to establish discipline is uncomfortable but I would say that it makes sense to begin with having physical exercise in the morning. Then, stand in formations at a certain time in the morning when orders are read out for the day. The platoons that are specifically formed for fighting with weapons need to train continuously so that they know what to do when they confront the enemy. Officers need to go through training programs, classes. They need to become skilled, read books on how to fight a war. Nobody knows how to fight naturally. It's something people learn.

What separates an officer from an enlisted man is education. Officers need to have a degree. They shouldn't have one in war, but in science, maths, literature, psychology or whatever else. That degree is a proof that they know how to be educated.

At the end of the day, this strictness and discipline helps keep your mind clear for urgent decisions. It helps you stay focused when you encounter pressure and have bullets flying over your head. That's another purpose of it.

**Training for the Ukrainian marines** We gathered at 8a.m. I then sent the men down stairs and put them in exercise formation. It was difficult initially. The first day we repeated all the exercises at least ten times. There is no better way to get young men to listen than to exercise it out of them. After our exercises, the first week was classroom and position training only. The body does not know how to naturally hold a weapon, this education process is vital in becoming a good marksman. It usually is very painful the first few days. By the end of that first week, the pain is over and now the body begins to remember these positions. This is all in preparation for the live fire training. The second half of each day was used for tactical ground training, maneuvers, and

concealment to get the men used to thinking in a combat situation. Under stress, the body and mind can fail you, but with the proper training, you will be able to act appropriately and save your life as well as your comrades life too. Week two was practical use of the knowledge given to the men in the first week. Since the Marines in Mykolayiv were removed from their base in Crimea, we didn't have the proper tools or equipment to work more efficiently. But as Marines, we are taught to overcome and adapt. Their intention is to build their own training base and I was invited to design a training facility here after the course. The course has been used since before WWII and will continue to work for generations to



## I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH DEVOTION AND AN INTIMATE CONNECTION LIKE I DID HERE BETWEEN THE VOLUNTEERS AND MARINES

come. None of this could have happened without the help of many people around the world helping. The volunteers here in Mykolayiv are priceless. I appreciate them so much for their tireless help for our Marines. I have never seen such devotion and an intimate connection like I did here between the volunteers and Marines.

**Psychological assistance** The military provides psychologists for soldiers who come back from war and have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Along with that, the military has groups where the war veteran can join other soldiers like that or people he or she can relate to. They help veterans to get back from war emotionally. War is indeed a very traumatic stress. It's not natural for us to take another's life. When we do that, it affects our minds and hearts. It doesn't change us into evil or cruel people - the ones it does change probably had issues with that before the service. I think that post-traumatic comes from the fear that your life can be taken away at any moment, they stay alert every day and night and don't sleep normally. ■

# Neo-Nazi Tales from the Russian Crypt

Russia's aggression has revived right-wing forces in Ukraine. Still, their actual popularity remains marginal compared to most EU countries



When Svoboda joined the coalition Government after the Maidan, it failed to meet the voters' expectations about efficiency and anti-corruption efforts. As a result, its support collapsed from 10.4% in 2012 to 4.7% in 2014 and continues to decline

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**Oleksiyenko**

**O**n April 17, political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko reported that he had received an e-mail from a hitherto unknown organization pretentiously named UPA, "Ukrainian Insurgent Army," claiming responsibility for the murder of the "anti-Ukrainian bastards: Chechetov, Peklushenko, Melnyk, Kalashnikov, and Buzyna." As though to prove its

genuine involvement in some of the assassinations, the e-mail included information about the caliber of weapon that was used in at least one of the murders, which supposedly would not have been widely known. The e-mail closed with a warning about a "merciless revolutionary struggle against members of the anti-Ukrainian regime of traitors... and their total destruction."

Shortly afterwards, the Security Bureau of Ukraine's Main Investigative Administration Director Vasyl Vovk announced that "although the Ukrainian Insurgent Army is a renowned name, this organization is a complete fake." Of course, the possibility that some murders were indeed carried out by a newly-formed group using terrorist methods to reach its radical

goals cannot be completely ignored. However, both Ukraine's security forces and its expert circles believe that the phantom "UPA" name is being used either to cover the tracks of the real killers of individuals listed in the letter, or as part of a deliberate Russian special forces operation to revive the ghost of neo-nazi and ultra-radical "lawlessness" that supposedly stoked all the events in Ukraine starting with Euromaidan. Social networks were a-buzz over the fact that in his speech to the nation, Vladimir Putin mentioned the murder of anti-Ukrainian journalist Oles Buzyna just 10 minutes after it became known in the Ukrainian press.

