

The Ukrainian Week

International edition

#6 (136) June 2019

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to be continued?

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The Ukrainian Week

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ТИЖДЕНЬ



BRIEFING

The poisonous recipe from Kolomoisky

Lyubomyr Shavalyuk

Quite some news! Oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky said in an interview for the Financial Times that Ukraine should follow Greece's suit, quit the IMF's austerity policy and default on its external debt at least. The statement triggered an outcry in Ukraine and beyond. No matter how you analyse it, there is little good in it for Ukraine.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Start with Greece. It decided not to cover its debt to the Troika of the IMF, ECB and the European Commission. The decision was put on a referendum on July 5, 2014. Greece was in the following economic position: the permanent economic crisis had eaten 26.5% of its real GDP between 2008 and 2013, unemployment had grown from 7.3% in 2008 to 27.8% in the summer of 2013, emigration sped up and more. In fact, the deep crisis lasted six years and profoundly changed the country and the mood of its population.

Economic growth recovered in 2014, albeit remained slow. The country was exhausted by the lengthy belt-tightening. When the next debt payments were due and Troika offered another dose of bitter austerity pills, the government decided to avoid responsibility by placing it on the shoulders of the people and running another referendum. The outcome of the vote surprised no one. The results included a new wave of capital flight, five more quarters of economic decline (and -0.6% of real GDP and two lost years), and debt restructuring which will be followed by the inevitable payments on the debts. The first time the economy returned to permanent growth was in mid-2017, and the population is still shrinking.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES PROVES OTHERWISE: UNLESS CONTROLLED BY LENDERS OR INVESTORS, THEY FACE HUGE PROBLEMS WITH SELF-CONTROL, RESULTING IN A SURGE OF CORRUPTION AND NEPOTISM

Greece's default lessons are quite simple. Firstly, a refusal to pay your debt does not mean that the debt vanishes. You will have to pay sooner or later. Secondly, default means the loss of trust. It can be lost in a minute and take decades to restore. Short-term benefits of default are questionable and long-term side effects are catastrophic. Thirdly, capital flight from Greece would have been far quicker and ruinous for the economy, had it not gone through a six-year crisis before. Ukraine is not Greece. It has well recovered from the 2014-2015 crisis. Ukraine can pay its debt back and it has many things to lose.

Another country Kolomoisky points to is Argentina which has declared default many times and is still ok, so Ukraine has arguably nothing to fear. Is this really so? Who in their sane mind can dream of a path of one of the most developed countries in the early 20th century that has tumbled to ranking 64th in terms of GDP per capita today? Ukraine has been degrading for over 25 years, and this is harsh enough.

Argentina is by far not the only South American country that has defaulted several times in the past decades. The results are obvious: this undermines the trust of investors for years, leads to internal chaos in governance and more. Argentina's economy has been in recession six times in the 21st century alone, including the current one. So Ukraine has much to fear and low to fall, even if it has experienced two deep crises in the past ten years. A sclerotic economy that learns no lessons from its failures has yet to make at least one country in the world powerful and happy.

Default on official debt, including to the IMF, is very dangerous. Cooperation with the IMF is just one aspect in the geopolitical support of Ukraine from the West.

Other lenders look watch it, including the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, the EBRD and others. Quitting cooperation with the IMF will push them away too. If Ukraine fails to meet its obligations, it will lose other elements of the Western geopolitical support which includes military cooperation – and the transition of the Ukrainian military to NATO standards, – economic cooperation, including the Association Agreement with the EU, and more. Who will want to deal with an unreliable partner?

South American countries that have declared defaults were not in war with a much stronger enemy and did not need geopolitical support as much as Ukraine does. Does Kolomoisky have anything to offer as an alternative? If he means the support of Israel where he lived until recently, this country can provide serious military support. But it does not have options, such as sanctions against Russia, switching off SWIFT for it, consolidation of the EU to support Ukraine's interests. So this is a sad alternative, if it replaces the West rather than contributes to its actions.

Finally, the factor of Ukrainians. Kolomoisky said that they have elected Zelenskiy because they did not want the cooperation with the IMF they had under Poroshenko. But where would Ukraine's economy be without the help of the IMF and other donors in the past five years? The choice of Ukrainians signals that they do want to live better than they lived under Poroshenko, that they want new opportunities. But default and the economic crisis it triggers guarantee something very different: the loss of Ukraine's moderate accomplishments of the past years. Ukrainians did not vote for that.

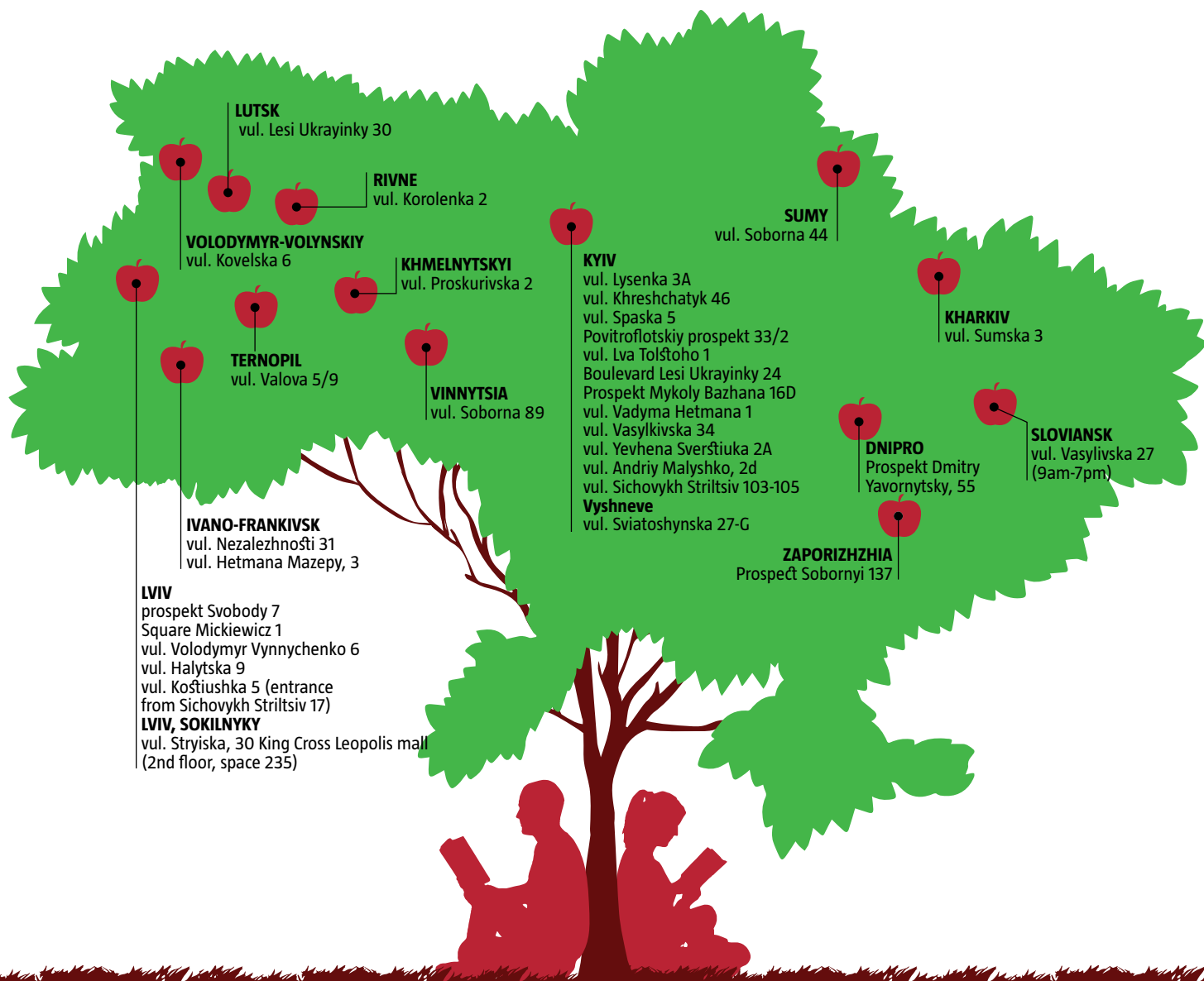
Announcing default would have more side effects. Kolomoisky presents it as a more sovereign choice, implying that Ukraine should act as befits it. The experience of South American countries proves otherwise: unless controlled by lenders or investors, they face huge problems with self-control, resulting in a surge of corruption and nepotism. Some conditions of the IMF program for Ukraine were indeed tough. But they have taught Ukrainian politicians to be more disciplined, to steal less and to be more pragmatic in the way they use budget funds. Without external control, corruption will thrive in Ukraine once again and the people will hardly benefit from that. So the entire crew of corruptioners who have been pushed away from milking Ukraine in the past five years is applauding to Kolomoisky and looking forward to new "accomplishments". The problem is that a corrupt country can never defend itself properly in war.

Ukraine would lose in a default. Why is Kolomoisky promoting it then? His logic is simple. Undoing nationalization of PrivatBank means termination of cooperation with the IMF. If Kolomoisky wants to return the bank, he and Zelenskiy would have to explain to Ukrainians why they have become poorer because of the ensuing economic chaos. Declaring default and blaming everything on it, while getting rid of the IMF, is a perfect option. The problem is that Kolomoisky appeals to patriotism in this. This is utter cynicism.

Kolomoisky is apparently preparing the information field for denationalization of PrivatBank. This once again proves that an oligarch in him defeats patriotism, even though many in Ukraine tend to perceive him as a patriot. If Volodymyr Zelenskiy were to accept his long-time partner's proposal, the country would face a disaster. ■



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The return of threat

Why is right-wing populism on the rise around the world

Michael Binyon, London

More than 70 years since the defeat of fascism, populist right-wing parties are winning votes and challenging governments across Europe. From Italy to Sweden, from Hungary to Spain, politicians on the far right are denouncing migrants, inciting hostility to Muslims and stirring up what many politicians see as a dangerous wave of nationalism that threatens the stability and values of established democracies.

The political landscape seems suddenly to have changed. Donald Trump is riding high in America. Theresa May has already fallen victim to the populist pressures of Brexit. Vladimir Putin is secretly funding right-wing parties across Europe. And the world of social media is now full of messages of hate, intolerance and racial taunts.

The established political parties are deeply worried. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, says Europe

must wake up to the new dangers to the European Union. President Macron is under siege in France, denounced every weekend by groups of violent “gilets jaunes” (yellow vest) demonstrators. And the European elections have just shown a huge rise in support for far-right groups, once seen as fringe remnants of fascism, who are now entering the European parliament in large numbers.

All politicians have to send out “populist” messages to win votes. Appealing to what people want and promising easy solutions to their problems is not new. But there is a new brand of populism that is allied to an arrogant and divisive nationalism and thrives on identifying and denouncing enemies within a country’s midst – immigrants, gypsies, liberals and especially Muslims. These new populists say that Europe’s heritage and Christian values are under threat. They warn of cities being



Overseas fashion icons. There are more and more right-wing populist leaders in the world such as Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the USA

swamped by black and brown-skinned immigrants with alien values and cultures who bring a wave of crime, drugs and prostitution in their wake. They appeal to an older generation worried about job losses and nostalgic for lost greatness and social stability. And they also appeal to a young generation that feels excluded from power and impatient with established rules and social conventions.

Around the world, from Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil to Viktor Orban in Hungary, a shameless new form of government is on the march. It trades in feelings not facts, nostalgia not progress, grievances not solutions and chauvinism rather than co-operation. From behind a cover of ancient hatreds and hyped-up modern threats, it disdains established processes and norms and governs as though ordinary rules do not apply. In Poland, the right-wing government has tried to take control of the courts by appointing judges that favour its views. In Italy, the deputy prime minister and driving force of the present coalition has promised a census of people of Roma descent and has threatened criminal prosecutions of any ships that pick up migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean and landing them in Italy. In Austria the leader of the Freedom Party – until he was caught proposing an corrupt deals with a group posing as Russian oligarchs – proposed closing mosques, described migration as “population replacement” and used language reminiscent of the Third Reich. Ministers in Estonia flashed a “white power” sign while being sworn in. A fascist senator in Australia spoke of a “final solution” for Muslims. And in Germany, where the far right led to the Holocaust and world war two generations ago, some members of the Alternative for Germany party are again denouncing Jews.

Alarming, the far right now sees itself as part of a global movement. It recently tried to organise a convention of all those parties across Europe that share attitudes and policies once seen as dangerous and unacceptable. Matteo Salvini in Italy expresses open admiration for Orban in Hungary. In Britain, those on the right of the ruling Conservative party, especially the leaders of the Brexit movement such as Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg, have been in touch with Steve Bannon, the maverick American far-right campaigner and former Trump adviser, who is now trying to build a far-right network across Europe.

Why is the populist right doing so well? Partly, this is the result of the failure by mainstream parties to deliver greater prosperity for ordinary people. Most European countries have grown steadily richer. But the wealth gap has widened enormously. The rich have become much richer, while the poor have seen their real wages stagnate. Chief executives of big British companies now earn on average 183 times more than the pay of an ordinary worker in their companies – a difference at least twice the pay difference 20 years ago. They are paid 165 times more than nurses and 140 times more than teachers. This gap is even greater in America and India. Mainstream parties, either on the left or the right, have lost any political vision, and offer no solutions to modern problems – drugs, violence, increasing crime, housing shortages, social care and health systems that are overstretched.

Populist parties promise quick and easy solutions – even if these promises are untested and rely on what many say are fake facts and fake news. And voters are

ready to disregard the rights of minorities and the vulnerable if these stand in the way of sweeping new measures. A recent survey in Britain found that half of all voters said Britain “needs a strong leader willing to break the rules.”

The mainstream parties have been alarmed by the rise of the far right. This was particularly evident in Britain, where the recent European elections put the new Brexit party well ahead and forced the ruling Conservative party into fifth or sixth place, behind even the Greens – a result so humiliating that it forced the party to compel Mrs May to resign even before the results were published.

It is the centre-right that feels most threatened. They are bleeding support to those on the far right. Traditional conservative parties in Europe – the Christian Democrats in Germany, the British Conservatives or the Popular Party in Spain – have reacted by trying to steal many of the far-right’s ideas and policies or entering into coalitions with groups that were once seen as extremists. On the whole, this has proved disastrous. The spectacular collapse of the coalition in Austria of the mainstream People’s Party with the far-right Freedom party came after the corruption of Heinz-Christian Strache, the Freedom Party leader, was revealed in a sting video. But it has left Sebastian Kurz, the young Austrian chancellor, without any ally in government and looking foolish and naïve. His government is likely now to fall.

AROUND THE WORLD, FROM JAIR BOLSONARO IN BRAZIL TO VIKTOR ORBAN IN HUNGARY, A SHAMELESS NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS ON THE MARCH. IT TRADES IN FEELINGS NOT FACTS, NOSTALGIA NOT PROGRESS, GRIEVANCES NOT SOLUTIONS AND CHAUVINISM RATHER THAN CO-OPERATION.

In other countries, established Conservative parties have proposed alliances with the far-right: before the election in Sweden last September the liberal conservative Moderate party proposed a deal with the hard right Sweden Democrats; the Popular Party in Spain formed a regional government with Vox, the new right-wing party; and in Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands, long seen as bastions of liberal tolerance, the ruling parties are making concessions to the right. In Denmark, for example, the government now allows the police to confiscate jewellery and other valuables from arriving asylum-seekers.

Many Europeans blame President Trump for the success of the far right. His nationalist America-first rhetoric won him the presidency and voters do not seem to worry that he says things often shown to be untrue or denies what he said only days later. Europeans think they can copy his tactics. Putin is also blamed for encouraging and secretly funding parties such as Marine Le Pen’s National Front – now renamed as the National Rally – as part of Russia’s attempt to destabilise established political structures in the West. These trends have been encouraged by social media, where those with the most extreme views or hate-filled messages are winning the greatest following. Traditional governments seem powerless to respond. Theresa May has been forced out of office. Merkel has given up leadership of her party. Nationalism now dominates politics in Poland and Hungary. Is the world moving back to the dangerous political tensions of the 1930s? Will history repeat itself? ■

Jerry Skinner:

“We want to make in the case of clear that this was a deliberate act designed to be a provocation for the August invasion”

Interviewed
by Yuriy Lapayev



The Ukrainian Week talked again with an attorney representing the families of those killed in the disaster of the Malaysian MH17 flight in a lawsuit against the Russian Federation in the European Court of Human Rights, on the evidence in this case, and on the possible consequences of the verdict for Russia

Can you provide us some news in case of MH17 in ECHR? What is your current mission in Ukraine?

— We are in Ukraine at the present time as a result of serious and official Statements of Facts that were issued by ECHR about three weeks ago. It included a series of questions, which we will be answered by the Russian Federation later this year. Those questions deal with information that may include reference to information that may be answered more fully with evidence still in Ukraine. So we have come here to prepare to reply more fully to the Russian opposition. The

Russians will oppose what we have already done. The Statements of Facts by ECHR is very close of what we have alleged, so the Russians will respond and then we will have the opportunity to reply. We want some new information, we want as much information as we can find. We want to make in our case clear that this was a deliberate act designed to be a provocation for the August invasion. We believe that Russia just needed extra time between the MH17 event and the August invasion of the Donbas to create a wave of misinformation to blame Ukraine. So we are here in Kyiv, collecting further information about this time period around when it happened. We believe our case is strong and growing stronger.

Which countries are currently involved in the process?

— In the statement of facts, that I mentioned, the court invited the countries that had citizens on the aircraft to join the case, to make the observation on the Statement

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of Facts and to participate. So far the Dutch government, which has the largest interest, because of the large number of Dutch people on plane has been the only nation to agree. But they have indicated, that some of the other countries, like Australia, Germany, and UK maybe joining soon. Then we will have individuals and state applicants bringing cases against Russia. That changes the landscape significantly. The world is pushing back.

Do you think involvement of USA would benefit the investigation?

— That is an embarrassing question, because I'm from United States. We believe the US government has the information, at least what the JIT, the Europol criminal investigation, has issued a report. That American report perhaps, including satellite photographs was given to the JIT and presumably is also here in Kyiv in the possession of Ukrainian part of the JIT team.

We would like to have this report, because we understand it to be scientifically reliable enough and significant enough, that it would be hard to deny what it shows. We want that to be the part of the civil case for the families as well as part of the criminal case. So one of the things we came here to try to obtain are copies of that report. Because the American government does not admit that they exists. And I have requested it officially by FOIA, requested it from Congress and there is either silence or no report produced. We want that information from US government, I think that could help enormously.

What Ukraine still needs to do?

— Ukraine has several actions filed. You filed four original actions in ECHR on the broader issue of Crimea, on the actions in Donbas. But none of the actions are direct and to the point to say: "Russia, you invaded us" or "You killed or displaced our people" or "You destroy our industry and infrastructure". Nothing is stated straight like that. I have been encouraging Ukrainian government to bring at least one action that essentially says: you hurt Ukrainian people and nation severely. It needs to identify that the reparation for those actions are so big, that Russia is indebted to Ukraine for billions of dollars and the debt should be paid as a matter of justice. If nothing else, Russia may never leave the territories it has taken, but if it going to continue this criminal behavior, they should pay for it.

Remember the missile targets one airplane, MH 17. But the real target of the attack was the freedom of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. ■

У К Р А Ї Н С Ь К И Й
Тиждень



No U-turn is allowed

Why results of the Ukrainian presidential elections absolutely do not mean Ukrainians' desire for a shift in foreign policy?

Oleksandr Kramar

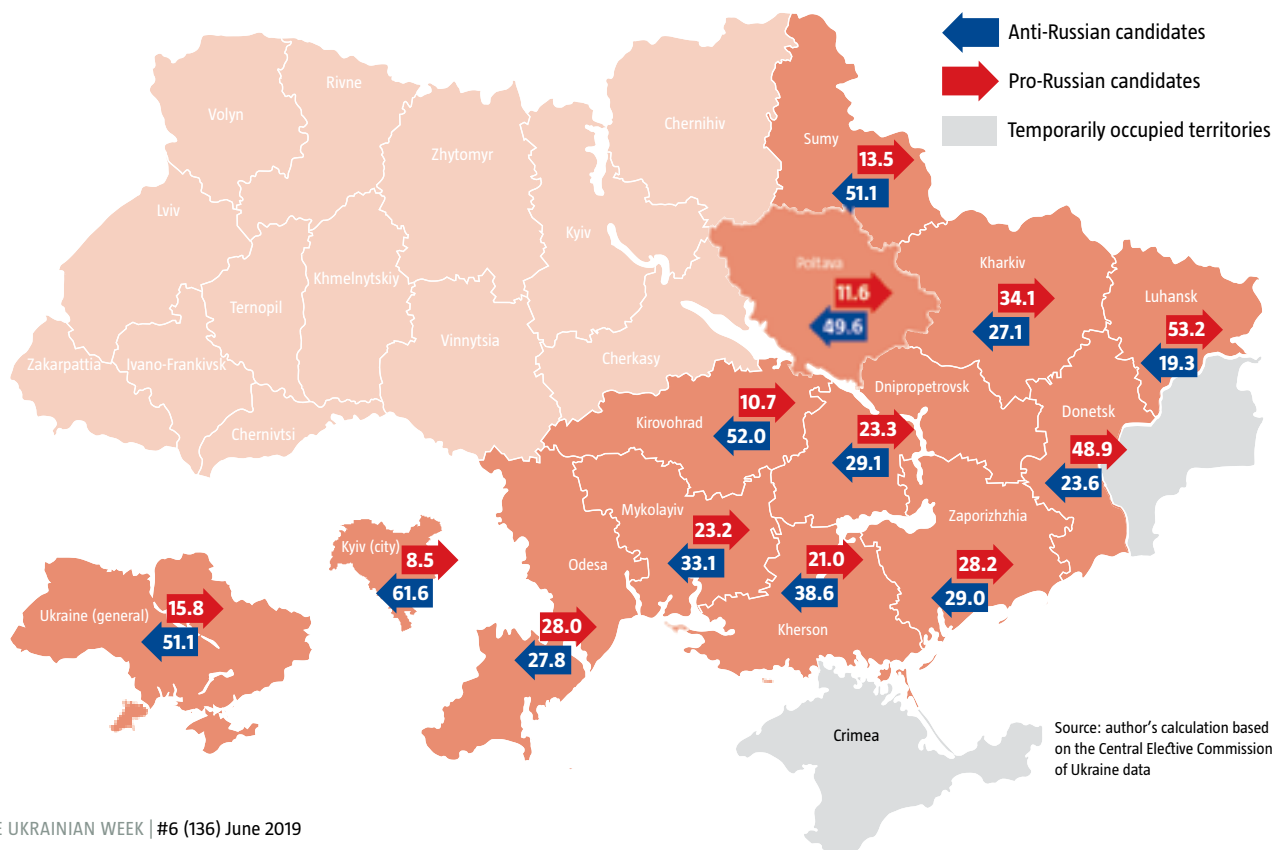
Results of the second round of presidential elections in Ukraine proved to be a fertile ground to various members of the Russian fifth column in Ukraine – equally among politicians and representatives of the pro-Russian media. They decided the time has come for them to claim that Ukrainian society demands a radical change of the strategic direction. The key thesis of their propaganda was a claim was that Ukrainian society firmly rejected president Poroshenko's internal and foreign policy. Therefore, as they imagined it, if not the new president, then at least the new parliament will make a drastic shift in country's foreign policy and will turn its sight back to Russia. Those tendencies are somehow also noticeable among pro-Ukrainian and pro-European citizens. However, Poroshenko's defeat to Zelenskiy in the second round absolutely does not mean that Ukrainian society wants the change in the country's foreign policy, or that Zelenskiy's voters somehow demonstrated their stance against European aspirations, de-Sovietisation of Ukrainian public space and culture, or against country's top priorities which were identified by Poroshenko – "Army, Faith and Language". Results of the vote after the first and second round of elections have clearly proven that Poroshenko simply failed to convince majority of Ukrainians that his defeat would mean a radical shift in Ukraine's geopolitical and ideological strategy. Poroshenko lost not because of the "Army, Faith and Lan-

guage", or his foreign policy, but because of the poverty, rising living costs and corruption. At the same time, the main aim of the fifth column right now is to convince Ukrainians that Zelenskiy's victory means a decisive defeat for the foreign policy initiated by Poroshenko, and if Zelenskiy is not going to change anything any-time soon, he would lose the popular support as well.

In reality, results of these presidential elections, and especially those after the first round, when people traditionally vote "for" a specific candidate, rather than "against" one, have proven something completely opposite. The absolute majority of Ukrainians, including those living in the East and South, support Ukraine's efforts to move away from Russia with further integration with the European Union. Openly pro-Russian candidates, such as Yuriy Boyko and Oleksandr Vilkul together earned only 15.8% of all votes in the first round, which is barely 3 million votes. Politicians with clear anti-Russian positions (Poroshenko, Hrytsenko, Tymoshenko, Smeshko, Lyashko, Koshulynskiy, Nalyvaychenko, Bezsmertniy and others) received over 51% of the voters, or 9.5 million votes. Together Boyko and Vilkul received majority of the votes in the Ukraine-controlled areas of Donbas region, as well as a third of votes in Kharkiv region. Elsewhere, even in the South East they received less than anti-Russian candidates. For instance, in Zaporizhzhia region Boyko and Vilkul together received 28.2%,

Support for foreign policy initiated by Poroshenko

Support for pro-Russian and anti-Russian candidates in the first round of presidential elections, %



while anti-Russian candidates received 29%, in Odesa – 28% and 27.8% respectively. In other regions in the South and East they have done even worse – in Dnipropetrovsk region they lost 23.1% to 29.1%, in Mykolayiv region – 23.2% to 33.1%, in Kherson region – 21% to 38.6%. No need to mention other areas, where they barely earned 10%. In Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, pro-Russian candidates received together 8.5%, while anti-Russian group of candidates won 61.6%. In Kirovohrad region Boyko and Vilkul lost 10.8% to 52% won by anti-Russian candidates, and 11.6% to 49.6% in Poltava region.

Current tendencies in Ukrainian society make it impossible for a candidate or a political party, who openly calls for the restoration of close ties with Russia, to be elected, let alone hold onto the power for some period of time. It seems like the close circle of the newly elected president began acknowledging this fact. Despite that Zelenskiy's voters are quite diverse in terms of their political views, he will still be forced to openly declare his anti-Russian stance, which will open up a door for him to cooperate with other anti-Russian political parties, as well as securing support from their voters. Potential loss of the voters, who are fierce devotees of the so called of "reload" and "peace-making" with the warmongering state and its puppets in Donbas, is somehow seen as a lesser of two evils by Zelenskiy and his team. Recently Zelenskiy caused uproar among some of his followers on Facebook, publishing a post claiming that after a careful consideration he "realized that after the annexation of Crimean peninsula and Russian military intervention in Donbas, there is nothing common left between Ukraine and Russia, but the state border" and he definitely "wouldn't call current Ukrainian-Russian relationship a brotherhood".

His pro-Russian followers and supporters as well as member of the Ukraine's fifth column hoped that Zelenskiy's victory would in fact lead to a significant U-turn in Ukraine's Russian policy. They have immediately showered him with angry accusations, claiming he has bitterly disappointed their hopes and threatening that "pro-Russian citizens will elect pro-Russian parliament", calling on Zelenskiy to "unite the nation rather than divide, and adhere to his promises". At the same time Zelenskiy is forced to acknowledge that even before the first round of elections 53.3% of his voters supported Ukraine further integration with Europe, while 45.4% supported Ukraine's accession to NATO (as opposed to 32.6% who were against it). Result of the second round drastically changed the geopolitical picture of Zelenskiy's voters – he increased his support by 43%, while pro-Russian Boyko and Vilkul remained with their 15.8% of support. Thus, the anti-Russian and pro-Western majority among Zelenskiy voters has increased even more. According to Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KMIS), before the second round of Ukrainian elections 44% of his voters were Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, 23.8% were bilingual and only 28.2% were Russian-speaking.

Change in the strategy is an important issue once we look at Zelenskiy's future cooperation with the parliament and the local authorities. According to KMIS, pro-Russian parties, such as *Opposition Platform for Life* (OPZZh) of Medvedchuk, *Opposition Block of Akhmetov-Novinskiy* and *Nashi* of Murayev would only win 19.1% of votes, while *Block Petra Poroshenko* (BPP), *Batkiushchyna*, *Civic Platform* (GP) of Hrytsenko, *Samopomich*, Vakarchuk's potential party and UKROP would win 49.4%. It also seems like in every region, except for Donbas, the anti-Russian forces would win. Another 25.9% would vote for *Sluga Narodu*, Zelenskiy's political party. In the South of Ukraine, OPZZh, Opposition Block and *Nashi* would win 30.2%, while combined anti-Russian parties would have 31%. This equation would constitute 36.2% and 27.3% in the East, while *Sluga Narodu* would get 28.1%. Needless to say, in the Central Ukraine, pro-Russian parties would barely receive 7.1% of the votes, while anti-Russian BPP, *Batkiushchyna*, GP of Hrytsenko and Syl'a i *Chest* of Smeshko would receive 58.4%

of the votes. In the west of Ukraine pro-Russian parties would barely reach the 4% of support. Those pro-Russian parties, however, would have received 73.7% in the Ukraine-controlled areas of Donbas, as opposed to 6.5% won by anti-Russian parties.

It seems like the sole viable option for Zelenskiy and his political party is partnering in the parliament with pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian forces. Firstly, because this would mean support from at least of 50% of Ukraine, except for Donbas. This means, 55.4% support in the east, 66.7% in the south, 87.6% in the centre and 89.6% in the west. At the same time, if Zelenskiy chooses to partner with the pro-Russian parties, he will create a dangerous situation and growing opposition not only in the west, but also in the centre of the country. Even now Zelenskiy is seen as the representative of the South, who does not have significant support among Ukrainians living the central or western regions and who won the second round of elections mostly owing to corruption scandals surrounding Poroshenko. At the same time, one should also remember about the classical competition between Kolomoyskiy, the sponsor and the key man behind Zelenskiy, and Akhmetov and Novinskiy, who are behind the Opposition Block. Kolomoyskiy also has quite a strained relationship with Dmytro Firtash, Vienna-based Ukrainian oligarch and the sponsor of OPZZh. Kolomoyskiy, Zelenskiy and their circle may be absolutely indifferent or at times even ignoring Ukrainian national aspirations, such as Ukrainisation, de-Sovietisation or de-colonisation of the cultural sphere in Ukraine. But they would absolutely support Ukraine's movement towards the West, if they see strengthening of the ties with the West as something more profitable, than trying to come to an agreement with Kremlin or its satellites. Additionally, Kolomoyskiy may be tempted by the assets of pro-Russian oligarchs in Ukraine. And it is much easier to get hold of those once he declares himself in the opposition to Kremlin.

Therefore, Zelenskiy is doomed to search for strategic partners among pro-Ukrainian and pro-Western political forces, rather than the pro-Russian Kremlin's fifth column. This will also increase his popularity in the regions, where his support initially was not that strong. He will have to, though, correct his rhetoric and get rid of his image as a soft politician, ready to compromise with Moscow or with pro-Russian politicians such as Medvedchuk or Lukash – which he has been actively trying to prove recently.

Medvedchuk's OPZZh is not denying that they have a lot of hope in the upcoming parliamentary elections in the fall 2019. According to Ukrainian constitution, presidential power in Ukraine is rather limited. According to pro-Kremlin "team", it is much more effective to have fragmented parliamentary coalition, which would influence both president and the prime minister and which would be ruled by the 'eminence grise'. In order to influence the parliamentary coalition, such marginalized political players like OPZZh will need divided parliament and a weak president.

If Zelenskiy opts for a partnership with pro-Ukrainian forces, pro-Russian fifth column will still be able to form some sort of a parliamentary representation, especially using the votes of the Zelenskiy's disappointed voters of the East and South. However, the Latvian example proves that this will not be enough. In Latvia, pro-Russian *Saskanas Centrs* has been one of the biggest parliamentary forces in the Latvian parliament for years, claiming from 25 to 30% of the seats. This, however, failed to influence Latvia's further integration with Europe and NATO.

At the same time, political parties in Ukraine that are still hoping to bring the country back into the Russian sphere of influence, are aware of the fact that possibilities to do so are shrinking. This, in turn, makes them more aggressive and reckless, forcing them to use new methods in a political environment, when openly pro-Russian candidate stands no chances. In this case ambitions of the pro-Russian fifth column in Ukraine may only be fulfilled as a result of a coup d'état or power seizure. ■

Master of improvisation

The new President's first steps create quite a few potential problems for himself first and foremost. Potential successes are harder to see

Andriy Holub

Intense activity. This phrase best describes Volodymyr Zelenskiy's first steps. His first week started with the inauguration speech and ended with arguments about the smell of food in Kyiv on social media triggered by his greetings on the Day of Kyiv. News came plenty to fill both political and tabloid newsfeeds. What was far more difficult to see in this whirlwind of developments was the course of the new President, if there is any.

BARELY VISIBLE SO FAR, THE PROBLEM IS THAT ZELENSKIY IS DETERMINED AT SETTING UP MINES FOR HIMSELF. THE PARLIAMENT DISSOLUTION DECREE CAN BE APPEALED IN COURT. **THE DECISION WILL NOT COME SOON. BUT IT COULD TURN INTO A TRIGGER FOR THE CRASH OF THE PRESIDENT IF THE IMPEACHMENT LAW IS PASSED**

"My first draft law is about people's power," is the quote from his platform as candidate for presidency. "Together, we will record a mechanism in it with which only the people of Ukraine will shape the key tasks for the government through referenda and other forms of direct democracy." His other first proposed draft laws mentioned in the platform and promises from his team include bills on impeachment, lifting of immunity from all those in power and revoking mandates from MPs. In fact, the first two bills sponsored under Zelenskiy's signature were about the snap election he called. One was purely technical on public procurements for the election period. Another one was on the change of the election system to the proportional system with closed party lists. The President's team presented this as a product of compromise with the rest of MPs. Eventually, this product of compromise gained 92 votes in favor out of 226 necessary for it to pass.

Here are a few more quotes. "My key task is to bring to power patriotic specialists with integrity," Zelenskiy wrote in his platform. "Don't worry. We will have no nepotism," he told the journalists of the Schemes: Corruption in Detail, an investigative show, still as candidate.

"We have said this before and are saying this still – there is some risk for people between the first and the second round, and even after the second round. If we mention any of the current officers as future minister of defense or chief of headquarters now, they may not stay in service until the inauguration. You know this well. Special services and career diplomats know this too," said Dmytro Razumkov, head of Zelenskiy's election office, about why they have not yet disclosed their future key appointments.

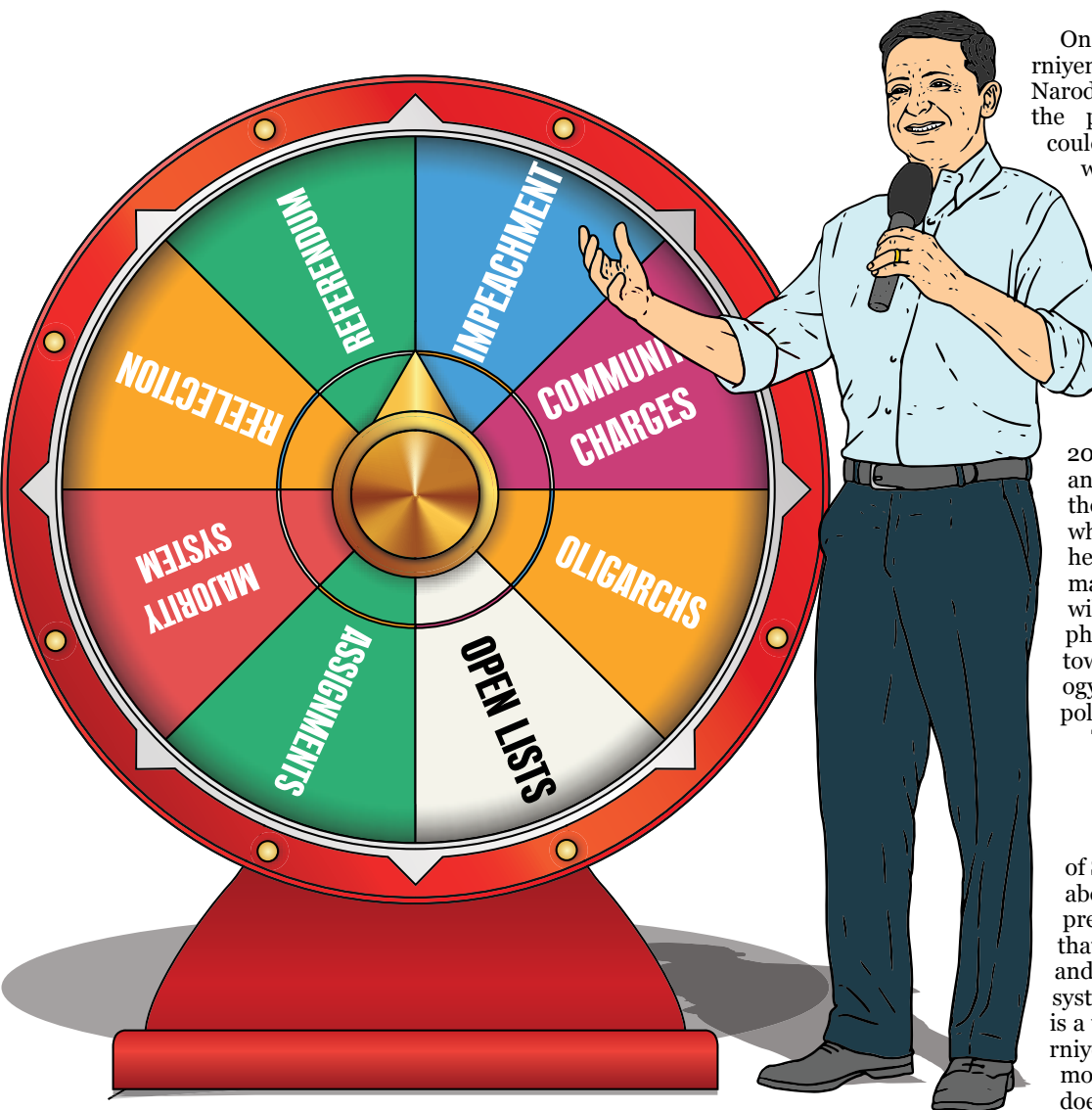
In his first week in office, Zelenskiy broke one of his promises on the draft laws, and partly walked away from the second one on appointments. Two earlier broken promises from his team were to present candidates for the key appointments and publish the texts of the first draft laws by the second round.

All this can be brushed off as insignificant. Firstly, Zelenskiy never quit the idea of people's power or any of his other proposals. He only forgot to mention the impeachment law in his inauguration speech. The referendum idea gained a new significance after the newly-appointed Chief of Staff Andriy Bohdan spoke about asking people about negotiations with Russia. Ruslan Stefanchuk, the President's envoy to the Verkhovna Rada, claims that the text of the bill is ready. The problem is that he said the same thing before the second round, and it has not yet been submitted for public discussion.

There is no nepotism in the appointments. At least nobody has found any public evidence to prove the opposite. What we have instead is appointments of a friend from childhood, many people from the Kvartal 95 show and the Chief of Staff appointed against the lustration law. It is difficult to criticize Zelenskiy for appointing his closest people in his Administration. The mere name of the entity implies that this is about the President's personal apparatus and the organization of his work. But the Presidential Administration gained a shadow role during the years of independence. If it remains the platform for backdoor deals, the society will know about this very soon. Otherwise, these appointments will not really matter that much. But the arbitrary interpretation of the law in the appointment of Bohdan is a far more disturbing factor.

In terms of its appointments, Zelenskiy's team can be criticized for something else. Are there many "patriotic specialists with integrity" among the new officials who would have faced "repressions" by the predecessors if they had been disclosed as candidates for their positions during the election campaign? In fact, just two people can come under this category. One is Vadym Prystaiko, Ukraine's ambassador to NATO until recently and Deputy Chief of Staff now, and Ruslan Khomchak, the new Chief of the General Staff and Chief of Staff with the Ground Forces before that. Another case is for Olena Zerkal, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs responsible for all international courts against Russia under Poroshenko's presidency. She was first appointed Deputy Chief of Staff for Zelenskiy, only to publicly reject that proposal later.

One appointment stands out of Zelenskiy's first people: Ivan Bakanov for Deputy Chief of the Security Bureau of Ukraine (SBU). Bakanov is Zelenskiy's business partner and childhood friend. But the SBU is not the Presidential Administration. Few remember this, but Zelenskiy sent two dozen people to the Right to Power talk show on 1+1 before the second round of the election. Nothing was mentioned about their future positions. Bakanov was among them, presented as a person "responsible for the President's contacts with the Verkhovna Rada". Nobody mentioned the SBU. Ruslan Riaboshapka and Denys Monastyrsky were then referred to as experts for law enforcement issues. Eventually, Riaboshapka was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff, and Stefanchuk represents the President in Parliament. Monastyrsky has no portfolio yet. This move can be interpreted in two ways. Zelenskiy may have



On June 3, Oleksandr Korniyenko, the head of the Sluha Narodu election office, said at the party presentation what could be applied to the entire work of the presidential team. His comment was on the news about libertarianism as the party's ideology. The mention of a political ideology mostly familiar of internet-geeks triggered a storm of jokes. When journalists asked him about this, he said "Go 20km or 100km out of Kyiv and nobody will understand the issue of ideology there, who is right, left or center here. The party will have its manifest on its website, it will explain everything." This phrase betrays the attitude towards the platform ideology and the understanding of politics and State as a whole.

The result is the main thing while procedures are a mere burden. They feel like they can juggle ideologies, appoint Chief of Staff in violation of the law, abolish the decrees of the previous President – even if that, too, is against the law, and try to change the election system within one day, which is a violation as well. What Korniyenko is right about is that most of Ukraine's population does not understand ideologies. In the same fashion, many of Zelenskiy's supporters will come

a grand plan for reconstructing the state and is keeping it secret. Then one can assume that Bakanov's appointment was long planned but not announced for tactical reasons. The second assumption is much worse than any of Zelenskiy's plans: he is simply improvising.

The main signal of no plan so far is the dissolution of the Verkhovna Rada announced in Zelenskiy's inauguration speech. The decree on this was published late as Zelenskiy's team decided to also change the election system. Initially, they proposed a switch to the proportional system with closed party lists and the threshold down to 3%, not the open-list proportional system promised during the campaign. "Clearly, the decision is not perfect, but this is a compromise. Of course, this is not our goal, our dream, but this is a lesser evil than the current first-past-the-post system where people buy votes with buckwheat and then resell them during the vote... We worked on the draft law all night," Ruslan Stefanchuk shared on May 22, after the draft law failed to pass the Parliament. The new President's blizkrieg failed. But it's the process, not the result that matters here. The fact that the initiative of the newly-elected Head of State with the skyrocketing rating failed to secure a hundred votes only means that his team had not done any serious preparations for the vote.

up with excuses for his reluctance to stick to procedures. Ukrainian politicians have too long used them as a cover-up for their own interests. The Verkhovna Rada is deeply unpopular, and so is the former President, so "they deserve what they have." Yet, it is only successful countries in the world that have procedures, and outsiders don't.

Barely visible so far, the problem is that Zelenskiy is determined at setting up mines for himself. The Parliament dissolution decree can be appealed in court. The decision will not come soon. But it could turn into a trigger for the crash of the President if the impeachment law is passed. If Zelenskiy's popularity slips by then and the court rules the dissolution of Parliament unconstitutional, his friends and opponents will have a serious leverage against him. The officials appointed by Poroshenko and dismissed by Zelenskiy can, too, return to their portfolios through courts.

It will be Ukrainian society, not President Zelenskiy that will have to deal with the legal debris currently produced by the Presidential Administration. With the current pace, Ukraine may find itself in the legal chaos and political crisis that will make the current time look like perfect stability. All this in a country that is still at war. ■



The power of Facebook

Do we stand a chance to win a battle for social networks?

Yuriy Lapayev

It's been a while since social networks seized to exist as a mere communication tool to get in touch with the former classmates. Nowadays this is a gigantic industry involving practically all the aspects of human life, and, what's interesting, recently influencing social interaction more and more. The world was witnessing the government change in Venezuela online, after the 'blue tick' of Nicolas Maduro's Twitter account was transferred to the opposition leader Juan Guaido. To a large extent in Ukraine the new president owes his astonishing victory to an extremely successful advertising campaign in social networks. Therefore, unsurprisingly, military, counter-intelligence and security agencies moved their fierce struggle onto a new battlefield – online.