### "NEO-NAZI ZOMBIES ON THE MARCH"

Whatever else it may promulgate, Russian propaganda is particularly obsessed with the meme "rampant neo-nazism in Ukraine." This is the main bogeyman aimed at discrediting Ukraine before the world and scaring Ukrainians themselves. In reality, not just neo-nazism, but even garden-variety nationalism is far less popular in Ukraine than in most countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

In the more than two decades that Ukraine has been independent, the 2012 Verkhovna Rada elections were the only ones to see a short-lived surge in popularity for Svoboda, the main nationalist party, and it barely scraped together 10.4% of the vote or 2.13 million ballots. By contrast, the first elections after the Euromaidan, in October 2014, gave all three nationalist contenders—Svoboda, Praviy Sektor and the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (CUN) — 1.036 million votes, i.e. only 6.6%. This was particularly striking as, unlike 2012, occupied Crimea and the Donbas, which traditionally were least likely to cast ballots for nationalist parties, did not even participate. In the end, none of the three parties passed the threshold to gain seats in the Rada.

By comparison, nationalist parties in other countries in Europe have done remarkably well. For instance, France's Na-

tional Front won 13.6% of the vote in 2012 while its leader Marine Le Pen took nearly 20% of the vote in the presidential election. Austria's Freedom Party took 21.4% of the popular vote in the 2013 parliamentary elections, and an additional 3.6% went to the breakaway Alliance for Austria's Future. Hungary's ultra-nationalist Jobbik party took 20.5% in the 2014 parliamentary election, while at its peak in 2000, the Greater Rumania nationalist party took 19.5% of the vote. In Russia, the so-called Liberal-Democratic party run by the chauvinist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy has had a steady 8-12% of the vote in recent years.

Yet if we look at the ideology and history of Ukrainian nationalist forces, it turns out that neo-nazi attitudes are rare and their political success has not been based on ideology.

### SVOBODA: THE PROTEST VOTE THAT FIZZLED

Svoboda was originally founded back in 1991 as the Social Nationalist Party of Ukraine (SNPU), but remained a marginal regional force even in Western Ukraine, never mind at

fend hired labor, to protest illegal construction or government socio-economic initiatives. Coupled with growing demand among a certain portion of Ukrainian voters to take a forceful stand against the ruling Party of Regions in the Verkhovna Rada, Svoboda found itself enjoying an unexpectedly high result, over 10%, in 2012. In reality, many who voted for Tiahnybok's party at the time knew little about its ideology, enabling it to benefit from what was largely a protest vote among those radicalized by the Yanukovich regime.

By 2012, Svoboda had managed to largely eliminate its "neo-nazi" label and instead took on a virtual monopoly position as a radical defender of the Ukrainian language and culture against the onslaught of pro-Russian Regionals, especially the actions of much-hated and corrupt Education Minister Dmytro Tabachnyk and the Kivalov-Kolesnichenko language law, whose aim was to reverse russification in Ukraine. Meanwhile, opposition voters were fed up with the toothlessness of the relatively democratic opposition, which came across as hapless victims unable to stand up to Yanukovich's usurpation of power or his traitorous policies that were sacrificing the national interest in favor of Putin's Russia.

In short, this part of Ukraine's electorate wanted to see a political force that at least appeared capable of confronting the arrogance of the then-ruling Party of the Regions. In the case of Svoboda, demonstrative radicalism and shock value clearly won out over ideology and platform. When Svoboda joined the coalition Government after the Maidan, expectations were not met and the situation in the country shifted: Svoboda was quickly discredited by its ineffective Defense Minister and Prosecutor General, not to mention Agricultural Policy and Environment Ministers who were suspected of corruption. So the protest vote that was not nationalist in any real sense was completely disillusioned and the party's support collapsed from 10.4% in 2012 to 4.7% in 2014. The latest

## MANY WHO VOTED FOR SVOBODA PARTY SAW IT LARGELY AS PROTEST VOTE AGAINST THE YANUKOVYCH REGIME

the national level. When its current leader, Oleh Tiahnybok, took over in 2004, the party underwent major changes, including a change of name, and its popularity began to rise. In 2007, an internal clash resulted in the formation of a splinter group known as the Social Nationalist Assembly (SNA) and its military wing, Patriot Ukrainy. Still, Svoboda was unable to muster even 200,000 votes, that is 0.3-0.8% of those who actually voted, prior to 2010.

Without rejecting the party's classic nationalist slogans, Tiahnybok began to focus more on social issues, which led to turbulent internal debates among party faithful. These changes were reflected in a growing number of street actions to de-

polls suggest that this trend continues.