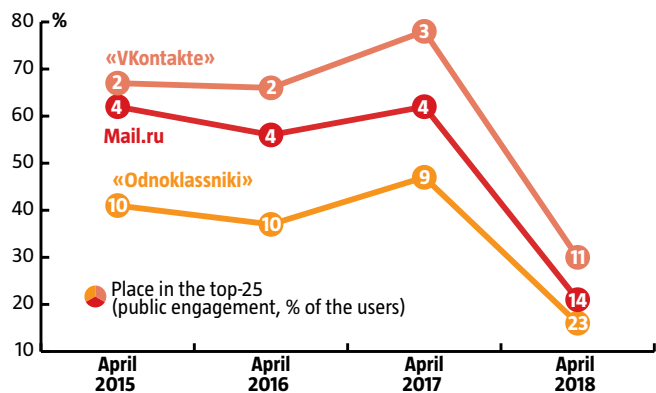
HIDDEN POISON

There have been countless examples of well thought out manipulations conducted by the Russian security services on social networks since 2014. In the beginning of the so-called "Russian spring" most of the "people's republics"¹ had their own pages on various social networks, although these were not always popular or successful. For instance, page of one of the "republics" had a rather impressive amount of followers – it was liked by nearly 40,000 users. Interestingly enough, only approximately 30 out of those were real people – the rest were presumably online bots. Before long, Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) began blocking these online pages and arresting its administrators. Sometimes this task wasn't as easy as it seemed, since most of the servers were located outside of Ukraine. On more than one occasion, online bots posting on these pages attempted to force people out on the streets, calling for the "third Maidan"² manipulating sensitive topics such as inflation or rising costs of utilities. One of the very recent online attacks spread the rumours about the "inevitable" declaration of the martial law in Ukraine. Online agitators used the classical set of arguments – they claimed that certain military units would be withdrawn from the Joint Forces Operations territories (OOS), the army will be disarmed and will be forced to refrain from opening the fire in the conflict zone.

There were also some novelties among those manipulative techniques. For instance, recently a lot has been said about the fake "orders" allegedly "issued" by the Ukrainian Minister of Defence "ordering" to confiscate all the imported cars on the EU license plates³ and transfer these vehicles to

The trajectory of decrease

Popularity of the Russian online media platforms in Ukraine



2019. Change in the methodology to demonstrate the public interaction

| | January | February | March |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| «VKontakte» | 14 5.1 mln | 14 5.6 mln | 16 5.1 mln |
| Mail.ru | – | 23 4.1 mln | – |
| «Odnoklassniki» | – | – | – |

Source: TNS CMeter data

the Ukrainian armed forces. Facebook and VKontakte were full of fake "scanned copies" of the non-existent "orders", all of which, however, contained numerous spelling and factual mistakes. For example, the head of the defence ministry was mentioned with his military titles, despite the fact that at time he has already retired from the army. However, this skillful manipulation of the two hot and sensitive topics promised its authors an easy success. On another occasion, there was a rumour shared via social networks, claiming that the Ukrainian government has allegedly approved a bill allowing country's secret services to wiretap and intercept citizens' private communications on social media, messengers or even on their cell phones. Funnily enough, this fake contained a reference to a state authority that does not even exist in Ukraine – but does, however, exist in Russia. However, the numerous Olgino trolls⁴ have always struggled to implement their Russian-prepared narrative in Ukraine. It would be worth to name several mistranslated gaffes, when online translators made some rather ludicrous errors – everyone knows infamous examples such as "Combat Seeds" (a translator's error made while translating the name of Semen [Semenchenko], Ukrainian politician, since in Russian 'semen' also means 'seed') or "Savchenko's Hopes" (Russian automated translator has mistakenly translated the Russian

¹Puppet "states" in the east of Ukraine, controlled and military supported by Moscow.

²Manipulative slogan, claiming that Maidan protests of 2013-2014 failed and Ukraine needs another revolution.

³Ukrainians have been massively importing cars with EU license plates using the loophole in the law to avoid paying taxes. When the government tried to close the loophole, it led to protests by the car owners.

⁴A common name for the so-called Internet Research Agency, a Russian agency whose employees are engaged in online influence operations using fake social networks accounts to push for Russian agenda in various countries across the world. The agency was named online a troll factory from Olgino due to its location in one of the areas of St Petersburg.

version of the name Nadiya Savchenko (Nadezhda Savchenko in Russian), where the word “nadezhda” also means hope). Recently one of the Ukrainian bloggers has even created a digital test-program designed to detect online Russian trolls. This test, which will seem like a complete gibberish to those who are fluent in Ukrainian, will nevertheless appear like a logical text if one uses automated Russian-Ukrainian translators. Nevertheless, despite the certain level of success, quite a lot of Russian psychological warfare attacks have gone unnoticed until the very last moment. “The most successful operations were those which had gone unnoticed”, – says Valentyn Petrov, head of the cyber security department at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine (NSDCU), in conversation with *The Ukrainian Week*. He thinks that it is impossible to separate social networks behavioural patterns from the Kremlin military strategy – and the counterattack must be seen as equally important. Even now, there are quite a few pages on social networks that are either calling against destruction of Ukraine as a state, or are trying to fuel separatist moods. Having said that, according to Petrov, Facebook has demonstrated an immediate reaction – the social network quickly removed the posts, which were calling to bring down Ukrainian government or were sharing confidential military information.

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THESE ELECTIONS ONE COULD HELP BUT NOTICE A LOT OF POSTS SHARED ACROSS VARIOUS SOCIAL NETWORKS AIMING TO CREATE THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE POLARIZATION OF THE UKRAINIAN SOCIETY. QUITE FREQUENTLY WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE ACTUAL SUPPORTERS OF ONE OR ANOTHER CANDIDATE, ABUT ABOUT THE ONLINE BOTS

Kremlin trolls have not left aside the key event of Ukrainian politics this spring – presidential elections. Before, during and after these elections one could help but notice a lot of posts shared across various social networks aiming to create the maximum possible polarization of the Ukrainian society. Quite frequently we are not talking about the actual supporters of one or another candidate, abut about the online bots. Identifying these bots is hardly a complicated task – they rarely use an actual profile picture, or they just upload a random picture uploaded from online photo stocks; they may use some stereotypically Ukrainian symbols such as trident or a national flag; their names sometimes are just formed as a adjective to one of Ukrainian cities and sometimes their names are even a combination of digits. Ideological narrative demonstrated by those accounts is suspiciously close to the one relished by the Russian propagandists and their vision of the situation in Ukraine – they claim Ukraine needs federalisation and compromise with Russia, they insist Ukraine should give up its EU and NATO aspirations. Various linguistic or grammatical errors made by these bots, as well as their lack of knowledge of the specifics of Ukrainian politics, make it easy to identify accounts, which are operated from the outside of Ukraine. Another, somewhat more sophisticated method, which is currently being used by the social media propagandists is creation of politically neutral, Ukrainian-speaking online groups or pages on social media, that are frequently sharing memes or comic content. Therefore, these groups gain a lot of followers owing to their politically-neu-

tral, as it may have seemed, content, and a light, entertaining manner of writing. At the same time, the comment sections under each of the “neutral” posts is stormed with endless complaints and outrage by the users, who are complaining about “impoverishment”, “the blood money”, “betrayal” and “bad government”.⁵ This situation somehow resembles the catastrophic American scenario – Russian bots also, very successfully, managed to escalate tensions between the representatives of different political parties manipulating the sensitive issues such as race, gun laws, abortion or the rights of minorities. In the United States Olgino trolls supported both sides in their fierce online clashes. Such tactics may become successful also in Ukraine, which is currently facing post-election divisions visible even without external interference. The more arguments are instigated online (for example, due to a new law which was just passed), the better it is for Russia, because the last thing Kremlin wants is a strong and united Ukraine. “The more differences they can stir between us, the more lenient we will be in the upcoming diplomatic talks”, – says Valentyn Petrov. According to him, Ukrainians, who are damaging the reputation of Petro Poroshenko or Volodymyr Zelenskiy online, are subconsciously aiding their enemies and weakening international position of their own country. We have recently witnessed something similar – during the active phase of military action in Il-ovaysk and Debaltseve, as well as owing to the social outcry and protests, Moscow was hoping to strengthen its position at Minsk talks. At the same time, attention gained by these events was absolutely incomparable to its scale, which only proves the artificial creation of panic. Therefore, instead of tanks, fire and live ammunition Ukraine is facing virtual online bullets, and the aim, as well as result, of these online attacks are similar to the live explosions.

NEW PRESIDENT – NEW THREAT

The issue of information and cyber security gained a new meaning when it comes to the newly elected Ukrainian president. In of the very few interviews he had given, Zelenskiy insisted on the need of absolute transparency and direct communication between the state authorities and its citizens. Overall, the idea seems right and logical. This is especially important considering the fact that results of the presidential elections clearly demonstrated that the lack of effective communication became one of the main reasons for Poroshenko's defeat. Even very obvious and substantial Poroshenko's achievements were never properly explained and transmitted to the citizens, which, in the end, have only devalued these achievements. Additionally, it is true that the state authorities should rather be listening to the problems of the ordinary people, than blindly following the ‘Potemkin’s’ reports submitted by the members of the staff.

At the same time, it is still questionable, whether one should prioritize such kind of communication in the current political circumstances. The problem of such type of communication is that it may expose certain security vulnerabilities; be used not only for the better, but also for the worst, and end up being exploited to manipulate the public opinion. The more open and exposed is the system, the more prompt it is to the external threat. There are all the possible scenarios. For instance, one may submit thousands of different insignificant and trivial requests and questions to the state authorities, thus creating the so called informative noise, whilst ignoring the urgent and crucial issues. Such control would also require close cooperation with the administrators of the social media pages, obliging them to verify the identity of the users’ pages and making it impossible to use

⁵ The words *zubozhynnya* (impoverishment), *torgivlya na krov'* (the blood money), *zrada* (betrayal) or *popana vlada* (bad government) entered into Ukrainian political slang as a specific vocabulary used by either trolls or online demagogues using social media platforms to create argument. *Zrada*, which initially means “betrayal” in Ukrainian, became a synonym for a populist panic or political paranoia.

fake accounts. One tweet from the real and official account of Donald Trump brought down the price of shares of Lockheed Martin, while another one nearly started the nuclear war with North Korea. It is highly unlikely that anyone could predict the scale and potential damages caused by the controversial tweets, for instance shared from the fake account of a well-known politician. In the times of 'deep fake', when advanced technology can create a fake video imitating certain person's motions or voice (frequently, these could be politicians), it would be very unwise to ignore this threat. At the same time, any online moderation is a sensitive issue and will automatically lead to the accusations of censorship. One should also understand that at the moment not everyone in Ukraine is using social networks on a daily basis and thus may also claim that his or her voice has not been heard.

Furthermore, in the above-mentioned circumstances, Zelenskiy's announcement, claiming that blocking Russian social networks was unnecessary, because Ukrainians are "using VPN to access them anyways", seems rather irrational. It is true that some users did indeed switch to VPN and proxy-tools in their efforts to access the blocked content. However, according to the research, published by Kantar TNS CMeter, Russian social networks and media sources have been gradually losing its popularity in Ukraine. For instance, in August 2018 Russian social platform VKontakte was number 10 in the top-25 most visited websites in Ukraine, while in February 2019 it ended up being 14th, and in March 2019 – it fell down to 16th. Another Russian online service, Mail.ru, has also lost its popularity, and after being scoring 17th out of most visited websites last summer, this year it was not even included in the list at all. This means less revenue from Ukrainian users and as a result – less taxes to the Russian state budget. The main reason for Ukrainian sanctions – Russian military invasion – has not disappeared and all the talks about the possible removal of the block may hardly be regarded a wise decision. It is unlikely, that the new president would dare and consider lifting the sanctions. However, there is a way around it – to avoid outcry and social disapproval, the new president may wait for the sanctions period to run off and then quietly avoid renewing them. It is the task of the citizens to monitor this and demand renewal of the sanctions and blocking the Russian source until Russia withdraws its troops from the occupied territories.

THE VOICE OF THE COUNTRY

One of the key priorities is to form the legal framework of the state's and citizens' relationship with the social networks. Currently, there are no set of laws regulating the social media and within Ukrainian legal framework, Facebook and other social media do not exist as a subject to local laws and regulations, and, as a result, all the related problems do not exist either. At the same time, one doesn't need to invent anything new – United States and Germany, as well as European Union, partially, have already adopted the legislation regulating the use of the social media. Therefore Ukraine will only have to adopt the best out of those laws to its current needs.

There has also been confusion when it comes to drafting these laws. NSDCU insists that the legislation has to be drafted by the Ministry of Information Police (MIP) of Ukraine, with the following approval by the Ukrainian parliament. At the same time, in conversation with *The Ukrainian Week*, Dmytro Zolotukhin, deputy head of MIP, insisted that drafting the law is the task of Ukrainian MPs.

Zolotukhin also gave an example of France, where the parliament passed a controversial law, which significantly

helped in fighting online propaganda, especially on social networks. The draft law was submitted to the French parliament by the members of the *La République En Marche!* political party and debates surrounding the draft lasted for nearly a year. According to Zolotukhin, Facebook has recently received three heavy fines in France, each amounting from €50 mln to €300 mln, partially because of the above-mentioned French law. Additionally, the social network giant was also accused in breaking French anti-monopoly laws and insufficient personal data protection. Zuckerberg has afterwards personally visited Emmanuel Macron in order to settle down the dispute.

Ukraine is not France, though, and Ukraine will struggle to make its voice heard on the international arena. Currently, Ukraine does have the leverage to pressurise the multibillion corporation. Thus Facebook has a free hand to act the way it pleases in Ukraine – from ignoring the official complaints to delaying pages verifications if requested by the authorities. Despite the earlier agreement, Facebook has failed to disclose the information about the financial sources of political advertisement, especially the advertisement which would still pop up across Facebook breaking the election silence in Ukraine in April 2019. Yet, the situation for Ukrainian users in Facebook remains unsettled and complicated. While we are not talking about the famous baseless mass-blocking conducted by Facebook in 2018 against many Ukrainian users, currently a number of Ukrainian social and political activists are absurdly blocked on Facebook, and their posts are removed. For instance, a video published on Facebook, where the Russian teacher has been abusing the student from Caucasus has been widely shared on Facebook, but Ukrainian journalist Ihor Medelyan, who has simply reposted this video, was immediately warned of hate speech, and his repost was deleted.

THE LIGHT SIDE OF POWER

In any event, social networks are not only a source of headache for Ukrainian intelligence and government officials – the state has begun using social media in order to fight fake information and push its own agenda. Ukrainian armed forces successfully picked up Russian tactics of manipulating the enemy using the sudden fakes in the social media. Currently we can hardly talk about the adequate response from Ukraine to Russia, because financial resources brought to this information war by two countries are incomparable. Additionally, social networks provide a great deal of important information for those who are using it for open source intelligence. In fact, thanks to social networks Ukrainian volunteer organization, *InfoNapalm*, succeeded in gathering countless proofs of Russian military intervention in Crimea and Donbas, proof of Russia's involvement in the MH-17 catastrophe, managed to identify Russian military equipment in the East and prepare a great deal of material for the international courts. This has eventually forced Russian military commanders to ban the use of social media among its soldiers. Despite the orders, many soldiers still use the social media – here and there, someone would publish their photos, someone would forget to remove the geographical tag from their publication, and someone would boast about their "trip" to Ukraine. One of the examples is the Russian attack on Ukrainian vessel in the Kerch Gulf – the video of the Russian attack has been leaked online just few hours after the incident. Indeed, the Satan in the famous American movie, *The Devil's Advocate*, once said – "Vanity is definitely my favourite sin!" ■

Who elects Ukraine's presidents

Socio-demographic portrait of the electorate for the top presidential candidates in the past 20 years

Hanna Chabaraï



PHOTO: STANISLAV KOZLUK

Do the young elect populists? The generation born in the independent Ukraine supported Oleh Liashko and Volodymyr Zelenskiy in the last two elections

Exit polls of the voters leaving polling stations to predict the outcome came into use in Ukraine's elections in the late 1990s. Among other things, this allows sociologists to find out what electorate candidates or parties had by age, gender and education.

The first election with a wide-scale independently funded exit poll took place in 1999. It was (and still is) organized by the Democratic Initiatives foundation involving some top sociological companies. The Ukrainian Week used exit poll results regularly published by the Democratic Initiatives to find out who supported the leaders of presidential races throughout the past 20 years.

The 1999 election had two rounds with the incumbent Leonid Kuchma and Petro Symonenko, the leader of the Communist Party. The youth mostly supported Kuchma, his electorate shrinking with age. Pensioners prevailed in Symonenko's electorate. In the second round, those aged 60+ let the leader of the Communists down. The highest share of those voting against all was in the 18-29 age group and among those with college degrees. Sociologists discovered that more Ukrainians voted for Kuchma and more Russians voted for Symonenko.

Society was highly polarized in the 2004 election when Viktor Yushchenko ran against Viktor Yanukovich.

Sociologists assumed that fear, insincere answers or refusals to respond in polls could affect the reliability of the results. They decided to do the polling anonymously: the respondents would mark answers in the ballots on their own and put them in a box. Two companies, Socis and Social Monitoring, did exit polls via interview. The Razumkov Kyiv International Institute of Sociology used anonymous ballots. The latter showed a difference of 3.9% in favor of the opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko.

Round two exit poll results were dramatically different from the figures announced by the Central Election Commission. Eventually, the Supreme Court of Ukraine decided that the voting violated the principles of election law and scheduled a re-vote.

Yushchenko was supported by Western and Central Ukrainians in all rounds, mostly countryside residents aged 40- and people with college degrees. Yanukovich's electorate was 60+ residing in cities in Eastern and Southern Ukraine with secondary or vocational education. Yushchenko's voters were evenly divided in terms of gender, while Yanukovich's supporters included 58% of women. Generally, men and women are fairly even in their preferences in presidential elections in Ukraine.

In 2010, the competition was between Viktor Yanukovich and Yulia Tymoshenko. Eastern Ukrainian cities traditionally provided support to Yanukovich while the countryside in Western Ukraine voted for Tymoshenko. Voters with college degrees were reluctant to vote for both, giving somewhat more votes to Tymoshenko in the second round.

Mobilized by Russia's aggression in the East and Crimea, Ukrainians elected their President in one round in 2014. Freshly released from jail, Tymoshenko failed to compete with Poroshenko with her under 13%. Both competed for the countryside in Western and Central Ukraine. Poroshenko was supported in cities while Eastern Ukraine supported Mykhailo Dobkin. Both focused on older people. Oleh Liashko attracted the youth.

Five years later, Volodymyr Zelenskiy beat Poroshenko with an unprecedented margin, building his campaign on his TV series-based image of a president. He got 73% in the second round in absolute majority of oblasts, other than Lviv Oblast, and in all age, education and settlement categories. His electorate is concentrated in South and Eastern Ukraine and in big cities. These are mostly young people with unfinished secondary or vocational school. People with a college degree residing in Western Ukraine prevail in Poroshenko's electorate. Many of the new President's voters decided to support him in the last month before the election or later. ■

Voters in the past two decades



1999 presidential election

Supporters of Leonid Kuchma
Aged 18–29
Secondary/vocational school
Residents of countryside
in Western Ukraine

Supporters of Petro Symonenko
Aged 60+
Incomplete secondary
education
Residents of urban
Eastern Ukraine



2004 presidential election

Supporters of Viktor Yushchenko
Aged 18–29 and 40–49
College degree
Residents of countryside
and oblast capitals
in Western and Central Ukraine

Supporters of Viktor Yanukovich
Aged 60+
Primary, incomplete
and full secondary education
Residents of towns and villages
in Eastern and Southern Ukraine



2010 presidential election

Supporters of Viktor Yanukovich
Aged 50+
Incomplete
and full secondary education
Residents of towns and villages
in Eastern
and Southern Ukraine

Supporters of Yulia Tymoshenko
Aged 40–49
Incomplete secondary education
in the first round and college
degree in the second round
Residents of villages in Western
and Central Ukraine



2014 presidential election

Supporters of Petro Poroshenko
Aged 60+
College degree
Residents of towns and villages
in Western and Central Ukraine

Supporters of Yulia Tymoshenko
Aged 50+
Incomplete secondary education
Residents of villages
in Western and Central Ukraine



2019 presidential election

Supporters of Volodymyr Zelenskyy
Aged 18–29
Incomplete college degree (students)
in the first round, incomplete
secondary education in the second
round Residents of cities
in Southern Ukraine,
Eastern Ukraine joined in the second round

Supporters of Petro Poroshenko
Aged 50–59
College degree
Residents of oblast capitals
and towns in Western Ukraine



Ghosts of the past

Will Zelenskiy be in charge of previous regime's political revenge?

Roman Malko

The key to Zelenskiy's stunning victory in April this year is his image as a positive, heartening and honest guy, who would make his voters' wishes come true – as soon as he becomes a president. Somehow this way, the “Kvartal-95” standup comedian has managed to secure support of the record amount of voters in Ukraine, while barely speaking on public and promising absolutely nothing.

There are two sides of this coin, thought, which Volodymyr Zelenskiy has flipped when entering the politics. One side of it brought him in total control of millions' logics and reason. Another side, however, may very soon backfire, quickly damaging that innocent image of a good Samaritan-president, that has brought him to power. The reason behind this is that effectiveness of the campaign led by Zelenskiy and his circle owed a lot to voters' total distrust and resentment towards the previous government – but as soon as the victorious president-elect becomes the government himself,

the voters' love may quickly turn into hate. From now on every step of the new president will be judged through prism of the personal hopes and expectations, as well as satisfaction or dissatisfaction of an average voter. Thus, as the new president not only lacks any capacity to fulfil their hopes, but also struggles to understand the new environment he got himself into, his popularity as well as citizen's blind trust will rapidly start vanishing.

Zelenskiy's patrons and those who have been able to meet him in person, are clearly operating more accurate understanding of the current situation, than the average voters of Holoborodko, the comedian's fictional character in his famous political TV series. Those patrons hardly perceive Zelenskiy as a magic cure for country's current problems and short-comings – instead they treat him as a practical platform to implement their own pragmatic goals and plans. They have little delusions, but they have utter political cal-



On the front line. In his efforts to be loved and accepted by the patriotic voters, new president has to follow the steps of his predecessor – because he has no other choice

culations and a solid judgment; they have experience in the game and they know how to play by the rules of the genre. Many have made their way to Volodymyr Zelenskiy's office in order to secure safe grounds for their personal goals and ambitions; while others are tentatively waiting, trying to assess whether it's better to earn new president's favor or keep the distance. Every each of them, though, remains in the state of a sheer uncertainty, turbulence and hesitancy. It seems like the president himself remains in the same state right now, especially after all the suggestions, advices, warnings or even threats he has received. One should understand that this is, however, the specifics of the transition period.

At the moment Zelenskiy is not doing himself a favor trying to be liked by everyone, showing off his apparent openness, while being unable to establish a dialog with the citizens, who brought him to the political Olympus, and honestly explain them who he really is and what his goals are. It is rather possible that he is not able to explain those to himself either – or, potentially, will never be able to do so at all. Soon it may turn out that the pressure he has to put up with, the new tasks and skills he has to develop in order to carry out his day to day duties, the decisions that sooner or later he will have to make, will be a burden on him that he will no longer be able to carry.

Despite Zelenskiy's numerous talks of transparency, honesty, openness and his adherence to democratic principles, there was little evidence to suggest that any of those will be implemented on practice. On the contrary, everything seems to be happening according to the classic tradition of the behind-the-closed-doors political games. Sometimes occasional fragments of important information are noticed from the outside, as well as implicit indicators hinting at the forthcoming storm. At this point it even seems plausible that Kolomoyskiy, Zelenskiy's patron, has intentionally returned to Ukraine prior to Zelenskiy's inauguration, feeling that his protégé is slipping off his hands and he is losing control over the situation – in any case, Kolomoyskiy's appearance on the political scene was understandable and expected. However, it has hardly been expected to see Andriy Portnov, the former head of the presidential administration during the Yanukovich times and the mastermind of the "dictatorial laws" preceding Euromaidan, returning to Ukraine. Moreover, his reckless and manic efforts to unfold the campaign to "bring to account" the president Poroshenko may lead one to believe that the possibility of the revenge is not as vague as it seems. Understandably, at this point it is more of a matter of testing the waters, destabilizing the situation, inducing the hysteria and nurturing the panic. Needless to say that Portnov's appearance in Ukraine is the Yanukovich's circle attempt to see how much leverage they have got and whether it would be a good moment to return or they still have to wait.

Ironically, now there is even more obscurity surrounding Zelenskiy and his future steps, than it was during election campaign, when he preferred to remain silent on most issues. There are more than one worrisome indicators of the upcoming revenge and many members of the former regime see recent events as a window of opportunity right now. These include the ill-famed court decisions in relation to the PrivatBank, decision of the Constitutional Court to annul the law against acquiring illegal wealth, and, what's worrying – threatening to annul important political lustration laws. Worrying indicators include Kolomoyskiy's ruthless demands to take back the control over PrivatBank or pay him billions in break-up fee, as well as his indirect blackmailing remarks to announce default. Additionally, Valeriy Khoroshkovskiy, Ukrainian oligarch that according to

The Ukrainian Week's sources has reportedly returned to Ukraine at some point during the presidential campaign, and has not only established close ties with Zelenskiy's camp, but has also contributed a considerable sum to his campaign. Add to this Zelenskiy's ambiguous behavior right since the beginning – his reckless and impudent inauguration speech, dissolution of the parliament, his audacious demand for the government to resign, as well as appointing his close business aides at the top role in the state administration.

Needless to say that Kolomoyskiy has firmly denied that he has any influence of the new president, Khoroshkovskiy claimed that he has not recently traveled to Ukraine himself, but it was his spouse who flew in, and Zelenskiy has adamantly insisted that no old politicians will be present in the new government – he has even promised to never work with the old members of the Party of Regions, former Yanukovich's party. Some even insist that the new president should be allowed at least 100 days to adopt to new realities and show his true intentions, before being criticised. At the same time, it is a hard to believe in his promises, considering the mere fact that the old Party of Region's hawks were present in Zelenskiy's campaign from the very beginning. Dmytro Razumkov, the former mastermind behind the youth branch of the Party of Regions, will be leading Zelenskiy's party *Shuga Narodu* ("The Servant of the People") in the parliamentary elections. Andriy Bogdan, Zelenskiy's head of the presidential administration, is the former deputy minister and was responsible to fight the corruption at the government of Mykola Azarov.

IRONICALLY, NOW THERE IS EVEN MORE OBSCURITY SURROUNDING ZELENSKIY AND HIS FUTURE STEPS, THAN IT WAS DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN, WHEN HE PREFERRED TO REMAIN SILENT ON MOST ISSUES.

THERE ARE MORE THAN ONE WORRISOME INDICATORS OF THE UPCOMING REVENGE

Last but not least, Zelenskiy's close and long-term partnership with Kolomoyskiy is the icing on the cake. Interestingly enough, Zelenskiy has never openly claimed that he will not work with pro-Russian politicians and has announced that he is not afraid to undertake any decisions at any price in order to stop the bloodshed in Donbas.

It is easy to fish in troubled waters – there is no doubt in that. While Zelenskiy's voters are awaiting president's wise decisions, improvement of their standards of living, immediate lowering of the everyday costs and other miracles, as well as trying to read the hidden message in his public speeches, the real players in this game are slowly, but firmly get on with their agenda. They create new challenges and new circumstances for the president. Every each of them has their own expectations and hopes for him. It would be good if these agreements made behind the closed doors only concerned the entry to the parliament or political partnership. The most troublesome, alarming and petrifying is the fact, that currently, as it seems, nobody is really directing this political drama. Some are more involved, whilst others prefer to stand aside, but what's terrifying is that even Ukraine's Chief of Staff does not know for sure in what country one will wake up tomorrow. Thus, unsurprisingly it is very difficult to predict the aftermath of the chaos and who will fall its victim. The whole uncertainty creates a vast number of rumors and gives the feeling of an unavoidable bad end. As the history has shown, in Ukraine one's efforts to be liked by everyone as well as attempts to initiate a dialog with the "fifth column" has always ended up in a tragedy for the country. ■

Anticipating revenge

What likelihood of the pro-Russian forces returning to power is and where to expect the first strike from

Maksym Vikhrov

The change of the country's top leadership, which is taking place this year, for some is associated with high hopes and for others with great concerns. The greatest concern is the prospect of a rematch of the pro-Russian, anti-reformist forces that were removed from power after the Maidan. Today, at the end of the presidential election, the situation is still ambiguous. Under certain circumstances, Volodymyr Zelenskiy may well become a driver of revenge: given his rhetoric, as well as work in the format of "95 Kvartal", he does not feel any moral debt to the Maidan, and the stunning election results give him (self)confidence. In addition, in the amorphous Zelenskiy team there are people associated with ex-regionals. Still, there are not enough grounds to consider him Yanukovich 2.0. If President Yanukovich consistently represented the interests of the Party of Regions that was rather monolithic at that time, then President Zelenskiy would be the product of the joint actions of several groups, the nature and goals of which differ significantly. But exactly what the alignment of forces in his coterie will be, how much he will be dependent on his team and whether he will listen to the public is still unclear.

In general, through the District Administrative Court, 62% of the dismissed officials have been reinstated

Whether the Verkhovna Rada will become the revanchist core, the question is also open. Now the revanchist initiatives of ex-regionals are more like flirting with their own electorate. Let us recall, recently ex-regionals registered a number of draft decrees relating to the removal of Volodymyr Vyatrovich from the post of chairman of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the removal of Andriy Parubiy from the post of speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, and the abolition of the new language law. However, given the current situation in the parliament, this "creativity" of Oleksandr Vilkul, Vadym Novinskiy and Valery Pisarenko is of no particular importance. The key question is what the situation will be after the elections. According to KIIS, as of April, five political forces could go to the VR, among which the "Servant of the People" party would get the most support - almost 26% Ukrainians were ready to vote for it (among those who decided and intended to come to the polling stations). It was intended that National Democratic forces collectively would get support of about 31% of voters (13.9% – *Block Petra Poroshenko* (BPP), 12.1% – *Batkiivshchyna* ("Fatherland"), 5.1% – *Hromadyanska Pozitsiya* ("Civic plat-

form"). On the other hand, the pro-Russian camp would be represented only by the party *Opozytsiyna platforma – Za zhyttia* ("Opposition platform – For Life") with 15.7% of the votes. Thus, the prospects for revanchists will significantly depend on which line the presidential party will follow, which remains as "mysterious" as Zelenskiy himself. In short, what concerns the president, as well as the legislative and executive powers, is today an equation with many unknown variables. But the obvious threat comes from where it could be expected least of all, namely from the judicial power. And in this case revenge is no longer a likely prospect, but a fait accompli.

Revanchist technologies are now actively being worked out in the Kyiv District Administrative Court, which recently has been making scandalous decisions in a conveyor mode. It is not only about recognizing the nationalization of PrivatBank as unlawful. This decision is by far the loudest, but a long chain of extremely controversial decisions is following it. Firstly, the District Administrative Court seriously affects the personnel policy of government departments. In particular, in 2018, it reinstated in the position the former head of the SESU, Serhiy Bochkovsky, and his former deputy Vasyl Stoetsky, as well as the former head of the SFSU, Roman Nasirov. The former head of the State Aviation Service Denis Antonyuk was also reinstated, and thanks to the aforementioned court, Ekaterina Amosova remained the rector of the Bohomolets National Medical University. In general, through the District Administrative Court, 62% of the dismissed officials have been reinstated. This was announced in February 2019 by its chairman, Pavlo Vovk. In February 2019, through the same court, they tried to dismiss acting Minister of Health Uliana Suprun. A new technique of sabotage of reforms can be observed in this: if there is a lack of strength to backtrack on reforms in parliament, it is possible to fight through the court with the most reformers personally. Or, instead, to block personnel purges. In addition, the District Administrative Court has demonstrated that it can influence the work of many instrumentalities. So, in April, it banned the National Bureau of Investigation from holding a competition to form Council of Public Control, banned a competition for the position of a judge of the European Court of Human Rights from Ukraine, and also stopped the competition for the position of the head of the State Customs Service. In addition, it prohibited the appointment of members of the High Council of Justice under the presidential quota, and also initiated proceedings against five members of the High Qualifications Commission of Judges. No need to explain that in this way it is possible not only to influence the personnel of certain departments, but also to paralyze their work in general.



PHOTO: UNIAN

From “In-laws” to the UOC MP. Most controversial decisions today are made by the Kyiv District Administrative Court and Judge Vovk personally

But the activity of the District Administrative Court is not limited to this. It has recently lifted the entry ban for Russian political consultant Igor Shuvalov, and has also lifted the ban for the TV series “In-laws”, one of actors of which, the Russian Fyodor Dobronravov, publicly supported the annexation of Crimea. Today, two more actors of “In-laws” are banned from entering Ukraine, but it is possible that they will be unblocked after Dobronravov. In the end, this may result in a massive admission of Russian artists to Ukraine, the restoration of tours and the return to the Ukrainian broadcast of Russian media content: films, TV shows, television programs, and the like. In addition to everything, the District Court has already managed to cancel the results of the verification of income declarations by the people's deputy Vadim Novinsky and suspended the renaming of the UOC of the Moscow Patriarchate. The judges do not conceal their readiness to actively intervene in the “big politics”. In particular, they publicly demanded the impeachment of Petro Poroshenko. And all this, let us remind, in just one month! It is possible that the interested forces will carry out revenge through the District Administrative Court, since it

is it that has the authority to appeal against the decisions of all central authorities, with the exception of those of the President and the Verkhovna Rada. Still, it's not just about authority. By a strange coincidence, the personnel of the said aforementioned court are very specific.

Since 2010, the District Administrative Court has been headed by Pavlo Vovk, to whom the Public Integrity Council has a long list of suspicions, ranging from evading property declaration and ending with illegal enrichment. He is also accused of having links with politicians, namely Serhiy Kovalev and Oleksandr Hranovsky. In May 2017, NABU conducted a search on the estate belonging to Vovk's ex-wife, and their divorce seems a fictitious one. His colleague Ihor Kachur, who, by the way, is also accused of fictitious divorce, has an equally interesting biography. He joined the District Administrative Court in 2008. Prior to that, he was Deputy Minister of Industrial Policy in the Government of Yanukovich, and before that he was a member of the odious Kivalov CEC responsible for fraud in the 2004 presidential election. Judge Volodymyr Keleberda has also been known for a long time. In particular, by the fact that in 2008 he blocked the decree of then-President Viktor Yushchenko to dissolve the Verkhovna Rada and forbade the CEC to prepare for pre-term elections. Truth to tell, this decision was later appealed to the Administrative Court of Appeal. But it was then that Keleberda got close to Andriy Portnov, then a BYuT deputy, and later a high-ranking functionary of the Yanukovich regime. In total, according to the calculations of journalists, out of 49 judges, 23 came to work in the District Administrative Court during the times of Yanukovich, so the list goes on. Experts are actively arguing about the extent to which this court is the fruit of the personnel work of Kivalov and Portnov. How it has happened is the open secret, because the judicial reform in Ukraine actually has not taken place.

The unreformed judicial power itself was a brake on the development of Ukraine, but now it can become a powerful tool of revenge. If the pro-Russian and anti-reformist forces fail to create a majority in the Verkhovna Rada, the struggle can be transferred from the session hall to the courtroom. And a biased court can do no less harm than a revanchist government. Following the nationalization of PrivatBank, the court may not only declare lustration of a certain official unlawful, but also abolish language quotas, decommunization, blocking Russian social networks and further down the list. In addition, the District Administrative Court is unlikely to be left alone. For example, Shevchenko district court of Kyiv, which has recently canceled the arrest and search for the odious pro-Russian blogger Anatoly Shary, has already been putting out feelers. And the Constitutional Court has already put a mark by the abolition of the Criminal Code article on illegal enrichment. In public space, fears have repeatedly been expressed that the next step for CCU would be to abolish the lustration of Yanukovich officials and limit the electronic declaration. The extent to which these fears are real is a debatable question, but such a scenario is quite consistent with the logic of the events of recent weeks. Thus, the threat of revenge is very real. It is said that generals always prepare for wars that have long ended. It seems that the Ukrainian civil society, at least its opposition-minded part, is also preparing for a rematch according to the 2010 scenario. But this time the threat is looming from a completely different angle. And it is still not clear how to resist it. ■

Is this the end of “the era of poverty”?

Very soon Ukrainians will begin realising that the past couple of years can hardly be called “challenging” in terms of economic and social situation

Oleksandr Kramar

Recently, Zelenskiy’s influential patrons have several times expressed their unhidden interest in Ukraine’s possible economic default. This may end up being only the top of the iceberg of disappointments and revelations for many Ukrainians, who were sincerely hoping to end “the era of poverty”, as promised by newly elected president Zelenskiy, as well as to improve their living standards. Economic situation in Ukraine over the past couple of years can hardly be called

Ukraine’s levels of export in the period of January-April 2019 have been **3.8%** higher compared to the same period in 2014, despite the fact that at that time considerable share of country’s export was supplied by the nowadays occupied territories. Ukraine’s agricultural output in 2018 was on **9%** higher than in 2013

challenging, and in several cases it has actually demonstrated possibly the best performance in the modern Ukrainian history. The nearest future, nevertheless, does not bring any optimistic promises. There are several reasons behind the pessimistic scenario – starting from the obvious unfavourable global economic trends to the new government’s, who is hoping to soon form the parliamentary majority, lack of understanding and economic strategy.

DO WE ONLY APPRECIATE WHAT WE’VE ALREADY LOST?

Various recently conducted public opinion polls have only proven that the vast majority of Ukrainians are still very dissatisfied with the situation in country. Pro-Russian politicians, especially those with the close ties to Viktor Medvedchuk are vigorously trying to enforce an idea that Euromaidan, and the subsequent war with Russia somehow caused the entire collapse of Ukrainian economy. Reality is very different though – since 2014 Ukrainian economy has not only recovered compared to pre-Maidan and pre-war times, but in several sectors it has actually showed a noticeable growth. Official data provided by the State Committee of Statistic of Ukraine show that the real GDP index in 2018 did indeed show that economy’s growth has slowed down by 2.2% compared to 2014, and on 8.7% compared to 2013. At the same time, Ukraine’s population without Russian-occupied areas in Donetsk and Lugansk regions has fallen to 38.8 million in 2018, while in 2014 this amount constituted 43 million (including occupied territories); in 2013 this number amounted to 43.14 million. Therefore, compared to 2013 Ukraine’s population has decreased by 11%. Thus we can see that the real GDP per capita index in 2018 has not only reached the 2013 levels, but in 2019 it does promise to be even higher.

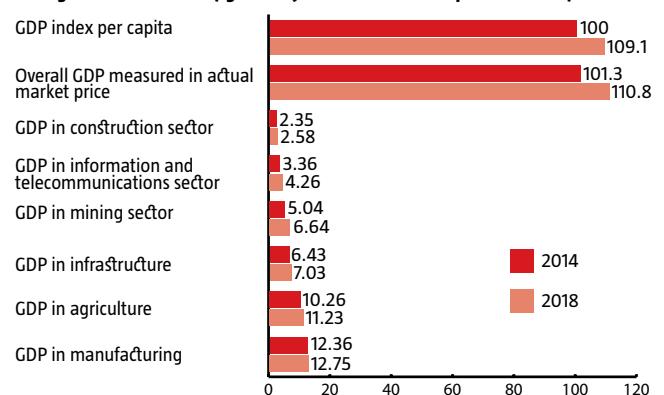
Ukraine’s levels of export in the period of January-April 2019 have been 3.8% higher compared to the same period in 2014, despite the fact that at that time considerable share of country’s export was supplied by the nowadays occupied territories. Ukraine’s agricultural output in 2018 was on 9% higher than in 2013. Industrial output of Ukrainian economy in January-April 2019 has exceeded the 2015 levels, the time when active phase of Donbas military operations was suspended, by 7.1%.

Several sectors of Ukrainian economy, which have only recently had very little importance for the overall growth, are currently growing much faster than the old “traditional” sectors. While dynamics of growth in several “young” sectors are higher, the general growth of economy or the GDP still remains relatively mild due to the fact that importance and influence of the “young”, fast growing sectors is smaller than those “traditional” sectors. At the same time, sooner or later planned economic diversification will undoubtedly prove its positive role for Ukraine’s economic sustainability and its ability to resist sectorial shocks and various negative global trends.

Additionally, Ukraine’s public debt in April 2019 amounted to \$79.8 billion, which is a 9% increase compared to the early 2014. It is a considerable hike, especially bearing in mind the fact that country’s gold reserve has grown by \$6.1 billion since February 2014, when the Euromaidan protests brought down the regime of Yanukovych, until April 2019 (from \$15.46 billion to \$20.52 billion). This happened primarily owing to the IMF loans, which have been used to increase gold reserve, but have also contributed to the increase of national debt.

The minimum wage in Ukraine, which is now somewhat above €140, is not only unprecedentedly high for Ukraine (compare this to €103 in February 2014, and €68 in 2008). It

Change in the GDP value, generally in Ukraine and in specific sectors, € billions



¹ “The end of the era of poverty” was one of the slogans of Zelenskiy’s presidential campaign.

Source: author’s calculation based on the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine, Derzhstat and the NBU data

is now not much lower than the minimum wage in Bulgaria – €174 in 2014, and Romania – €190.

The real wage in 2018 has grown by 9% compared to 2013, increasing in 2.9 times, while the costs of living have been increasing much slower. If we compare this data to the early 2014 indicators, the progress is even more evident. For instance, the average wage has increased to UAH 10,200 in March 2019 compared to UAH 3,400 in March 2014. Even if we convert this amount into euros, it will still be a 1.7 times increase from €212 in March 2014 to €340 in March 2019 – despite the fact that hryvnia has lost more than half of its value since then. The growth in the industrial sector was even more evident – in this sector the average wage has increased from €243 to €392 over the past five years. Public sector workers had their salaries increased from €161 to €253 in education and from €148 to €226 in public healthcare.

Such pace of growth is probably one of the highest in Europe. The reason behind many Ukrainians' dissatisfaction with the situation is the fact that despite an evident progress, level of their income, sadly, still remains one of the lowest in Europe, especially in comparison to the EU member states. National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) has rightly pointed out in their inflation report, that one of the key reasons behind the economic growth is domestic demand and increase of retail trade, which is result of growing wages. Additionally, according to the NBU report, correlation between Ukrainian and EU salaries has visibly improved, which has subsequently decreased the number of Ukrainian economic migrants. According to businesses' estimation, throughout 2018 and in the early 2019 a lot of companies have reported the lack of qualified specialists and professionals. Easier access to the European labour market as well as the long-term demographic tendencies have been the key reasons behind this situation. This does not diminish the sole fact of an evident income increase among Ukrainians.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

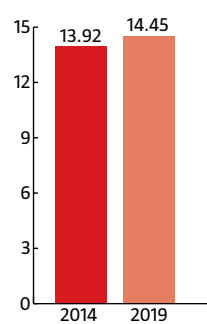
It is understandable, that, despite the quick recovery and relatively high level of growth compared to the pre-war period, an impoverished country like Ukraine would have very little chances to quickly join the club of wealthy and economically developed nations.

At the same time, it looks likely that the world economy will soon immerse itself into the new cyclic economic crisis, which will undoubtedly be a painful blow to dependent and poorly diversified Ukrainian economy. Thus it is possible that we will soon be witnessing Ukraine's economy entering the downward spiral, when each economic cycle of growth and decline will bring Ukraine down lower and lower. As a result, despite the periods of relatively dynamic growth in 2000-2007, 2010-2012 as well as 2016-2018, Ukraine's real GDP remains at best 1.6 times lower than in 1990.

External factors may also cause rather negative impact on Ukrainian economy. Global economy is facing an upcoming cyclic crisis, especially when it comes to raw material sectors. Ukraine is running the risk of suddenly discovering that that "challenging economic situation" and "the era of poverty", as it was called in Zelenskiy's presidential campaign, was in fact possibly the highest point of the most accelerated growth in Ukrainian modern history. The negative global impact may also be intensified by bitter rivalry between the world's top economies.

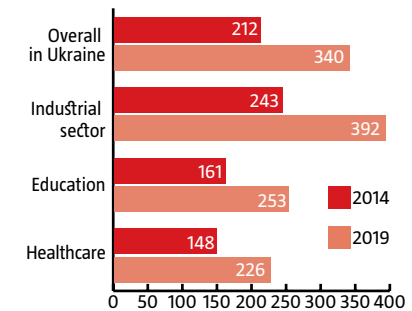
In such circumstances, in order to break out the downward spiral cycle, Ukraine needs to conduct radical changes in its national economic policy. At this point it is not enough to return to the economic levels of 2013, or even 2008 or 1990,

Ukraine's export, € billions
January – April



Source: author's calculation based on the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine, Derzhstat and the NBU data

Changes in the average wage in Ukraine, € billions
March



which are nevertheless higher than current ones. Ukraine needs to drop the idea that it is possible to somehow redistribute the economic wealth within the current corrupt oligarchic system. Instead, Ukraine has to develop a strategy to grow the economy and set such a distribution mechanisms, which will encourage everyone to contribute to its increase. **The Ukrainian Week** has previously published a number of articles dedicated to the nature of necessary economic policies.

This will be the only way for Ukraine not only to break the current stalemate, but to also become a competitive player in the aggressive fight over the place under the sun in the modern day world economy. Ukraine has to give up the philosophy of endless redistribution of the national wealth, abusing the remaining bits of this wealth.