### **PRAVIY SEKTOR: A MANY-COLORED COAT**

Meanwhile, Euromaidan's crest raised a new nationalist organization, Praviy Sektor. Initially an informal civic movement that brought together radically-inclined activists with right-wing views when it emerged at the very beginning of the revolutionary process in November 2013, PS eventually turned into a political party. The initiative to form Praviy Sektor came from a nationalist organization called Tryzub, but it also included UNA-UNSO—based on which the movement was renamed “Praviy Sektor” or Right Sector and the political party was formed—, Patriot Ukrainy, and a number of smaller organizations, such as Karpatska Sich, Biliy Molot, Chorniy Komitet, the Committee to Free Political Prisoners, and individual nationalists and football ultras.

As a result, Praviy Sektor never formed a monolithic organization. During the protests on the Maidan and later, when it was necessary to stand up to Russian aggression, some serious ideological disagreements among the various organizations were moved to the back burner, but they did not disappear. To this day, at least three different centers of power can be seen in Praviy Sektor: Tryzub, where the current PS leader Dmytro Yarosh came from, UNA-UNSO and Patriot Ukrainy. Because most of these organizations are not equally represented across the country at the local level, the distribution of responsibility within Praviy Sektor reflected this: the informal leader responsible for Western Ukraine was the late Oleksandr Muzychko, known as Sashko Biliy, from UNA-UNSO, while Eastern Ukraine is the remit of Patriot Ukrainy's Andriy Biletskiy.

### **TRYZUB: NO BEASTS OR MINDLESS SLAVES**

Given Praviy Sektor's diversity at this time, on April 23, 2015, the organization's leadership decided to activate ideological training at the local level following a document that is intended



Dmytro Yarosh, the leader of Praviy Sektor, a new nationalist organization that emerged during the Maidan as a union of a number of various nationalist organizations. It is not a monolithic organization to this day

to serve as an ideological platform for internal consolidation. So, instead of a public, visible platform for external use, PS is based on an internal document that reveals its real ideological foundations: “A Brief Ideological Training Course...” Since this document is used jointly by both Tryzub and PS, it appears to be a reflection of Tryzub views with the aim of extending these views to the entire movement.

Tryzub was founded in 1993 as the paramilitary wing of the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists. In 2007, Dmytro Yarosh became its leader. Ideologically, the organization, which sees itself as an order and not a party, is conservative nationalist, with considerable weight given to Christian ideals: “Christianity is the foundation, essence and goal of human existence and therefore our ideology. Without Christianity, there can be no Ukrainian nationalism.”

In terms of its ideological and educational approach, Tryzub “unequivocally condemns national-socialism, which turned the individual into a beast,” and “communism, which created a

mindless slave.” It also establishes a high level of religious and ethnic tolerance: “We believe that Jews, Christians and Muslims share a common belief in one God... For the true believer, there is actually no insurmountable barrier between these various faiths... To use these differences for self-aggrandizement, to set up confrontations among these religions or to engage in religious chauvinism is a sin before God and a crime against humanity.”

Not only does Tryzub ideology not equate nation with ethnicity, it does not espouse any racist views. A nation is seen as “a conscious, functional union of people who jointly support the idea of freedom based on ethnic, social, spiritual and cultural values.” This means openness to the integration of other ethnic groups into Ukrainian society. “Our attitude to non-Ukrainians is fraternal towards those who join us in the struggle for a Ukrainian national state, tolerant towards those are supportive of our struggle for the right to be masters of our fates on our own soil, and hostile towards those

who stand in the way of Ukraine's national rebirth and state-building."

However, in the political platform of the Praviy Sektor party, "the high proportion of citizens who are the descendants of individuals transplanted to Ukraine in one manner or another from other regions of the Soviet Union, who have never accepted the right of the Ukrainian people to have their own state, and who continue to be oriented on Moscow" is seen as a problem inherited from the period of soviet occupation. It follows that there is a need to complete the national revolution whose goal is to set up a "nation-state," where "the citizens of other nations recognize the indigenous people as in charge of the country, while enjoying equal rights and duties, knowing and respecting the indigenous language, laws and history, being given the necessary conditions to maintain and develop their own national identity, and being authorized representatives of the culture of their own people."