Without the sweeping change in its economy Ukraine will face hard times in the current turbulent world. The last cycle of economic crisis began 12 years ago. Despite governments' and national central banks' efforts to delay the new upcoming crisis, the rules of the market economy showed little will to compromise. Thus very soon Ukrainians will be once more reassured that in the real life, as opposed to the movies, the real end of "the era of poverty" requires decades of hard work and well-thought national economic policy.

The new president's team members, particularly those from *Sluga Narodu* ("The Servant of the People") newly-formed political party, which has also announced its ambitions to form the parliamentary majority, have shown very little understanding of the necessary strategic changes. Whilst during the presidential election campaign they may have deliberately avoided this question, claiming that developing social and economic policies is the prerogative of the parliament, now, with the upcoming parliamentary elections it would give the new party the chance to present its model for the future economic strategy. This could be the opportunity to present their vision of multiplying and growing the national wealth, rather than redistributing it in the old fashioned manner.

Otherwise, Ukraine is running the risk of returning to the downward spiral fall and recession, with the government trying to conceal its failures and the real state of affairs behind the fruitless "fight against corruption", looking for scape goat, and traditional fuelling the hatred towards the rich. Since this will coincide with the predicted aggravation of the global economy, many Ukrainians will nostalgically miss the times of the relatively stability, which is about to end right now; even despite the fact that even now nothing has been done to systematically correct national economic policies and turn the state into an effective tool of aiding and supporting economic growth, as well as encouraging the productive work and respect for its results. ■

Cloud on the horizon

Over the next couple of months Ukraine will be facing powerful economic challenges

Lyubomyr Shavalyuk

When a person is tirelessly working their way towards their goal, it may at first seem as if the circumstances were aiding them, somewhat making it easier to reach the aim. However, as soon as one stops giving enough effort, everything immediately starts falling apart – a sort of a punishment for the weakness. Many of us have probably encountered this phenomenon at some point of our lives. Now, it seems this rule applies not only to people and their lives, but also to countries.

When Ukraine faced an immediate danger of losing its international financial support and loan payments, country's top politicians have made it their top priority to solve this problem. They have agreed for a number of rather unpleasant conditions offered by IMF, they kept looking around for other sources of investment, sold state bond at unpleasantly high interest rates. These efforts, have, however, paid off – Ukraine's gold reserves have been growing, while the risks for economy have been decreasing.

This financial year the situation is visibly more complicated. Budget implementation rate in January-April was **95.2%**, and if we exclude the NBU's earning from the equation, this number will decrease to **90%**. Therefore, theoretically problems paying the salaries may begin even earlier this year

Presidential elections have somewhat discouraged Ukrainian political establishment from pursuing their aim, while the elections' outcome has left the country on crossroads and possibly on the verge of turmoil. Economic consequences did not make us wait for too long – Ukraine has been facing economic challenges one after the other, and if the country's government is not able to deal with those issues properly, it will take less than few quarters for Ukraine to fully feel its negative impact.

PROBLEMATIC BUDGET

Key problem of Ukraine's domestic policy is its state budget. During the first four months of the current financial year, it was not satisfactory to say the least (see **Weak execution**). At first glance, everything seemed to be normal – budget received UAH 322 billion, which is a 18% growth compared to the same period of January – April 2018. However, the actual state of affairs was worse than it seemed. In April National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) earned UAH 47.6 billion for the state budget, which the official revenue of the year 2018, and according to current Ukrainian legislation this sum has to be transferred to the budget by the end of the current financial year. If we compare this year's state revenues to the previous year without NBU's contribution, overall economic growth within the first four months will only account to some 7%. This number does not correlate neither with the nominal GDP growth, proposed by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (10.9%), nor with the anticipated growth, projected by the government in the 2019 state budget

(11.7%). Therefore, over the period of four months Ukraine's earnings seem to be at least UAH 15 billion short. In practice, however, State Fiscal Service of Ukraine confirmed these shortcomings, stating in its reports that anticipated revenue was only fulfilled by 91.4%.

Why is this worrisome? We can compare this data to the previous year's one. According to the State Treasury Service of Ukraine, over the last year anticipated state revenue was completed on 98.2%. This result is indeed unsatisfactory; however, these numbers are not critical and are nevertheless manageable. However, the revenues continued falling over the following months. As a result, in July and August 2018 Ukraine's state budget faced a bitter liquidity deficit, and the government was forced to withhold some payments and pay offs until they received a short-term loan of \$ 725 million by the end of August 2018. Over this period media raised a question about possible delays in paying salaries and retirement payments, however the government has quickly dismissed those claims, saying that there is no need for panic and there are no signs of negative impact on economy. Nevertheless, this did have certain effect on economy – the real GDP growth rate in the 3rd quarter slowed down to 2.8%, while the previous few quarters it constituted 3.5%.

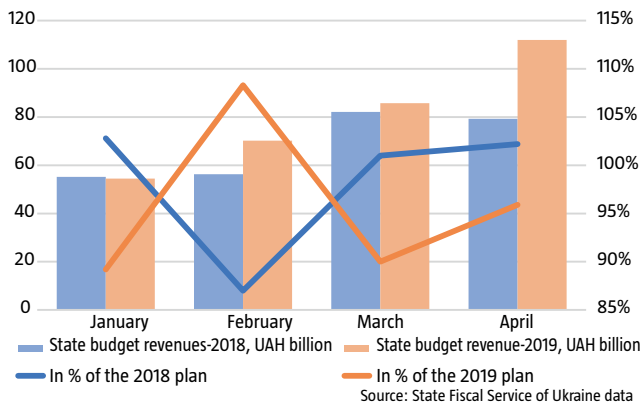
This financial year the situation is visibly more complicated. Budget implementation rate in January-April was 95.2%, and if we exclude the NBU's earning from the equation, this number will decrease to 90%. Therefore, theoretically problems paying the salaries may begin even earlier this year. Hereby, there are two factors to consider.

First of all, according to NBU reporting standards, its annual revenue, prior to transferring the budget its share, is UAH 64.9 billion. Ukrainian parliament may revise the sum supplied by NBU, and the state will receive additional UAH 17 billion – this, however, won't last long and will barely be enough to cover the deficit of the first four to five months.

Secondly, this year Ukraine has been quite successful in selling its state bonds, receiving UAH 13.3 billion in revenue in the period from January to April this year – compared to 11.1 billion in the same period last year (see **Shower of gold**). However, there is one little detail. Current growth is a result of foreign investors' inflated interest in Ukraine's state bonds. Non-residents hence bought obligations on more than UAH 33.3 billion in the past four months, while the interest rates were high and the national currency is still very cheap. There are however, well-grounded concerns that by the end of the summer foreign investors will initiate the sale of the bonds.

EXTERNAL THREATS

There are extensive external threats for Ukraine and its economy. These are less apparent at the moment, because currently there are other, more positive events, dominating the economic scene in Ukraine – for instance, an increased inflow of foreign currency, stabilisation of the national currency – hence nothing hints immediate problems. At the same time, if one projects these current trends in the few months' perspective, the picture will be much grimmer.

Weak execution

One of the key reasons for the relatively stable hryvnia, Ukrainian national currency, is the recent successful harvest of wheat and oil. According to some estimates, revenue from this harvest brought Ukraine additional \$ 1 to 1.5 billion, most of which was transferred to the budget in the early 2019. According to the State Service of Statistics, in March this year wheat export has increased on 28% compared to the previous year, and foreign currency cash flow has increased on 52% in the first quarter. This effect will eventually wear off within the next couple of months, because all of the produce from the previous harvest will be sold, and this year's harvest does not seem to be as fruitful. Additionally, prices for agricultural products have dropped – for instance, wheat prices have decreased by 7%, corn prices – by 3%, soya – by 19%. This will also decrease the foreign currency inflow.

Interestingly, from the early 2019 Ukraine has received nearly one additional billion dollars as a result of a very successful harvest this year, as well as more than a billion dollars after non-resident foreign investors began buying government bonds. These are nearly \$ 2 billion of additional revenue owing purely to fortunate and temporary external factors. Nevertheless, these funds became the key reason for hryvnia's strengthening against the major global currencies. This did have, however, one side effect – import indicators shown in hryvnia were lower, than expected, and as a result revenues gathered by the custom authorities were significantly lower – in January-April customs authorities reported only 88.1% plan execution figures.

At the same time, according to NBU, foreign currency purchases on the interbank, the top-level foreign exchange market, reached on billion dollars. This means, that had it not been for the above-mentioned temporary circumstances, Ukraine currency market would face a significant dollar deficit, and as a result, a very different exchange rate. Thus the current strong hryvnia is a temporary occurrence and is likely to change in the near future. Quite possibly that the impact of the agricultural trade factor described above will wear off relatively soon – however, will the non-resident foreign investors lose their interest in government bonds and when will this happen?

UNSTABLE WORLD

Global financial and economic situation in the world currently is only increasing external risk factors described above. Federal Reserve has recently increased its discount rate several times, and kept reducing its balance sheet, and in the IV quarter its pace rose to \$ 50 billion per month. European Central Bank (ECB), at the same time, has slowed down its asset-purchase programme known as the quantitative easing (QE), and by the

end of the year it stopped its bond-buying scheme. Developing markets painfully reacted on cash-flow decrease during 2018. This has hit the shares, bonds and currencies of the developing countries and this was enough for the key central banks across the world to correlate its policies. The Fed has taken a break in increasing the discount rate. ECB decided to pursue its reinvestment programme.

This has temporarily calmed down the markets, but has not solved the global problem. US Federal Reserve keeps decreasing its discount rate on \$ 50 billion a month, leading to decrease of the currency in the global financial system. Thus, problems in the troubled countries' financial sectors lead to problems in the other sectors. Here is where Ukraine may face the real danger.

Geographically, for Ukraine the closest troubled economy is Turkey. In the IV quarter, Turkey's GDP has decreased by 3% compared to the same indicators in 2017. It is important to know that weakening of Turkish lira began in 2010 and then accelerated again in 2015. This, however, did not prevent the economy from growing, which began right after the global economic crisis in 2008-2009 and finished in the early 2018. Nowadays Turkey, the 19th world economy, enters an evident recession with the unemployment rate of 15%.

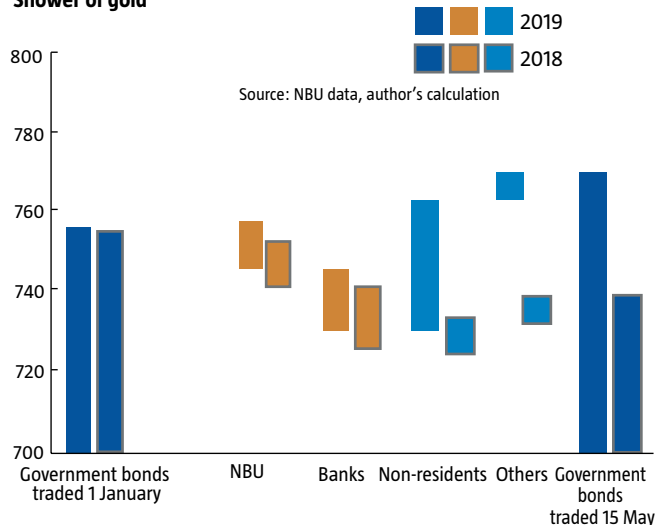
This will constitute a potential problem for Ukraine, because the Turkish market is the fourth, after Russian, Polish and Italian in terms of export. Weakening of Turkish economy will lead to a lower purchasing power of Turkish consumers, and as a result – decrease in Ukrainian export to Turkey. This tendency became visible in 2018, however it has only become important now. Turkey's key trading partners are Germany and China, which means that Turkey's domestic economic problems will have an impact on already troubled economies of Eurozone and China.

REAL ECONOMY SECTOR'S PROBLEMS IN ITALY AND TURKEY WILL NOT ONLY AFFECT HRYVNIA' EXCHANGE RATE, BUT ALSO OVERALL DEMAND, WHICH, WILL SUBSEQUENTLY HIT NOT ONLY FINANCIAL SECTOR, BUT ALSO THE OTHER INDUSTRIES IN UKRAINE

Another trade partner of Ukraine, beset by problems, is Italy. In the I quarter its economy showed a positive growth of 0.1%, which is a noticeable decrease compared to a 1.8% growth in 2017. This has also coincided with the end of the ECB's QE program. Nowadays Italy is quickly approaching recession based on a number of indicators – performance of the industrial sector, retail trade and PML index. So far global analytical centres do not predict drastic decline of Italian economy. For instance, according to IMF projections, Italy's real GDP will increase on 0.1%. Based on IMF's conservative approach and the fact that its earlier prediction was 1.1%, it is possible that the real result will be worse than the official prediction. By the way, IMF has also predicted a 2.5% decline in the Turkey's economic growth, thus practically acknowledging its recession.

These factors are a direct threat for Ukrainian economy – Turkey and Italy together share 10.5% of Ukrainian export. Additionally, Italy is the third economy of the Eurozone. Its problems will be immediately felt by Germany and France – this will reflect on the euro's exchange rate and economic indicators in those countries. Real economy sector's problems in Italy and Turkey will not only affect hryvnia' exchange rate, but also overall demand, which, will subsequently hit not only financial sector, but also the other industries in Ukraine. Some indications of this tendency are already visible now – for instance, Ukraine's industrial production index (IPI) has fallen to the 0.9% per year. ■

Shower of gold



This relatively small decrease is difficult to interpret, but the lack of growth in the industrial production gives reasons for concern.

There are also troublesome Argentina and Pakistan, next in line to as troubled Brazil and Indonesia. Their domestic economic complications are relatively insignificant for Ukraine; however, turbulent events in their economies do impact global markets. For instance, by the mid-May MSCI EM, index that captures large and mid-cap representation across emerging markets, were down by nearly 10%, which is an unusual dynamic for such a diversified index. This means that if the monetary policy of the global central banks across the world is not modified within the next few quarters, it may lead to a financial crisis across many emerging markets. The crisis will not only affect Ukraine financially, but will also hit its material sector (prices of exported raw material may decrease) and trade sector (Ukraine's export may decrease, and not only to Turkey or Italy).

DIFFERENT SIGNALS

Thus Ukraine has ended up in a very uneasy and complicated situation. On one hand, Ukraine's economy is doing relatively good – there is foreign currency inflow, hryvnia has strengthened, Ukraine is able to repay its one billion dollars financial obligations. Hryvnia has also reacted well on the results of the second round of the presidential elections, inauguration of the new president and the news of the potential dissolvent of the parliament. At the same time, NBU has indicated that it is ready to start decreasing its discount rates. This is a peaceful gesture aimed at calming down foreign investors, who are expected to start buying government bonds and strengthen the national currency.

On the other hand, looking in long-term perspective we have a lot of very significant risks. Most of the external risks are part of the global tendency that became obvious after the policy conducted by Feds and ECB. If the Fed's monetary policy doesn't change it is highly likely that all of the above-mentioned risks will cause an effect of domino. At some point NBU may decide that decreasing discount rate is an early measure. In this case not only foreign investors may stop buying bonds leading to a currency deficit on interbank, but they may also start selling the bonds. This may lead to a further depreciation of hryvnia – not necessarily in the same pace as it happened in 2014-2015, but it will still be noticeable compared to the recent, relatively stable, exchange rate.

Further, this may cause certain complications for state budget implementation indicators. While hryvnia is strong,

budget revenues won't fit the plan. Even after hryvnia gradually becomes cheaper, economy will need time to correlate dollar and the national currency. At this point government bonds may become less attractive for non-resident foreign investors, and the government will start losing money. This will force the government to either try to get the money from somewhere else, begin budget sequestration or cut off the public pensions, which was the case last year. While the first two options are difficult to implement, the third one will most probably cause many negative side effects both for economic and social situation in the country.

POLITICAL FACTORS

Unsurprisingly, if Ukrainian politicians could work to implement the long-term goals and prepare a safe back up plan, we could have avoided many of the above-mentioned problems. IMF could have provided a loan. However, before the presidential elections Ukrainian political elite has been rather idle, reassured that there are no evident economic difficulties in the near future. Now, as the country sinks in a political vacuum, which will not be filled any time sooner than at least three months, it will take time for the new government to form its new own team and establish the trusted partnership with IMF. Nobody, apart from the new president can take responsibility for the country – and he does not have the authority in these issues.

Additionally, it will still take a lot of time to receive a new, hypothetical, transfer from IMF even after the new government has been established. There may be many reasons for IMF's caution – for example, Ukraine's failure to implement the anticipated budget, and the experience of the past four months only proved that. This will be followed by the period of talks, consultation and bargaining combined with an evident worsening of the economic situation in the country. Additionally, due to the legislative and executive power vacuum it will be difficult to regulate the risks. Such future doesn't bring in much optimism. There is a hope that IMF will adequately evaluate situation and will act preventively, with full understanding of the fact that Ukraine faces complete reload of the central power institutions. But is IMF really interested in doing this? Future will show.

One may be surprised by the obvious euphoria expressed by the new president's advisers. They have been reassuring the public that Ukraine can easily get by the end of the year without any loans provided by IMF. This would be an ideal scenario and perhaps very few people would object it, however, tendencies and risk described above really beg to differ. New president's advisers are not only wrong in their claims, but they are also ignoring the global financial situation, and their reckless self-assurance may end up being very harmful for the country. Such ruthless attitude also guarantees unexpected consequences. In Ukrainian case that means practically guaranteed panic of the foreign currency market.

Yet, if this year Ukraine is destined to survive another financial and economic shock, its consequences will still be less devastating than the ones in 2014-2015. Ukraine's banking sector will be tested, and it seems like it is strong enough to handle middle-size crises. It is likely that the economic growth will eventually slow down to 1-1.5%, in the worst case scenario, which is currently unlikely, will fall slightly below zero. Ukraine's economy should be able to handle such blow rather quickly. However, it is not the blow itself which is concerning, but the fact that the country could have avoided it in the first place. All Ukraine need is responsible political class which would be willing to take the country's destiny in its hands. Unfortunately, it seems that Ukraine wasn't able to achieve this for more than 28 years now. ■

Just the first step

The language bill, passed by the Ukrainian parliament in the end of April, has had many important aspects left out. Many of those were important features that would allow this legislation to enable effective Ukrainisation of the public sphere in Ukraine

Oleksandr Kramar



PHOTO: UNIAN

The key factor. Ukrainian language has always been and will always remain the key indicator of the national identity

The aftermath of a drama surrounding the drafting and passing the language bill titled “Implementation of the Ukrainian language as the official state language in Ukraine” brought back the memories of the events seven years ago and only reaffirmed Ukrainian public that political elite lacks strong will, determination, and they are inconsistent in implementing the key legislation required to strengthen the national identity and they are willing to speculate on this topic rather than see its long-term positive effect.

Seven years ago, in July 2012, when certain political circles pushed hard to introduce the second official language in Ukraine – Russian – and pass the Kolesnichenko-Kivalov’s bill, *The Ukrainian Week* dedicated one of its most extensive publications titled “The basis of the civilizational choice”. This study proved that continuous efforts to further Russificate the public, social and political space in Ukraine even 20 years after the proclamation of independence is a direct aftermath of the

Russian language domination in various social spheres across the country. Ukrainian language has failed to become to a language of communication between various ethnic groups in the country, and thus unsurprisingly failed to become a basis for nation’s political consolidation.

Ukrainian lawmakers offered several options for the successful implementation of the language policy in Ukraine, frequently taking into account experience of other post-Soviet countries affected by long period of Russification rooted in historical ties and previous Russian occupation. These measures included education reforms, de-Russification of mass media, cinema and the press. Even 7 years ago *The Ukrainian Week* was convinced that Ukrainian language has to be the dominant language on all private TV and radio stations, owning at least 80% of the air time and 50% on the printed market. Additionally, all of the newspapers across Ukraine should have a Ukrainian version. This necessary measure would allow

overcoming the factor of post-colonial inertia and “imposing consumer demand”, which is subsequently distorting the real demand.

The fact that most of these points are in one way or another reflected in the language bill proves that *The Ukrainian Week's* publication back in the days has not gone unnoticed. At the same time, many essential points were not considered and many were distorted in order to include numerous amendments. Some important issues, which would make this document not only a positive declaration, but also a practical tool of Ukrainisation were ignored. Some points we also made vague and unsuitable for Ukrainian realities.

HAS THIS BEEN TAILORED?

For instance, prior to voting on the second draft, the bill included a point, stating that parliament MPs, as well heads of the municipal and district administration had to be fluent in Ukrainian. This was removed. Ironically, this requirement was still kept for municipal MPs and district MPs, even for those of the occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Amendment introduced by Yuriy Rybchynskiy (as well as Vadym De-

clear and straightforward may be interpreted in many possible ways. For instance, article 10 of the bill draft stated that “physical persons and legal entities should only receive replies to their requests in the official state language” was replaced with a vague sentence stating that “inquiries of the physical persons and legal entities to the state, municipal and the authorities of the Crimean Autonomous Republic must be dealt with in the state language, unless otherwise stated in the law”.

Similar case is with the general public information, such as public announcements, street signs, and other textual and visual information, which, according to the first draft, were supposed to be provided exclusively in the state language. The final version of the draft also includes an alteration saying “unless stated otherwise in the law”. Similar references were also added to the article about public events and public speaking. While the first draft clearly stated that the language of the public events may be solely the state language, the amended version has already had the “unless otherwise stated” included in it. Additionally, the bill has had the “this article is not applicable to small events intended for a limited amount of people” amendment added to it. Thus this loophole allows organisers naming any event “intended for a limited circle” and omitting using Ukrainian language at all.

The first draft clearly stated that the entire technical and project documentation in Ukraine has to be provided solely in state language, and, if necessary translated into other languages, however, in the amended draft such documentation is required in Ukrainian only in cases if “one of the subjects of contractual agreement are Ukrainian state authorities or Ukrainian state enterprises [...]”. In case if one of the subjects of the agreement is a foreign citizen, a stateless person or a legal entity incorporated abroad, the contract may be concluded in the language “according to the contractual conditions or in any other way suitable for the subjects of the contract”.

The final draft also included a norm, stating that “the working language of various international events, sessions, hearings, conferences is the state language or the language chosen by the organisers or as indicated by the international agreements [...] such events hosting foreign citizens or stateless persons should be held in the language acceptable for all participants”. Additionally, final draft dismissed a requirement to provide an obligatory parallel translation of public speeches held by anyone who is not able to express themselves in the state language. The final draft has only kept a statement about the necessity of such translation, without specifying exactly how this translation would be provided, it can, for instance be even interpreted as a written translation provided after the event.

Therefore, a lot of loopholes or vaguely formulated sentences were included in the final draft, which may potentially limit the usage of Ukrainian as a state language. Many articles of the bill had the “unless otherwise stated in the law” included in it. This may potential undermine this important law as such.

Last but not least, implementation of many points has been delayed. This includes various social spheres such as Ukrainisation of education, dubbing movies into Ukrainian, increasing the amount of Ukrainian content on the TV and radio, published media, updating websites or even software.

WEAK CONTROL

Those, who are already employed by the various state institutions or government structures, do not need to pass the test to demonstrate their fluency in Ukrainian.

Additionally, the first draft suggested to include an article to make any effort aimed at recognising other languages as a “state language” or providing them equal legal status with Ukrainian, punishable by law and equal them to anti-state

THUS THE STATE NEEDS TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY BROADEN AND INCREASE THE USAGE OF THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE, TRANSFERRING IT FROM THE FORMAL-RITUAL LANGUAGE INTO THE FULL-FUNCTIONED STATE LANGUAGE AND THE LANGUAGE OF INTERETHNIC COMMUNICATION IN UKRAINE

nysenko and Iryna Konstankevych), suggested to add that “salesmen, consultants, managers, employees of the information services and every other employees engaged in the service of clients and consumers on the territory of Ukraine” would be required to be fluent in Ukrainian. The legislation only kept this norm for the public healthcare workers and employees of the public healthcare. This has not been kept, for instance, for the employees of the private medical healthcare. Additionally, important amendments which would make Ukrainian as the only exclusive language of communication among the staff in the various educational establishments during any working hours were dismissed.

Another important point regarding movies streamed in the territory of Ukraine was dismissed. Earlier draft included an article saying that “videos distributed in the territory of Ukraine have to provide an audio track in Ukrainian at least two months prior to video's official release”. However, the parliament has modified this into a vague and unspecified definition such as “the state is going to provide full assistance to the video and audio providers on the territory of Ukraine in order to facilitate creation of the proper audio tracks or in acquiring legal rights to submit such tracks”.

Additionally, the 50% book quote, which required any book publisher to publish at least 50% of its books throughout the year in Ukrainian, was also dismissed. This requirement was modified in a way that the whole idea of this amendment has been neutralised: “this rule is not applicable for the literature published in Crimean Tatar language, or other languages of ethnic minorities in Ukraine”.

DANGEROUS AMBIGUITY – “UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE...”

There is a number of contradictions, that have likely been purposely inscribed in the law. These are able to diminish the role and influence of this bill in the future – should one want to do so – and unfortunately in Ukraine anything that is not crystal-

propaganda and actions against the state. These additions, however, were dismissed as well. MPs also did not support heavy fines or arrest for purposeful hate-speech against Ukrainian language or its public mocking. The procedure of imposing the fine is so complicated that it is not even certain whether it will work.

At the same time, interestingly, parliament has backed changes initiated by the close associates of ill-famed Viktor Medvedchuk – Nestor Shufrych and Vasyl Nimchenko – who suggested taking the article 54 out. The article 54 of the language bill stated that that person appointed by the parliament to supervisory language protection has the right to “receive documents or copies [they need in order to carry out their duties], as well other information they need, regardless of how confidential or sensitive is the information, should they request such information from the state authorities, government institutions, municipal organisation as well as other government objects”; those supervisory representatives should also have been granted the right to “freely access local or municipal governmental buildings, establishments, enterprises regardless of their type of ownership”; they should also be able to “request any information they need from the civic organisations, political parties or legal entities”.

After the initial draft has been amended, it became very difficult to actually bring those responsible for breaking the law to account, especially when it comes to people employed in customer services and trade industry. For instance, if the service provider broke the language law, the person who is appointed to supervise the law execution or its representative issues a warning and demands to improve the shortcomings within the next 30 calendar days. Should they break the law

again or fail to comply, the representative will issue the symbolic penalty in the amount of 300 to 400 untaxable minimum incomes.

The country needs something more substantial than the declarative legislation. Declaration itself, however, is in any case an important step forward. Ukraine needs a functioning execution mechanism to implement the state language policies aimed at uniting and consolidating the nation on the language basis. Language, in this case is the basic feature of national identity and a tool to reject postcolonial tendencies. Thus the state needs to make sure that they broaden and increase the usage of the Ukrainian language, transferring it from the formal-ritual language into the full-functioned state language and the language of interethnic communication in Ukraine. This can only be achieved if there is a strict requirement to know and speak this language. Without these steps nobody will be able to fully self-fulfil in this country and will be doomed to strive being marginalised. Needless to say, there is no need to pay attention to Kremlin’s information wars and their increased efforts to discredit Ukraine’s language policy. These information wars have always been initiated by Russia and will be fought despite of their complete absurdity.

In order to turn the language policy into a systematic and long-term strategy, instead of a short-term, one time move, Ukraine needs to create a state institution responsible for the control of the bill’s implementation, an institution that will have legal authority and will be able to sanction and bring to account those who break the law. The current legislation is too weak to fulfil these needs, but in the future it may become a strong basis for the revised and improved legislation that will aid in “Ukrainisation” of Ukraine. ■





Ulana Suprun:

“Raising awareness is our great responsibility”

Interviewed by **Oleh Feya**

Healthcare has been one of the most discussed subjects in Ukrainian society in the recent years. Healthcare reform has supporters and haters, some of the latter filing lawsuits against the Healthcare Ministry. At the same time, it is one of the most transparent ministries in Ukraine. Minister Ulana Suprun and her blog discussing healthcare myths and explaining the reform contribute to this. **The Ukrainian Week** spoke to Minister Suprun about the most dangerous superstitions in healthcare, promotion of healthcare, the development of critical thinking, the future of the healthcare reform, and about opponents.

You are doing a lot to raise awareness, including by debunking healthcare myths. Which ones are the most dangerous in Ukraine?

— Most myths have to do with vaccination. Ukraine has an outbreak of measles with over 100,000 sick and 37 dead. Some pseudoscientists in academia and the medic community say that getting sick is better than getting vaccinated. They simply forgot the consequences of terrible diseases. Polio epidemic used to break out in the past and people were kept in iron lungs. We no longer have any of this thanks to vaccine against this disease. There are some small breakouts amongst unvaccinated people, but

we have generally managed to defeat the disease. Measles epidemic in Ukraine broke out as a result of low level of vaccination. These diseases have dangerous consequences; saying that it's better to have them is irresponsible. We have 100% of the necessary vaccines. But people refuse to vaccinate themselves and their children.

Are there many such people?

— As of today, 90% of the children that need vaccination as scheduled have been vaccinated. When we came to the Healthcare Ministry, less than 60% were. A small percentage of people cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. But the problem is different: quite a few people buy fake vaccination certificates. Parents buy them and doctors sell them – they don't understand that this is dangerous for the child and for those around it. We have recently had a special operation in Lviv Oblast. We came to vaccinate unvaccinated children. Before going there, we checked data from schools and hospitals.

Hospitals told us that 25,000 children needed vaccination. In fact, it turned out that 50,000 needed it. Something didn't match! Half of the certificates in schools were fake. Many children were not vaccinated before they turned 18. We had conference meetings with every oblast.

For example, Kyiv says that 99% of babies have been vaccinated. We know how many children were born and how many vaccines were used. The figures don't match. It all looks good on paper. In reality, we have problems. We have certainly vaccinated 1.5mn adults and children ever since the measles epidemic broke out. Zero people have died of vaccines, but measles has killed 37 people in the past six months. It's more dangerous to get measles than to get vaccinated. It is a myth that vaccination is dangerous. Another popular superstition is about side effects of vaccines. They don't have any. These two myths stand in the way of vaccination.

What can be done with vaccine opponents? Some countries impose sanctions. For example, Australia withdraws benefits from those who don't vaccinate their children.

— Germany has a fine of €2,500 for refusal to vaccinate children. Ukraine has a rule of not letting such children into schools. But parents can buy fake certificates. And not every school sticks to this rule. We don't have mechanisms to control this. Some countries restrict access to social programs and impose fines. We do not want to use such tools. Instead, we encourage people to get vaccination. We have enough vaccines procured via UNICEF and other international organizations. The next step is to make sure that people trust the quality of vaccines. And to make sure that doctors, immunologists and academics stop hampering the process and encourage people to get vaccination instead. It is important to avoid politicizing this issue. Valeriy Suchkevych accused the Healthcare Ministry of a poor vaccination campaign at a recent Cabinet of Ministers meeting. He had polio as a kid and has a category of disability now. According to him, the Ministry does nothing to prevent the disease and fails to provide enough vaccines. This is not true. We do have more vaccines than what is used.

The American Journal of Public Health once ran an article about Russian bots trying to stoke controversial attitudes towards vaccination to undermine the confidence of parents about the need of vaccination. We have asked the political elite and the Church in Ukraine to make statements on vaccination. The clergy did not want to get involved. They said that this was up to the parents. But this is not up to the parents, this is a matter of national security! We've already had small outbreaks of measles in the National Guard. We've spoken to the Ministry of Defense and they said that "We cannot demand the military to get vaccinated." Yet, this is the only entity that can actually demand this. I asked Americans and Canadians about whether they vaccinate the military. They do not ask for consent: the military must be vaccinated. Diseases can undermine the capacity to defend the entire country!

What other popular and dangerous myths exist?

— One is that rehabilitation can be done with magnet therapy or electrophoresis. What does weak electric charge do when connected to the body? It does not reach the muscles, it does not even reach deep into the skin. When I ask academics about how exactly they use this method and how it works, they say they don't know. They wrote their dissertations 30 years ago and have since been replicating these outdated techniques. In many cases treatment has no underlying research basis. They are popular in sanatoria where directors say: "Patients keep coming here, eat well, rest, get electrophoresis treatment and feel better." I would feel better too after two weeks of rest, even if it

wasn't in a sanatorium. This is not evidence-based treatment. As a doctor, I look at scientific literature in my work and follow the rules of evidence based medicine. So I find it difficult to speak to people who claim to be scientists but give no clear answers to my questions.

I once saw data from the Healthcare Ministry saying that nearly third of what Ukrainians spend on medicines is for homeopathy and other similar "treatments". Do you have statistics about how dangerous it is to use such placebo?

— It's difficult to collect statistics. Because it's hard to re-wind everything and see how the person was treated until he or she gets into a hospital. If we look at 10 medicines with proven effect most used in the EU and compare them with 10 most used medicines in Ukraine, the lists will be completely different. Not a single identical item! Ukrainians buy hepatoprotectors, neurological vitamins and the like. There are several reasons for this. People are afraid to visit doctors and do self-treatment instead. They watch warnings in advertising on TV against self-treatment in big letters, and still use it. That treatment doesn't work, but people still believe ads. We have submitted amendments to the law on advertising to decrease the promotion of unproven treatments and to represent medicines more accurately.

The packaging for homeopathic medicines in the US has a disclaimer saying that they don't treat or work.

— These substances are not even called medicines in the US. In Ukraine, anything is called medicines. The State Expert Center registers them as medicines. The Healthcare Ministry regularly signs an instruction whereby

WE HAVE ASKED THE POLITICAL ELITE AND THE CHURCH IN UKRAINE TO MAKE STATEMENTS ON VACCINATION. THE CLERGY DID NOT WANT TO GET INVOLVED. THEY SAID THAT THIS WAS UP TO THE PARENTS.

BUT THIS IS NOT UP TO THE PARENTS,
THIS IS A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY!

medicines with proven effect have to be sold with a prescription. All the other stuff that's called medicines, including bioactive supplements, vitamins and the things that deal with symptoms, does not treat a disease. The Ukrainian language is beautiful and rich but it lacks words to distinguish between these things. We work with the State Service for Medicines and Drug Control, the regulator, to increase fines for selling medicines without prescription. People must understand that the medicine is real if it's sold with prescription. Canada and US have the concepts of over-the-counter when an item can be purchased from a drug store, and behind-the-counter where medicines are sold with prescription only. These medicines are physically separated in drug stores. People see this and realize that anything sold over-the-counter is not medicines. We want to accomplish this in Ukraine. Unfortunately, disclaimers on the packaging don't help. Another thing is that patients do not think critically, they don't ask themselves why they need this. If a doctor prescribes 15 items without giving prescription, this is a signal of something wrong. Each of us has a smartphone and Internet, we can check any medicine. We are working to physically separate real medicines from supplements and vitamins, so that the patients could easily distinguish between them.

What should I do as a patient if a doctor prescribes homeopathic treatment?

— I would switch to a different doctor. We are now introducing licensing for doctors. Whenever you want to drive a car, you should get a driver's license. It is taken away if you break a rule. We will do the same thing with licenses for doctors. A medic in the EU, US, Canada or Australia must have a medical degree and complete internship with respective exams. The license requires that a doctor sticks to clinical protocols. If your specialist does not stick to the protocol and prescribes homeopathic treatment, you can complain to the licensing council. It will fine the doctor or withdraw their license. We will give doctors five years to get the licenses. After five years, licenses will be mandatory, establishing another instrument of control over the quality of medical services.

The second thing is the National Health Service of Ukraine. It is currently paying for services in primary care. It will cover a clear list of services in secondary and tertiary care, for hospital and inpatient treatment. There will be a requirement to stick to clinical protocols. Medicines for specific diseases will be included in the covered service. If a doctor prescribes something extra, this will go beyond the protocols and the hospital's agreement with the National Health Service. The hospital may lose funding as a result. This will be our financial way to control the quality of services.

We as doctors should comply with ethical conduct. We as patients should have common sense.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS
IS THAT HEALTHCARE IS ON THE AGENDA
OF POLITICIANS AND CITIZENS.
IT IS TRENDY NOW!

In terms of common sense – you have a popular blog on healthcare. How does it work? Is it effective?

— Let's start from the end. We have recently looked at the weekly reach of our posts. It's 2 million views, and that statistics is from Facebook alone. Many of our texts are published as articles or reports on TV. Healthcare is finally on the agenda of our society! We are getting many ideas from the readers. Can we eat salo, they ask? We write answers. What about onions? We reply.

How do we do this? First, we look for an expert in Ukraine, a doctor or a researcher dealing with the given issue. Then we look for sources of accurate information to make sure that every point can be referenced to scientific literature. We write in a language people can understand, while research articles are hard to read. We've tested this on the Ministry staff to make sure they understand what we write. Then we tested this on people from other professions. We did not learn to write facts simply from day one.

I had a Facebook account when I came to the Ministry. I wrote about transformation of the healthcare system and about my meetings. I was not interested in reading it myself! At some point, my colleagues suggested that I write about getting the Mantoux test wet (a popular cliché in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries is that it's forbidden to get the area of the Mantoux test wet for a certain period of time after it is done – **Ed.**). I was surprised. Why would you write about it when everybody knows that you can wet the spot! No, they told me, we were said not to wet

it. Who said it? Doctors did. "We used to take baths sticking our hands out to make sure the water doesn't get on it." This is the common sense issue – the vaccine is under the skin, it cannot get wet there! Public response to that post was very visible. We then sat down to discuss other issues, some things from their childhood – I kept laughing about the things that were myths. And we wrote about all this.

Also, we are promoting the idea that we are not the ministry of treatment, but the ministry of healthcare! We should help people be healthy. That's when we began to write about public health as support for the health of all people, not the treatment of the sick. We are now writing about healthy eating, working out and prevention of diseases. This is our second major topic.

MP Ihor Shurma complained at the very beginning that I was writing on Facebook instead of doing my job as minister. But raising awareness is our great responsibility. We cannot transform the healthcare system and improve medical literacy without this massive awareness campaign. We teach people to think critically. And I see some interesting things! For example, I have recently written news about my lawsuit for libel against Oleksandr Dubynskiy (blogger and journalist with 1+1 channel – **Ed.**). We started getting comments about "bad doctors and reform not working". I no longer have to respond to this – average users come and respond with different comments: "Do you realize that it's primary care that has been reformed so far? Hospitals as secondary care will be reformed next year." People begin to understand, react and think. Because it is not the state that's responsible for our health. Each of us is responsible for our health; we must read and understand things.

Your work often triggers criticism and lawsuits. Who opposes the reform? How do you work with them?

— We have three major groups of opponents. Some are afraid of change. I worked in the US when Obamacare was introduced. Many doctors opposed it, they did not know the future. It took time for them to understand why the system was being changed and how things would work. If people don't see themselves in the new system, they fear becoming redundant. In our transformation, everyone is needed – doctors, nurses. Nobody will toss them out. Because we need to treat people and the workers of the healthcare system are its most important element. They are told that they would lose their jobs, hospitals would close down, and people don't know what will happen to them. They are manipulated.

You can speak to them, can't you?

— We actually speak to them more than anyone! Now to the second group of opponents. In the Ministry's system of communication, we send information down to oblasts, oblasts send it to rayons or counties, then it goes to chief doctors, then to average doctors. All these segments do not want change because they will no longer be as important in the new system of healthcare. The payment will go directly from the National Health Service to the hospitals, and intermediaries will lose control of the funding. Those who mismanaged and stole the funds will lose their positions. Those who did things honestly will find a spot in the new system.

The third group was definitely making a lot of money by using misleading schemes in the healthcare system. One example is the chief doctors from the Heart Institute with their hundreds of thousands of dollars which they

Ulana Suprun was born in 1963 in Detroit. She has been Acting Minister of Healthcare in Ukraine since August 1, 2016. She got her medical degree at the College of Human Medicine, Michigan State University, and worked at the Women's Imaging Center, Medical Imaging of Manhattan in New York, and as Acting Director of Women's Imaging at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. She has lived in Ukraine since 2013. She worked at the EuroMaidan's medical service as activist and doctor, then headed the humanitarian program of the Ukrainian World Congress.

did not earn through honest work. This group is shrinking. We have gotten rid of many, they've lost access to the distribution of funds. This group sees the end and is becoming more dangerous. They are launching a massive attack because all funding, other than for military hospitals, will go through the National Health Service after January 1, 2020. They will lose control over billions of hryvnias. So they desperately need to postpone or abolish the 2017 law. They have accumulated billions after decades of using these schemes. And they have access to oligarch-controlled television. People don't see us on TV often, but they see them.

You speak about the future with confidence. Will the reform last under the new President?

— In fact, a president does not have huge influence on the healthcare system, it's not his jurisdiction. It's the portfolio of the Government which stays until parliamentary election at least. We have full support from Prime Minister Hroysman and Government and will continue our work. The important thing is that we have done many irreversible things. We have created the National Health Service, an institution for transparent payment for services. Their website shows how much every doctor receives for their patients. 27 million Ukrainians have signed contracts with their family doctors. 35 million prescriptions have been issued under the Affordable Medicines program. We have the Public Health Center. Hospitals become more autonomous, freed from the chains of the state budget. We have created many positive things. Doctors tell us "Don't stop, we want the same thing for hospitals as what you've done for primary care." That will only happen when the transformation is completed.

It is important that the Ministry has changed. We have five directors and 71 employees, all working full time. These are professional civil servants who do not depend on the political situation. It's like in Europe: prime ministers and presidents change, civil servants continue working on the state policy. A change of president does not mean a change of everything, the rejection of past accomplishments. We have our vector towards the EU and NATO. Transformation of the healthcare system. All this does not have to change when one person leaves their position. We will spend the next six months explaining what we do if the team of the new President is interested, so that they understand what is happening. We hope to get their support, including for better funding of healthcare. We are the only country in Europe that spends more on education than on healthcare, because our people cover half of all medical expenses. This is wrong. We have to do this through state insurance. We will develop

state education with time; we have established the unified qualification exam and licensing for doctors. Many things have been done this year and we cannot return to what we had before.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy mentioned Dr. Komarovskiy as his healthcare advisor. What do you think of him?

— He says all the right things about vaccination because he used to work as pediatrician. I hope this will trigger more public discussion on vaccination. He has expressed support to the transformation of healthcare. Representatives of Zelenskiy's team have said that they want to see how things are happening. We are ready to talk to them about it. But an advisor is one thing, and the first person in the country is another thing. The President has not yet said anything specific. Healthcare is an important political topic. One of the most debated issues in the US Congress election was about healthcare. Presidential candidates and parties speak about it a lot before elections in other countries. In Ukraine, it's often different. One of the biggest accomplishments is that healthcare is on the agenda of politicians and citizens. It is trendy now!

What was the focus of your research in the US? Do you have time for it now?

— A minister has very little time for anything beyond their job. I have four deputies for every section, and I deal with all sections. But I still read academic journals on my specialization. I'm a radiologist, I worked with women's diseases as a doctor and as a researcher. I also read the Journal of the American Medical Association on medicine generally. I often send articles from those journals to my deputies and colleagues so that they see what's going on.

Is the Ministry planning to develop medical research?

— We have funded research institutes throughout all years of independence. But 90% of the funds was spent on salaries. We are changing the approach. Just like money will follow patients in hospitals, it will follow good research. The National Research Council will consider research projects and provide recommendations on the funding of specific research works, not entire institutions. There will be an allocation for the National Research Fund. The Ministry, too, has funds for research, albeit not much. Ukraine produces very little world-class research. Even the little funding we have is spent ineffectively. We should channel it into innovation and state priorities.

We inherited a horde of institutes that don't do any research from the Soviet Union. They publish something once a year for reports and the money is dispersed between them. I was following scientific discoveries when I worked in the US. It's very important for professional growth. Here we have a problem with English. Doctors read journals in Ukrainian or Russian, but they often do not cover the most up-to-date research. Doctors seem to stop developing after they graduate from the university. Medicine changes on a daily basis and we should always keep track of the new, learn and read journals. We are introducing requirements for professional growth, and doctors are not very happy because it's easier for them not to learn. We will create all the necessary conditions for the doctors and researchers publishing in the top journals, so that they don't compete with a crowd of pseudo-researchers for grants. So that they receive money for science, not yet another institute of foolology. ■

Rhetoric is changed in ORDiLO

Initiatives to return to Ukraine as autonomy have intensified in the occupied Donbas

Denis Kazanskiy

Fundamental shifts in Ukrainian politics are being accompanied by a certain revival in ORDiLO. In the leadership of the so-called republics (real, not nominal), they also seem to have permutations. And although, unlike Ukrainian politics, all the processes in the occupied territories take place behind the scenes, very secretly and non-transparently, some information nevertheless comes to the surface.

Rumors of a change in the Russian curators of the “republics” have long been circulating in the media and popular Telegram channels. But now they seem to be becoming a reality. Several sources have at once reported that instead of Vladislav Surkov, who was patronizing various unrecognized entities, which Moscow had spawned in the post-Soviet states, the former Russian Ambassador to Belarus, Mikhail Babich, would be the curator of Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republic (LDPR).

This information had appeared in the media before, but attention was paid to it only after Babich’s scandalous dis-

missal from the post of ambassador. He worked in Minsk for less than a year, but was remembered by a number of outrageous and distinctly boorish statements addressed to the Belarusian authorities. And they, of course, refused to deal with such an ambassador. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry said that the Russian ambassador “does not see any difference between a Russian federal district and an independent state.” This statement aroused the enthusiasm of the Russian nationalists, but Putin nevertheless had to make concessions and withdraw the excessively “industrious” official.