#### **PATRIOT UKRAINE: THE GHOST OF WHITE SUPREMACISTS**

Patriot Ukraine is a completely different story. The organization was set up in Kharkiv in 2005-6 by Andriy Biletskiy, who was then deputy to Svoboda's ideological chief, Prof. Oleh Odnorozhenko but is better known today as the founder and commander of the Azov volunteer battalion that has since become the Azov Company at the National Guard of Ukraine. After a scandalous split with Svoboda in 2007 over its openly racist views, Patriot Ukraine established its own political entity, the Social National Assembly or SNA. In contrast to Tryzub and UNA-UNSO, Patriot Ukraine and the SNA can really be called "neo-nazi" forces. Its leaders and ideologists follow an ideology based on maximalism, national-racial egoism, love of one's own and intolerance of the other. Its main goal is: "To establish, instead of lumps of different individuals mechanically united by the name 'Ukrainian' and the possession of a Ukrainian passport, a National Supersociety, a single biological organism that

consists of New Humans, that is, physically, intellectually and spiritually evolved individuals. From the mass of such individuals shall rise the Nation, and the weak modern individual shall become a Superman."

Biletskiy has stated baldly that "Ukrainians are a part of the European White Race, moreover one of the biggest and of the highest quality. The historic mission of our Nation in this watershed century is to lead and to bring into its ranks the White Peoples of the entire world in a final crusade against the subhumans led by Semites." The ethnic, social, cultural and spiritual concepts of the nation that can be seen in Tryzub are in sharp contrast to Biletskiy's ultra-racist approach: "All our national-

hoping to restore pre-revolutionary order and capitulate to Russia.

To understand the weight of these groups in Ukraine today, it's significant that not one nationalist political force gained seats as a party in the October 2014 Verkhovna Rada elections. Not one. Only individual leaders gained seats in FPTP districts, those same "men of action"—including the racist Andriy Biletskiy, who got 31.8% of the vote in his riding. But this was not because so many voters in this Kyiv district support his racist and anti-semitic views, but because he was the commander of a volunteer battalion that, in extreme circumstances, stood in defense of the country against outside aggression. By comparison, Praviy Sektor gained only 3.0% of the vote in this same riding, while all the nationalist forces together mustered only 10.4%. Another Praviy Sektor candidate, Boryslav Bereza, got 29.4% of the vote in a neighboring riding in Kyiv, while Praviy Sektor as a party got only 3.2%, and nationalist parties as a whole 9.7%. The leader of Praviy Sektor, Dmytro Yarosh, won his own riding in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast with 30.3% of the vote although his party got only 3.5%, and all the nationalist parties barely managed 5.0%. The Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists' Andriy Lopushanskiy got 32.1% of the vote in his Lviv Oblast riding, although CUN itself got only 0.24%—all of 279 votes!—and all the nationalist parties together 9.4%.

Of course, any nationalist organization can include individuals who are inclined to neo-nazism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and racism. But most nationalist parties in Ukraine do not identify with such ideas and even reject them altogether in their official platforms. The fact is that ethnic or religious superiority and intolerance find little support among ordinary Ukrainians. Indeed, over the quarter-century of independence, nationalist parties have only been able to count on more than a few tenths of a percent of popularity and support when they showed that they were able to distance themselves from such ideologies. ■

## **MOST NATIONALIST PARTIES IN UKRAINE REJECT NEO-NAZISM, XENOPHOBIA, ANTI-SEMITISM AND RACISM IN THEIR OFFICIAL PLATFORMS**

ism is nothing, a mere castle built on sand, unless it is based on the foundation of blood and of Race... The healing of our National Body must start with a Racial Purification of the Nation. Then, in a healthy Racial Body, a healthy National Spirit will be reborn."

Crucially, in the oblasts of Eastern Ukraine where people from Biletskiy's circle are responsible for Praviy Sektor, Patriot Ukraine's ratings are even more marginal than the average across Ukraine, ranging from 0.6% in Ukraine-controlled counties of Luhansk Oblast to 1.4% in Kharkiv Oblast. The organization also has a very high proportion of football ultras.

#### **IDEOLOGY VS IMAGE, IDEAS VS ACTIONS**

In the end, the popularity of nationalist political organizations is based, not so much on their ideologies as on their image as "men of action," their willingness to take radical action in extreme conditions in the struggle against a foreign aggressor—and against the reactionary forces representing the Yanukovych regime within the country who are

# The City of Parallel Realms



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If you suddenly find yourself in the "front-line city" of Kharkiv you'll be struck by its ever-present dichotomy. On one hand this city situated mere 40 kilometers from the state border with Russia has become a real centre of the volunteer movement. Ukrainian flags and symbols are ubiquitous, and on the main square, just opposite the Oblast State Administration building you'll find a large tent where citizens bring their donations for the soldiers on the front line. On the other hand, however, the majority of the locals seem to prefer living in a completely different dimension.