It is clear that after the scandals in Belarus, Babich’s authority in the eyes of the Russian Imperials has grown substantially. And his possible appearance in the hypostasis of the curator of LDPR was greeted by the Red-Browns with joy. They say it would be good for Babich to treat the “people’s republics” as if they were Russian federal districts. But emotions, as often happens with this category of citizens, have left logic and common sense behind. Few of them thought



Hope of the Empire loyalists. Russian patrioteers see in Mikhail Babich, LDPR new curator, the embodiment of their revanchist feelings, but it seems that his agenda is to reintegrate the occupied territories into Ukraine

that, in fact, Babich's policy in Belarus turned out to be just as "constructive" as all Russian chauvinism. Loud and boorish statements, that delighted the rabble, actually caused damage and only worsened relations between the countries. And such methods are unlikely to be effective in the future.

Moscow has not yet announced a new area of focus for Babich, but various sources confirm that he is already working with the so-called republics. "The Kremlin has not officially confirmed Babich's work in Ukraine. However, he is already working at LDPR. [He is] checking, assessing the situation, holding closed meetings and consultations. As a result, there will be further personnel and political decisions," commented on the information on Babich's supervision Aleksandr Zhuchkovskiy, a well-known militant of the DPR.

In social networks, they are already announcing the purges in the leadership of the "republics" and express the hope that Babich will begin to fight with an iron hand against the rampant looting and robbery (I can't bring myself to call it "corruption") in ORDILLO. However, given the fact that theft has long been the national idea of the Russian Federation itself and is encouraged by the "elite", Donbas is unlikely to see any changes in this. After all, Babich is also not an independent figure; he is just another cog in the corrupt and rusted mechanism of the Russian authorities.

However, the long-term curator of LDPR Vladislav Surkov, too, has not gone anywhere yet and, obviously, he is not going to completely leave. At least now he is showing his presence in every way. A few days ago, he met Denis Pushilin, the figurehead of the DPR, in Rostov-on-Don, where they attended a mixed martial arts tournament, sat side by side on the stands and eagerly took pictures. However, Pushilin, remaining Surkov's man, in fact, seems to have little effect on the situation. Unlike the late Oleksandr Zakharchenko, who together with his associate Timofeev "Tashkent" actually controlled the situation on the territory entrusted to him, Pushilin makes predominantly demonstration performances: he gives speeches, plays the guitar and voices regular statements. The real power is concentrated in the hands of those who control the economic block of ORDILLO, therefore the so-called Prime Minister Oleksandr Ananchenko is actually more influential than Pushilin in the DPR. And, it seems, Mikhail Babich will supervise him and his people from now on. Surkov, according to reports from ORDILLO, will not completely leave his business, but his weight will not be the same as before.

Still, whoever the new curator may be, he is clearly not the one who will determine the Russian policy towards Ukraine and the occupied territories. No matter how happy Russian national patriots are about Babich's imperial creed, he, like Surkov, will not take strategic decisions on his own, but will implement what Putin and his coterie will order. And the general line on the Donbas after the arrival of the new government in Ukraine may also change. It is no secret that the Russian leadership is counting on a reboot of relations and the revitalization of negotiations on the occupied areas of the Donbas reintegration (of course, on the terms of Moscow). And if the new Ukrainian government is ready to make concessions and legalize the occupation of the Donbas in the form of any autonomy, Russia will willingly contribute to this. And then all the imperial fervor of Babich will evaporate sharply and he will speak in the same vein in which the representatives of the Russian authorities have spoken for the last five years that Donbas is the territory of Ukraine, and the "republics" will not be recognized.

Today, the LDPR curators (obviously, within the limits of flirting with the new Ukrainian government) are already trying to launch a line for reintegration into Ukraine. Evidence of this is a flash mob, unprecedented in the previous five years. Residents of ORDILLO (mostly dependent state employees and students) are forced to write down an appeal to President Volodymyr Zelenskiy asking for autonomy for DPR and LPR within Ukraine. It was impossible to imagine this before. Starting from 2014, the militant official narrative constantly emphasized that there could be no return to Ukraine, and the same dependent state employees were driven out to the streets with posters "We don't want to work for Ukraine." But now the tonality has changed dramatically, residents of the Donbas got an order to no longer demand "returning to their native harbor", but autonomy within Ukraine.

THE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP IS COUNTING ON A REBOOT OF RELATIONS AND THE REVITALIZATION OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE OCCUPIED AREAS OF THE DONBAS REINTEGRATION. AND IF THE NEW UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT IS READY TO MAKE CONCESSIONS AND LEGALIZE THE OCCUPATION OF THE DONBAS IN THE FORM OF ANY AUTONOMY, RUSSIA WILL WILLINGLY CONTRIBUTE TO THIS

On this occasion, the militants hastily created a special site, Donbas Choice, on which allegedly the population of certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts can sign an appeal to Zelenskiy: "We, Donbas residents, demand the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, to stop shelling our homes! We demand to return the pension to people! We demand to give us the right to speak our native Russian! We demand amnesty for all parties to the conflict! Give us the opportunity to develop our economy! Let our police protect us! We demand autonomy for the Donbas!"

Voting on the site is nothing but a showcase. It is enough for the user to simply enter their name and city of residence in the form, as well as upload the photo. Anyone who wishes can enter any data regardless of place of residence. Among the "signers" you can already see photos of porn actors, as well as random people, who "voted" without their knowledge. For instance, the mayor of Severodonetsk Valentyna Kazakova. So we can witness another imitation.

Taking into consideration that without the consent of the above nothing of the kind could appear in the occupied territories, there is no doubt that the "leaders" ordered the "activists" to ask to return in Ukraine. It is still unclear to what extent all these actions are serious. Perhaps it's just about sounding public opinion or some ritual curtsy towards the new Ukrainian president. While the appeal to the Ukrainian authorities with requests for autonomy does not come from officials, but from odd "activists", it is always possible to demonstratively distance from such initiatives and assume that nothing has happened.

So, it's too early to make any conclusions about current events. The only thing that can be said precisely is that the Kremlin didn't plan to take away ORDILLO, as well as it doesn't plan this now. It will continue to use the occupied regions of the Donbas exclusively as a modest coin in confrontation with the West and the Ukrainian authorities. Therefore, those who very much enjoyed the issuance of Russian passports and perceived it almost as recognition of "republics", are going to get once again frustrated with the Russian leader. ■

Political games

After European elections: a new start?

Philippe de Lara, Paris



Set priorities. Despite gloomy forecasts on the eve of the elections to the European Parliament, voters confirmed the importance of the EU

The output of elections at European Parliament (EP) was unexpected: electoral surge of Green parties, containment of anti-European populists — except in Italy —, sharp decline of former dominant parties, both conservative and social-democrats. So unexpected that it gives way to rather contradictory interpretations. Indeed, nobody can deny that an important shift happened, except stubborn Eurosceptics, but in which direction, it remains unclear. EU is not a State, let alone a parliamentary one and a lot depends of member States, from the choice of the president of European commission to the ability to efficient governance... not to mention UK's decision to leave or not. To put it short, the reshaping of European political landscape creates new opportunities, but the domestic and global weaknesses and bottlenecks of EU remain and so a high level of uncertainty.

Let's take France. President Macron's election in 2017 and his "historical" speeches in Athens and at the Sorbonne raised great expectations for a refoundation of EU, but these expect-

tations, perhaps too ambitious, drowned soon in the growing divisions among European countries, the incapacity of Macron to reboot cooperation with Germany on strategic issues, and the Yellow Vests crisis, which pushed the Wunderkind of European politics on the brink. Not to mention the indefinite negotiations on Brexit. EU seemed weaker than ever, to the satisfaction of Putin and Trump.

Now the first surprise of these elections and perhaps the most important one is the turnout. For the first time since 1994, turnout is above 50% on average. Citizens were supposed to be hostile or at least disappointed by EU; turnout revealed the opposite: Europeans take EU seriously; they still believe that EU is worth participating and even defending. In France, polls predicted a 42,4% turnout, below the 43,9% of 2014. Actually, it jumped to 51,3%. On election day in France, when the turnout's trend was released, many pro Europeans, including myself, became very anxious. The two leading lists were Renaissance (Macron's party and its allies) and Ras-

sement national (the former National Front of Marine Le Pen, far right). They were neck and neck until end of April but, in the last three weeks of the campaign, RN took the advantage and ended in polls 2,5% ahead from Renaissance (24,5% vs 22%). Given this trend, everybody thought that the higher turnout would benefit to RN. Isn't RN very popular among Yellow Vests who were aggressively mobilised in the months before election against Macron? Rumours circulated evoking a gap of more than 3%, even 5%, which would be a disaster for Macron, all the more since extremes, right and left, had declared that this election was a referendum against Macron. Such an anticipation was so strong that, when the first estimates appeared on TV at 8pm, journalists spoke of a "clear victory" of RN. People in RN headquarters celebrated while Renaissance headquarters showed silent gloomy faces. Yet the estimated gap was only of 1,5% then, and it gradually decreased to 0,9% during the evening. The final results confirmed this proportion: 23,3% for RN, 22,4% for Renaissance, 23 seats for each. But reality was so at variance with expectations that medias and public opinion carried on referring to RN's victory. Even a very good newspaper like Le Monde invited its readers two days after election to "Ask your questions on the victory of Rassemblement national"! Many journalists and politicians still stick to this opinion. Now, not only figures forbid to speak of a victory of Far-right against Macron, but more careful observation shows that there are two winners at this election, Renaissance and the Green Party (13,5% vs 9% in 2014) and four losers, including RN. The first two losers are obvious: like two years before at presidential election, the two dominant parties who used to govern alternately since 1981 collapsed. The centre-right LR (Les Républicains) which expected 13-15% according to polls ends at 8,5% (against 20,7% in the former EP) and the social-democrat PS (Socialist party) confirmed its breakdown at 6,2%. Last but not least, the Far-left LFI ("Rebel France", led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, notoriously pro-Russian) gathered a small 6,3%, almost equal to the PS, far from its 19,6% at the presidential election. A stinging failure for a party which claimed to be the only genuine opposition to the "President of the wealthy", and which noisily supported the Yellow Vests with an insurrectional rhetoric. The result of RN is of course out of proportion with the collapse of the Centre-right, of the moderate Left and of Mélenchon. It is nevertheless a failure for three reasons:

1) Far-right is more alone than ever. Its potential allies have been whipped out: Yellow Vests lists gathered only 0,32% and the radical nationalist (and outrageously pro-Russian) "Debout la France" began the campaign with 8% of voting intentions to end at 3,5% (and 0 seats). This means that RN has already swallowed these electorates and has little margins of progress. Worse, its discreet complicity with Far Left in the EP on various issues, notably to withdraw sanctions against Russia and stop supporting Ukraine will be weakened since Far-left parties lose 14 seats in the newly elected Parliament (from 52 to 38). The perspective once envisaged of a rapprochement with moderate conservatives on immigration, family values, etc., is more remote than ever. Nobody can predict which direction will take the reconstruction of the Conservative party after LR's collapse, but it is certain that it will not be a rapprochement with RN. The spectacular rise of the Green party changes the political game. RN is not any more the only credible force challenging traditional moderate parties. A quite similar shift is happening in Spain and Germany, and of course in the European Parliament.

2) Its ambiguous and disquieting positions on EU and Euro will haunt for a long time the RN. Since 2017,

it successively suggested a Frexit "if French citizens decide so", then a "change of status" (sic) or Euro, then a reconstruction of European institution more nations friendly. There are 50 nuances of Europhobia among Right populists which RN is not able to reconcile. Except a few extremists, even the voters most pissed off against EU — and there are many —, don't want to leave EU and are afraid to lose the Euro. Far left is said (and its leaders admit it) to have failed because of the ambiguity of its position on EU: "remain in EU but cancel all European treaties" (sic). RN, although not yet fully impacted, will pay this ambiguity at full price sooner or later.

What about Far-right populists in other countries? Despite a triumph in Italy and good results in Poland, Hungary, Sweden, Belgium, the expected big rise of Far-right and radical nationalists did not happen: they had 153 seats in the previous Assembly, they have now 173, but might lose soon the 29 seats of the Brexit party of Nigel Farage if UK leaves EU. Even worse for them, the Radical Left, which takes side with them on several issues, notably on Ukraine, loses 14 seats (from 52 to 38). Now what about Italy, unique in its kind? The Far-right Lega of Matteo Salvini dominates the European elections (34,3%, 28 seats) as it dominates the government: Cinque Stelle (17%, 14 seats), once equal, is now a junior if not expandable partner. Anti-European and pro-Russian parties add up 65% of voters in Italy, more than Fidesz plus Jobbik in Hungary (59%)! Some analysts are worried that Salvini's triumph might announce a further progression of Right populists. This cannot be ruled out in given the uncertainty of European politics, but one should recall that Italy is the only country where decent conservatives have for long been replaced by a corrupted populist. Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia is now at 6,7% but still alive. Berlusconi dominated Italian politics for decades, he ruled Italy four times between 1994 and 2011. He is the only former European Prime minister who visited twice occupied Crimea with his "friend Vladimir Putin" (in 2015 and 2018). The Italian deep compromising with Russia, from Berlusconi to Salvini, is a dangerous but exceptional situation, which is unlikely to spread to other democratic countries.

THESE ELECTIONS MAY BE THE BEGINNING OF A MAJOR SHIFT OF EUROPEAN POLITICS, WITH LESS PRESSURE OF POPULISTS, A NEW POLITICAL LIFE DRIVEN BY ENVIRONMENT, WELFARE AND SECURITY ISSUES, RATHER THAN EXISTENTIAL PSYCHODRAMA

So, these elections may be the beginning of a major shift of European politics, with less pressure of populists, a new political life driven by environment, welfare and security issues, rather than existential psychodrama. This is still a wish more than a prediction because European politics does not depend only on the European parliament. But it is not excluded that the EP will take a more important function in EU and contribute to the successful blend of democratic bargaining and decisiveness that EU did not find so far. In this crucial moment when Europe's civilization is threatened by a world of brutes and might empires, there is a striking affinity between EU's and Ukraine's fate after Zelenskiy's election: great uncertainty, great dangers, great hopes, and in both cases, hopes come mainly from traditional parliamentary politics, although the era of Parliamentary government belongs to the past. Indeed, the next Rada is as unpredictable as was the European parliament, and both will bear huge responsibilities for the future of the continent. ■

A timely cult

The idea of Ukraine survived in Halychyna in the mid-19th century thanks to Taras Shevchenko's works

Sviatoslav Lypovetskiy



***Shevchenko in Exile* by Kornyl Ustyianovych, the first piece that launched the reflection on Shevchenko in Halychyna.** Experts refer the painting to 1860–1870

Vasyl Shchurat, a well-known academic from Halychyna, met Fedir Kruzhyłka, then 80, when he travelled across Volyn, then under the Russian Empire, in 1905. Kruzhyłka shared an episode from 1846 when Shevchenko stayed in Volyn and enquired about the possibility of crossing the border to Pidkamin, a town in the Austro-Hungarian part of Ukraine, even for an hour.

Apparently, Shevchenko never managed to do that – or there is no evidence that he did. But his works found their way to the Austro-Hungarian part of Ukraine 15 years later. While several editions of *Kobzar*, Shevchenko's most famous collection of poems, came out in his lifetime between

1840s and 1861, Halychyna discovered him after his death when merchant Mykhailo Dymet brought Ukrainian books from the Dnipro Ukraine in 1862. The printed *Kobzar* immediately turned into a bibliographical rarity barely seen by anyone. But handwritten copies spread through the network of *Hromadas* as students copied and learned the poems by heart.

"THE LONG-BURIED RUTHENIAN NATION"

Halychyna was far from its present-day image of "Ukrainian Piedmont" in the mid-19th century. The harbingers of Ukrainian revival here were the Ruthenian Three, an association of three students that started it in the early

1830s. They were the only ones in the entire Greek-Catholic college who would switch to what was then referred to as Ruthenian language. *Rusalka Dnistrova* (The Dniester Mermaid), a journal of ethnographic works they compiled, was confiscated, and police director Paiman was ruthless: "We're up to our ears in trouble with the Poles, and these crazies want to revive the long-buried Ruthenian nation".

The 1848 Spring of Nations briefly reinvigorated Ukrainians, but the wave of revival was followed by a greater wave of disappointment. The clergy turned towards the tsarist Russia, and it was the only higher class of Ukrainians in Halychyna. As a result,



Opening of an early monument to Taras Shevchenko on September 28, 1913. Vynnyky near Lviv. The first monument was erected in 1898 in Kharkiv at the private mansion of the local banker Oleksiy Alchevskiy. In Halychyna, at least a dozen monuments were built by the community by World War I



One of the earliest monuments to Taras Shevchenko in Zhukiv, a village in Berezhany region (the photo is from WWI period). Some community-built monuments, including the one in Zhukiv, were demolished under the interwar Polish rule

the term *moscowphiles* was replaced with the more palatable *St. Georgians* derived from the St. George Cathedral, the chief Greek Catholic church.

“Instead of inspiration – indifference, instead of aspirations – passivity, instead of initiative and movement – gravely silence, instead of confidence in their strength – complete apathy. Wherever the frosty northern wind blew, it turned the most fertile land into desert where nothing could be seen but huge fogs of dust.” This is how literature and folklore researcher Mykhailo Vozniak wrote about the 1850s in Halychyna.

Ukrainianness was too weak as an independent idea, and the young generations of Halychans seeking their own path, different from that of their predecessors, had a problem: they did not have anything to grasp or rely on beyond Eastern Christianity to make different from the Polish domination. The appearance of Shevchenko’s first works in the time of the Ruthenian Three did not have the necessary impact. These were rather separate poems which the mass audience did not understand. Still, Ivan Vahylevych, one of the Ruthenian Three founders, referred to Shevchenko as “an outstanding poet” in 1848 already, while writer and priest Mykola Ustyianovych described him as “loud Shevchenko”.

The young Halychans first learned about Odesa-based Volodymyr Bernatovych, a Ukrainian from beyond

the Austrian Empire, on the year Shevchenko died. Markian Shashkevych’s son later described the impression Bernatovych made on those present: “We were reading the works of our great genius Shevchenko in a small rooftop room, with fragments of manuscripts added (by Bernatovych – Ed.). As we looked at the very live Ukrainian, the first one we met, we were listening, remembering every word about Taras, the Kyiv community, life there. We were mesmerized by the beauty of his language and growing in courage.”

Danylo Taniachkevych was present at the meeting too. Bernatovych inspired him with the concept of *hromadas* or communities. In the 1860s, communities turned into a cornerstone of shaping the new generation of Ukrainians in Halychyna, alongside Shevchenko’s writing. Tyniachkevych himself referred to the poet as “our father Taras” in his piece for the *Vechernytsi* (Nighttime) magazine. That description defined Shevchenko in the years to come.

When Mykhailo Dymet first brought the copies of *Kobzar* to Lviv in 1862, they were nearly not enough: students rushed to copy the poetry and spread it among the like-minded. “Each of us had an ambition to know as many of Shevchenko’s poems by heart as possible”, Yevhen Olesnytskiy, a member of the Ternopil *Hromada* recalled. Similar things were happen-

ing in gymnasiums around the region. “When one copy of the *Haidamakas* appeared in Stanislaviv (modern Ivano-Frankivsk – Ed.) in 1863 or 1864, sent by some kind man to a student from Lviv, it was almost torn into pieces in a couple of days,” Olesnytskiy wrote. “You couldn’t give it everyone to read at once, so the owner was followed by a crowd of boys to whom he was forced to read the entire poem out loud until he lost his voice. Then someone pulled the book out of his hands and read on at the gymnasium corridor or on the street or anywhere.”

The handwritten texts included *Ukraine Has Not Died Yet* (Ukraine’s modern anthem – Ed.) which was ascribed to “father Taras” (actually written by Pavlo Chubynskiy – Ed.) and sung at the meetings. It was very different in sense and tone from the *Peace to You, Brothers* anthem approved by the Supreme Ruthenian Council in 1848.

The discovery of the poet, albeit after he died, fascinated young people in Halychyna. The moscowophile *Slovo* (Word) and the Polish *Tygodnik Naukowy* (Scientific Weekly) magazines published positive reviews of the poetry. Polish students re-published the article from *Tygodnik Naukowy* as a separate brochure and Ukrainian gymnasium students were learning Shevchenko’s biography “from Polish hands”. Not everyone in Poland shared this reaction to Shevchenko’s name, however. It soon turned out



I look – the dawn has come. A painting by Osyk Kurylas of December 15, 1918. A rare image of a smiling poet, it was painted during the Polish-Ukrainian war when Ukraine still hoped to get its statehood. The original painting had profiles of riflemen in the background but the soviet authorities had them painted over

that the older generation of the clergy lost a favorable view of his poetry: "... The church authority seemed ready to anathemize him," poet Ivan Franko wrote in *Young Ukraine*. They banned commemoration of Shevchenko because they treated him as a schismatic. When the youth asked the Orthodox Church for the commemoration, St. Georgians flagged the police. It got to the point where Shevchenko's portrait was tossed from the premises of the Rutheanian Conversation association, then brought back on the walls when it was no longer possible to turn a blind eye to the fame of the "greatest Rutheanian poet". This uncertainty from the older generation pushed the youth to get together in secret meetings.

"Closed door and windows, one of our friends on the watchout, several of us, guys from the lower gymnasium and classmates in the mood of celebration in a small room," student Bohdan Lepkiy wrote. "One spoke about Shevchenko's life, another spoke about his writing and recited two or three. *The Caucasus* and fragments from his address *To My Fellow-Countrymen*, and his poem *For Osnovianenko*. We did not sing the *Testament* but recited it as a prayer in unison. There was more goodwill in the speeches than wise sense, because what could we pos-

sibly say about Shevchenko as third- or fourth-graders? We didn't hear much about him in school, nor could we read much of his work beyond school. We filtered what was in the introduction to Shevchenko's poetry (edition by Sushkevych) and in *Kobzar* published in Leipzig. The declamations we almost whispered could not tear anyone to pieces nor fuel anyone. Still, those nighttime gatherings that seemed like a conspiracy excited us and put us in a higher tone. Nobody could know about them, the participants were united by a secret. The spirit of the great poet soared over them."

THE FOLLOWERS OF THE TESTAMENT

Shevchenko's texts ignited in the Halychans an interest in history. While the Poles developed a trend of wearing authentic aristocratic clothing, such as konfederatkas and kontuszys, in 1863, Ukrainian students responded by wearing Cossack hats, wide pants and belts, and zhupan robes. "An embroidered shirt, wide blue sharovary (Cossack equivalent of sirwal pants – Ed.), a "Ukrainian" *svyta* robe with a tassel, and a Cossack hat with the velvet base and a mandatory golden tassel, a silk belt in blue or red and gold, and a zhupan in the same colors – such popular style developed with time," wrote Ostap Terletskiy, a member of Hromada. "That look was completely different from the traditional clothing worn by Ukrainians in Halychyna. But the youth was persistently looking for blue fabrics and templates for sharovary. This fascinating trend was taking over the Lviv Greek Catholic seminary. Its students had been speaking Polish and had been in some illegal Polish groups just two decades ago, while now they would impress any eye-witness: "Theology students lined in sharovary, with zhupans and belts, making a bonfire, playing trembitas... and singing shepherd songs at the seminary garden!" an observer wrote.

Shevchenko's books had a similar influence on the language, inspiring students to spontaneously switch to phonemic orthography in Ukrainian. It was not officially adopted until 1892, so that was a revolutionary step for the 1860s amidst bitter wars between the supporters of the russified option and phonemic orthography used in modern Ukrainian. The young started using plenty of words and phrases unfamiliar to people in Halychyna but common in the Cossack legacy. Some

of the greetings a contemporary found in correspondence included "In good health, Mr. Osaul" (an elected military-administrative position in the Ukrainian Cossack state – Ed.), "I am sending you Cossack greetings, Mr. Brother" or "My dear Brother, my falcon, my Hetman!"

There was no better time for the evolution of the semi-mystical cult of Shevchenko in Halychyna: the Dnipro Ukraine was facing the Valuev Circular and the Ems Ukaz later, both banning the use of the Ukrainian language. Despite its limited opportunities, the youth in Halychyna did contribute to the promotion of Shevchenko's works. A group of students decided in 1866 to publish a full volume of Shevchenko's works. Given the timing and the context, this was almost Sisyphean labor – all they had in Halychyna was handwritten pieces spread from person to person, and their authenticity was difficult to establish. Some poetry was published in *Vechernytsi* and *Meta* (Goal), both Lviv-based magazines, and in the St. Petersburg-based *Osnova* (Foundation) brought by the travellers from the Dnipro Ukraine. The *Poetry of Taras Shevchenko* finally came out in Lviv in 1867 during Easter celebrations. While the friends preparing the collection went for vacations, one of them, Hnat Rozhanskiy, got too impatient to wait for the first prints in Cyrillic to arrive and ordered the first copies from the Polish publishing house of the Ossolińskis. The book of almost 300 pages featured poems *The Caucasus*, *Dream* and *Ukraine Has Not Died Yet*, all banned in the Russian Empire. Two more volumes were published in the years to come.

In 1867, composer Mykola Lysenko, then 25, travelled from Kyiv to study in Leipzig via Lviv. His meeting with the students in Halychyna was not in vain: when they held the first public commemoration of Shevchenko several months later, they had a problem with the music part. Oleksandr Barvinskiy, the drive behind the publication of Shevchenko's works, asked Lysenko to compose a melody for the *Testament* for the event. "They sent me Shevchenko's *Testament* in the letter asking me to compose music for it. Given the favorable references about my arrangements from the Czechs, they do not find anyone more suitable to ask this," Lysenko wrote in his letter to the family in 1868. In fact, they asked the same thing from Mykhailo Verbytskyi, the composer of the anthem *Ukraine*

Has Not Died Yet. As a result, Lviv unexpectedly saw two melodies for the Testament that were first performed at the event commemorating the 7th anniversary of Shevchenko's death. For Lysenko, this was the beginning of his long-time fascination and work with Shevchenko's poetry.

The youth published another edition of *Kobzar*, arranged the first public commemoration and promoted the cult of the poet in gymnasiums. They also created a new movement of *narodovtsi* or Ukrainophiles. They mentioned Shevchenko in their program brochure in 1867: "We are the followers of the great testament of our unforgettable *kobzar* Taras Shevchenko... We are proud of our people of 15 million... its name is Ruthenian, or Ukrainian, its land, its mother is Rus-Ukraine. Its bitter enemies are the lachy and the moskals (old words for Poles and Russians – Ed.)... With that simple people covered in its armor we will stand together as its loyal children."

The commemoration of Shevchenko eventually became official and allowed. This still bothered the clergy for some

time, but the students did their best to avoid controversial situation. In Lviv they would ask an Orthodox priest to do the commemorations. A piece in *Meta* described what happened beyond the region's capital:

"In the province where there were no Orthodox churches, the students did the following: one of them came to a priest (Greek Catholic of course) and asked him to serve a mass to commemorate his "father". All students gathered for the service early in the morning before school and the "son" told the priest that his "father's" name was Taras..."

Taras Shevchenko Society, the first one where his name was mentioned, appeared in 1873. Funded by Ukrainians living in the Russian Empire, it grew to flourish as an academic society under the Dnipro Ukraine historian Mykhailo Hrushevskiy. The figure of Shevchenko took the leading role in the pantheon of Ukrainians in Halychyna. Monuments popped

up for him across Halychyna before World War I. The climax of the Shevchenko cult in the Austro-Hungarian Empire came with the celebration of his 100th birthday on June 28,

THERE WAS NO BETTER TIME FOR THE EVOLUTION OF THE SEMI-MYSTICAL CULT OF SHEVCHENKO IN HALYCHYNA: THE DNIPRO UKRAINE WAS FACING THE VALUEV CIRCULAR AND THE EMS UKAZ LATER, BOTH BANNING THE USE OF THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE

1914. Nearly 10,000 Halychans in different firemen, scout or athlete society uniforms marched in Lviv that day. On that same day, Bosnian Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, pushing the world towards the global war. The military march of Ukrainians to commemorate Shevchenko opened a new stage in the development of Ukrainian idea. It showed that the Halychans were ready to form military units. Soon enough, Ukrainian Sich Riflemen appeared as the first such official military formation. ■



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A prologue to the restoration of the empire

The Ukraine-Russia
Union Treaty of 1920

Stanislav Kulchytskiy

Three treaties of December 28, 1920; November 19, 1990, and May 31, 1997 defined relations between Ukraine and Russia in the 20th century. Do they share a common feature that speaks in favor of the dealmaking capacity of the Russian diplomacy? Reflections on this bring to mind a well-known phrase by Otto von Bismarck, the iron chancellor of the Second Reich: agreements with Russia are not worth the paper they are written on.

The purpose of the December 28, 1920 treaty was to continue the restoration of the pre-Bolshevik Revolution empire misleadingly disguised as “the inviolable union of free republics.” The November 19, 1990 treaty signed by Leonid Kravchuk

and Boris Yeltsin as a part of joint action against Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the Union center, was a prelude to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin, however, immediately tried to turn the Soviet Union into a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the third version of the Russian Empire. When that attempt failed, Yeltsin had to accept the May 31, 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership. It was fine for Ukraine but the Russian ruling elite was not happy with it. After numerous attempts to stifle Ukraine in its embrace, Putin’s Russia finally switched to an armed aggression.

Even this aggression, masked as a hybrid war with endless statements about Ukrainians and Rus-

sians as one nation, fails to convince many Ukrainians that the Kremlin’s policy is imperialistic in nature: they do not approve of the abolition of the Friendship Treaty by the Verkhovna Rada for many reasons – ideological, economic, national, religious and reasons of everyday convenience. Unfortunately, Ukraine’s information space is controlled by oligarchs whose economic interests are linked with Russia even three decades after Ukraine recovered its sovereignty.

What can a country that respects democratic values, including freedom of speech, do in this situation? The only way is to look at the reality of Ukraine-Russia relations to counter the Kremlin’s mantras. The De-



Trotsky’s golden share. The soldiers mobilized from Russian gubernias had a weighty vote in Ukrainian soviets after the 1919 occupation

ember 28, 1920 treaty offers a good illustration of this distorted reality.

THE ATTEMPT TO MERGE UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

The soviet government established in the first half of 1919 crumbled under the peasants' insurgency. The White Guard occupied the Ukrainian Republic. Inspired by this success, Anton Denikin embarked on his march to Moscow, but the three-week fighting around Kromy in October ended in his defeat. As they chased the White Guard, the armies of Leon Trotsky once again entered Ukraine.

Trotsky declared in his address to the Red Army that "Ukraine is the land of Ukrainian workers and peasants, and only they have the right to work in Ukraine, rule it and build a new life in it. Remember firmly that your task is to liberate Ukraine, not to conquer it." His statement ended with the slogan "Long live the Free Independent Soviet Ukraine!"

On December 29, 1919, Vladimir Lenin wrote a somewhat different Letter to the Workers and Peasants of Ukraine on Victories Over Denikin. "It is obvious and commonly recognized that only Ukrainian workers and peasants can and will decide at their All-Ukrainian Assembly of Soviets, whether Ukraine will merge with Russia or remain an independent republic, and what federation connection should be established between this republic and Russia in the latter scenario," the letter said.

Christian Rakovsky, the head of the Ukrainian Soviet of People's Committees in the first half of 1919, read the letter the next day. In his view, the prospect of Ukraine's merger with Russia suggested by Lenin based on the will of Ukrainian workers and peasants could lead to another demise of the soviet government. He suggested formalizing relations between the Ukrainian SSR and the Russian SFSR in some kind of a treaty. The Kremlin seemed to accept that option. In fact, the letter had the following promising phrase: "We, the Great Russian communists, should be able to make concessions in disagreements with Ukrainian bolshevik communists when these disagreements are about Ukraine's state independence and the form of its union with Russia."

Where the Great Russians represented by Lenin really willing to make concessions? Or was this a trick? They approved the following



The Riga peace. The Ukrainian SSR came out as a separate entity when it signed the treaty with Poland in October 1920

quotas for representation at the IV All-Ukrainian Assembly of Soviets, the one that was to decide the status of Ukraine: one delegate each for 50,000 countryside residents, 10,000 urban population and 1,000 Red Army soldiers. How were Red Army members different from the other voters to be represented at the Assembly? Unlike workers and peasants, they were foreigners. Leon Trotsky flooded Ukraine with Russian soldiers while local residents drafted to the Red Army were sent to other military districts. By the end of 1920, there were 1.2 million Red Army soldiers in Ukraine.

As a result, there were 50 times more delegates represented the Red Army than peasants, and 10 times more than workers at the Assembly. It produced the necessary result: "The IV All-Ukrainian Assembly of Soviets declares that the Ukrainian SSR, while preserving its state constitution, is a member of the All-Russian Socialist Federative Republic," the resolution said. 30 representatives of the Ukrainian SSR were integrated into the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. By announcing the merger of Ukraine and Russia, the Assembly declared any attempt to weaken the links between them counterrevolutionary.

AUTONOMY OR INDEPENDENCE?

"Free Ukraine is possible under joint action of the Great Russian and Ukrainian proletarians. Without such unity, it is impossible," said the scripture on the Lenin monument in Kyiv that was knocked down in De-

ember 2013. The leader thus only allowed the proletarian Ukraine to exist. In his view, his party was the only avantgarde of proletarianism. Therefore, he was talking of a bolshevik Ukraine. Because the bolsheviks were hiding from the Constitution in their state and pushed the bolshevized soviets to the forefront, it was only the soviet Ukraine that could exist.

Soviet Ukraine could only be built as a Russian autonomy with a stateless status, or as an independent Ukraine. When he outlined this dilemma in the Letter to the Workers and Peasants of Ukraine on Victories Over Denikin, Lenin knew that the Kremlin was not losing control over the Red Army-occupied Ukraine, even as an independent republic. It was he who invented the unique state structure with two power hierarchies: extraconstitutional Communist Party hierarchy with dictatorial powers and the constitutional soviet hierarchy with managerial functions.

Still, both Lenin and his Kremlin circle wanted to build a centralized country, not just a centralized party. By accepting the autonomous structure of the empire they were reviving (that structure did not exist before the Revolution), they could hardly imagine a centralized country existing as a group of independent soviet republics.

Christian Rakovsky was also a man of the center because he was a member of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee that got together on a regular basis to solve all key issues of the state. Yet, he had

two reasons to defend the status of Ukraine as an independent republic. Firstly, he was one of 19 Central Committee members in Moscow, but No1 in the system of power in Kharkiv. Secondly, he was better aware of the moods amongst Ukrainians whom Lenin addressed in the Letter to the Workers and Peasants of Ukraine on Victories Over Denikin. They valued national statehood and did not quite realize that independence was an illusion under the soviet authorities. In fact, it was not entirely illusory then as the Communist Party power hierarchy was yet to be built, drawing human resources from Russia. Moscow centralizers could barely rely on the local communists recruited mostly from the ranks of former Ukrainian social-democrats and socialist revolutionaries.

IN SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENCE

The VIII Party Conference passed a resolution On Soviet Government in Ukraine in December 1919. It declared the desire of the Soviet Communist Party leaders to ensure free development of the Ukrainian language and culture, accomplish decisive influence of the poor peasantry representation in government bodies, requisition “excessive” grain in restricted amounts, abolish land ownership by landlords restored by Denikin, distribute farmland to peasants on equal basis, and prevent any forced integration of peasants into communes and artels. In other words, the Kremlin was rejecting the policy in Ukraine that led to the demise of the soviet government in the summer of 1919.

The situation was fairly stable in Ukraine in the first half of 1920. Soviet occupation was far more bearable socio-economically and nationally compared to that by Denikin. Still, this was an occupation. When declarations about the “local government of workers and peasants” remained just that, peasants in Ukraine changed their opinion sharply. One example was the letter of Otaman Koval, the leader of an insurgency unit in Poltava region, to the Red Army commanders: “We, the insurgents of Ukraine, and I personally are fighting for the independent Ukrainian soviet government. When the Russian soviet army just came to Ukraine as it chased Denikin away from Ukraine, me and most of my community that was then and still is in my unit, joined the ranks of the



Free Ukraine is possible! Confirmed against Lenin's testament

Red Army and worked sincerely as instructed by the soviet government. We, Ukrainians, thought then that we would chase Denikin out of Ukraine in a joint effort with the Russian soviet army, disperse the black flocks of counterrevolution and build Soviet Ukraine as part of a federation with the Soviet Russia, gaining wide autonomy for the Ukrainian people... I long dreamed that we, Ukrainians, would find peaceful ways to agree with the communist Russian Government. But we then realized that it is only by sword and bullets that we, Ukrainians, can gain the right to free life.”

Indeed, peasant rebellions were raging in Ukraine by the second half of 1920. Angered by the confiscation of grain, peasants launched an active fight against the Red Army units involved in the confiscation. “The kurkul banditry”, as the bolsheviks

referred to the new wave of the civil war, spread across Ukraine on a massive scale. “We are taking grain from Siberia, from Kuban, but we can't take it from Ukraine because a war is raging there and the Red Army is forced to fight against the bands that overflow it,” Lenin wrote in October.

In April, the troops of Josef Pilsudsky and the Ukrainian People's Republic Army led by Symon Petliura invaded the Ukrainian SSR and took over Kyiv. A day earlier, Felix Dzerzhinski arrived in Kharkiv as a newly-appointed commander of support for the South-Western front. His task was to organize a fight against Nestor Makhno's 20,000-strong insurgency army that started raiding the Left-Bank Ukraine. The other task of the No1 chekist was to fight against the national liberation movement in any form or shape, from national communism within the Communist Party to



PHOTO: UNIAN

the borotbists who never joined the ranks of the bosheviki. He wrote in a report to Lenin six months later: "Local communists are some sort of scum, they live by their small interests. I did not notice Russophilism, nor did I hear any complaints. In my sphere, I have good harvest here. All of the so-called mid-level Ukrainian intelligentsia are Petliurites."

Meanwhile, glavkism emerged as yet another threat to the building of the soviet government. Moscow People's Commissariats and their glavks, or headquarters, wanted to control operations throughout the accessible periphery bypassing their Ukrainian counterparts. After Christian Rakovsky went on an inspection tour across Ukrainian gubernias, he made several public statements that fall. "Ukraine has preserved the whole industrial apparatus. It needs small repairs, but the main thing it needs is enough fuel, raw materials and money. The trip revealed once again

how hard ultracentralist trends are hitting the industry," he said in one such statement. On November 2, Leon Trotsky made the following statement at the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee political bureau: "Ukraine is going through internal processes that are likely to make the soviet authority incomparably more stable. At the same time, the new stage of development entails far greater autonomy of government bodies in Ukraine. The current regime cannot be considered normal. Ukraine is still an anarchy economically under the mask of Moscow's bureaucratic centralism."

There were some international aspects in the problem of Ukraine-Russia relations. On October 12, a peace treaty was concluded between the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR on one side, and Poland on the other. "Both parties, according to the principle of self-determination of the peoples, recognize independence of Ukraine and Belarus," the preliminary peace terms specified. But weeks passed and the position of both soviet republics vis a vis the Russian SFSR remained undetermined.

Georgiy Chicherin, the Russian Foreign Minister, raised the alarm. He wrote in a letter to the politburo of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee on November 30, that "We recognized the formula of independence for Ukraine in the Riga Treaty, while the IV All-Ukrainian Assembly of Soviets supported the integration of Ukraine into the Russian SFSR. This was before the Riga Treaty which obliges us to recognize Ukraine's independence." He was perfectly aware of the benefits the Kremlin had with the two separate power hierarchies. "Current relations can in fact remain unchanged, but we need to establish them in the form of a union of two states, not one union state," he added.

THE UNION TREATY

Chicherin's letter to the politburo was the last straw that triggered immediate revision of the IV All-Ukrainian Assembly decision to merge Ukraine with Russia. The Soviet Communist Party Central Committee plenum put the issue on its agenda on December 7 under the following phrasing: "On the regulation of international and legal relations

between the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR." After it approved a directive on the recognition of the Ukrainian SSR as an independent and sovereign state, the Central Committee plenum proposed the presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the Russian SFSR to regulate international and legal aspects framed by the directive.

On December 13, Christian Rakovsky reported about the decisions passed at the Central Committee politburo. The next regular Central Committee plenum on December 24 considered the issues listed at the VIII All-Russian Assembly of Soviets, including the approval of the Workers' and Peasants' Union Treaty between the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR. Lev Kamenev was instructed to explain the situation to the communist faction of the soviets assembly, while Rakovsky was to deliver a speech on this item on the agenda and propose the ratification of the Union Treaty.

On December 28, the Union Treaty was officially concluded, signed by

MOSCOW CENTRALIZERS COULD BARELY RELY ON THE LOCAL COMMUNISTS RECRUITED MOSTLY FROM THE RANKS OF FORMER UKRAINIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES

Lenin and Chicherin from the Russian SFSR and Rakovsky from the Ukrainian SSR, as head of government and the people's commissar for foreign affairs. The VIII All-Russian Assembly of Soviets ratified the treaty on December 29, followed by the ratification by the All-Ukrainian Assembly of Soviets in March 1921.

The preamble solemnly confirmed "independence and sovereignty of each of the parties to the treaty." Article 1 declared the entry of both parties to the military and economic union. Article 2 said that "the mere fact of former dependence of the territory of the Ukrainian SSR does not result in any obligations to anyone."

All these pompous words were empty talk in the end. But the sovietized Ukraine preserved its quasistatehood. The center in Moscow was firmly in control of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, but not the people that was turning into a freedom-loving and united nation during its struggle for liberation. ■

June 12, 20:00**Interpol****Green Theater (Zeleny Teatr)
(Parkova doroha 2, Kyiv)**

For the first time, the Interpol, the American band, whose work not only marked the era of the post-punk revival, but also inspired others to experiment with music in this genre, will give a concert in Ukraine. The New York quartet will not arrive in our capital empty-handed – the musicians will present their new album "Marauder" to Kyivans and guests of the city. The new masterpiece has been creating for long 4 years, and, according to the musicians, the result will justify a long wait. How does a portion of good vintage music performed by the Interpol taste? Degustation is coming!

**June 15 – 16, 15:00****Underhill music festival****Pidhirya
(Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast)**

The festival summer starts with a blast of musical genres, artists and formats. What is it about? Western Ukraine invites you to a large-scale Underhill music festival that will present the audience with the most comprehensive palette of modern electric and pop music. You will surely believe this with the help of Boombox, Druha Rika, DZIDZIO, SKAI, IvanNavi, Arsen Mirzoyan, MamaRika and others. Guests from abroad will come to the festival, including the British James Zabiela and DJ Aphrodite, the Israeli singer Nadav Dagon and the Dutch music producer Ferry Corsten.

**June 16, 19:00****KISS****NSC Olympiysky
(vul. Velyka Vasylkivska 55, Kyiv)**

KISS to farewell? Before the end of their long-term musical career, the legendary rock band has embarked on a world tour to bid farewell to their fans. In the beginning of the year, the wave of concerts shook the largest cities in America. And at last the musical tsunami under the symbolic name End of the Road has reached the shores of Europe. The musicians promise a crazy show, which the world has not witnessed yet. Look at some impressive statistics: 45 years of work, more than 100 million albums sold and millions of loyal fans around the globe.

**June 17, 20:00****Tokio Hotel****Atlas
(vul. Sichovykh Striltsiv 37-41,
Kyiv)**

Hot news: The favorites of German pop rock scene are again in Kyiv! The band's success story dates back to the far-off 2001, when young musicians performed at the local music club in Magdeburg, and their talent was noticed by a well-known producer. Shortly after the fateful meeting, the band became known all over the world and with their music largely influenced the musical mood of the 2000s. Today, Tokio Hotel has a double reason for celebrations: the 15th anniversary of the beginning of their concert performances and the release of the new album Melancholic Paradise. Be sure not to miss it!

**June 21, 20:00****Miles Kane****Green Theater (Zeleny Teatr)
(Parkova doroha 2, Kyiv)**

After a 5-year pause, Miles Kane has released a new solo album entitled "Coup De Grace", which translates as "the final blast". It so happened that the name largely determined the fate of the album – "blast" effect brought it the title of one of the best British releases in 2018. And the British, in turn, has pleased admirers with old-school (in a good sense of the word) garage indie-rock and returned the young people love for live guitar music. Next step is to infect the Ukrainian public with this unrestricted energy – are you ready?

**July 6, 10:00****Ivana Kupala Night'2019****X-Park
(Park Druzhby Narodiv, Kyiv)**

The festival in support of Ukrainian traditions and the holiday for the whole family – this is what the event "Ivana Kupala Night'2019" is positioned as by organizers. The so-called pre-party, which will take place in the heart of Podil on July 5 at the Justinspace Art Center, will set it the tone and prepare for multi-faceted celebration. For Ivana Kupala Night is not only a magical ritual for sailing wreaths into water, but also (ethnic) music, various master classes (for children in particular), food courts and hand-made fairs, as well as a competition for children's creativity. Fun moments can be immortalized in the installed photo zone.





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