This distorted reality is dominated by the fear of war, social lethargy, creative impotence and an overbearing feeling of utter displeasure about seemingly everything. Meanwhile in some parallel universe exists the Ukrainian, pro-European and free Kharkiv, completely separated from the grey, panicky and decidedly post-Soviet "first capital", as some of the locals still insist on calling it since the communist times (Kharkiv was the capital of the Ukrainian SSR in 1920-1934 – Ed.).

This geometry of parallel realms that never meet is especially striking on the cultural front. According to the front man of the band "Papa Carlo" Vasyl Riabko, until recently even speaking Ukrainian in Kharkiv used to be akin to a political act. Even now, one is unlikely to come across Ukrainian language books, newspapers, local television programmes or large patriotic public events in Kharkiv. The city of 1.5 million has only a handful of Ukrainian churches, art scenes, little islands of modern European cinema, contemporary theatre societies or music bands that openly demonstrate their civic position. This "inner diaspora" is trying to break through the wall of patriotic ignorance and social apathy through the events organized by the Literature Museum, the Ye Bookstore, or through events by Prosvita, an educational community, EuroMaidan-birthered democratic initiatives, various volunteer projects or simply through the efforts of independent mavericks. But this is simply not enough to break the information vacuum, as well as to overpower the other extreme – the recently proliferating shallow flag-waving kind of patriotism.

Naturally, all these cultural efforts happen in spite of the idleness of the local authorities and government agencies. The era of Donbkin & Kernes (the former Head of Oblast State Administration and the city Mayor respectively. See p. 6 for details – Ed.), both of whom made no bones about their aversion to everything Ukrainian, had a lasting impact on the art scene of the city. Kharkiv is suffocating from bureaucratic arbitrariness, overbearing Soviet heritage, Russian propaganda, provinciality of education and the mass migration of the local artists. The municipal education and cultural establishments turned into snake pits of like-minded budget-consuming pencil pushers. All kinds of pro-Ukrainian initiatives are deliberately hindered in case something untoward might happen. And

one should keep in mind that the city is still run by the "little Yanukovych" (the infamous Mayor Hennadiy Kernes – Ed.) and so it isn't rare for teachers to be taken to Russia for "experience exchange in patriotic education", or for pro-communist organizations to be allowed into schools.

Kharkiv Oblast authorities are also passive and do not come up with initiatives to somehow promote the Ukrainian identity. Evident is the shortage of adequate staff, lack of strategic planning and readiness to think outside the box. The overall impression is that nobody really cares about anything, and this total indifference can sometimes be more daunting than the constant threat of terrorist acts that the region is gradually growing accustomed to.

It is obvious that Kharkiv is in need of true leaders, responsible businesses, creative thinking, a critical mass of moral authorities, notable artists, among many other things. Yet it will never be a Donetsk-like proletarian city. Despite all the deficiency in patriotic upbringing, you'll not going to see the emergence of a "Kharkiv People's Republic" or any sort of Donbas scenario being played out. Kharkiv can be a lot of things – mercantile, politically inert, immature and reckless, aesthetically vulgar – but it will always find a way to preserve its own traditional order. The customary tolerance, and utter aversion to any kind of violence, heroic and eclectic history, groundless claims to the capital status, border-town mentality with all of its perks and drawbacks – these things aren't going anywhere. Yet pouring new wine of post-modern Ukrainianism into old wineskins of Kharkiv's pragmatism may well produce a tasty drink. All it takes is some will from everyone concerned: the authorities, the civil society, the local elites, the regular

citizens. And Kharkiv will no doubt retain its unmistakable audacity, the unique relationships between the dwellers of the "big village", its national diversity and bilingualism, the thirst for justice and inviolability of personal space.

However, today's geometry of Kharkiv's parallel realms is

**KHARKIV IS IN NEED OF  
TRUE LEADERS,  
RESPONSIBLE BUSINESSES,  
CREATIVE THINKING AND A  
CRITICAL MASS OF MORAL  
AUTHORITIES**

best seen in its polyphony of worldviews captured within graffiti, where "Ukraine above all!" in an alleyway borders with something completely opposite decorating the next wall. There is no despair, no doom and gloom. Writer Serhiy Zhadan was spot-on in his reflections about Kharkiv and the war: 'Walk in the city, talking to the locals living in these streets and quarters, share metro cars with them and you see no fear whatsoever. It's just not there, for some reason. Perhaps, some don't quite realize what is happening. Perhaps some do realize all too well that things are rather dire and has no fear for that very reason. Each has its own understanding, own vision, own set of complaints and the list of demands'. And it is in confronting own fear that these fixations of the "front-line" Kharkiv are to be overcome. Fixations of the city fighting for its own independence as it wakes from ■



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