

The Ukrainian Week

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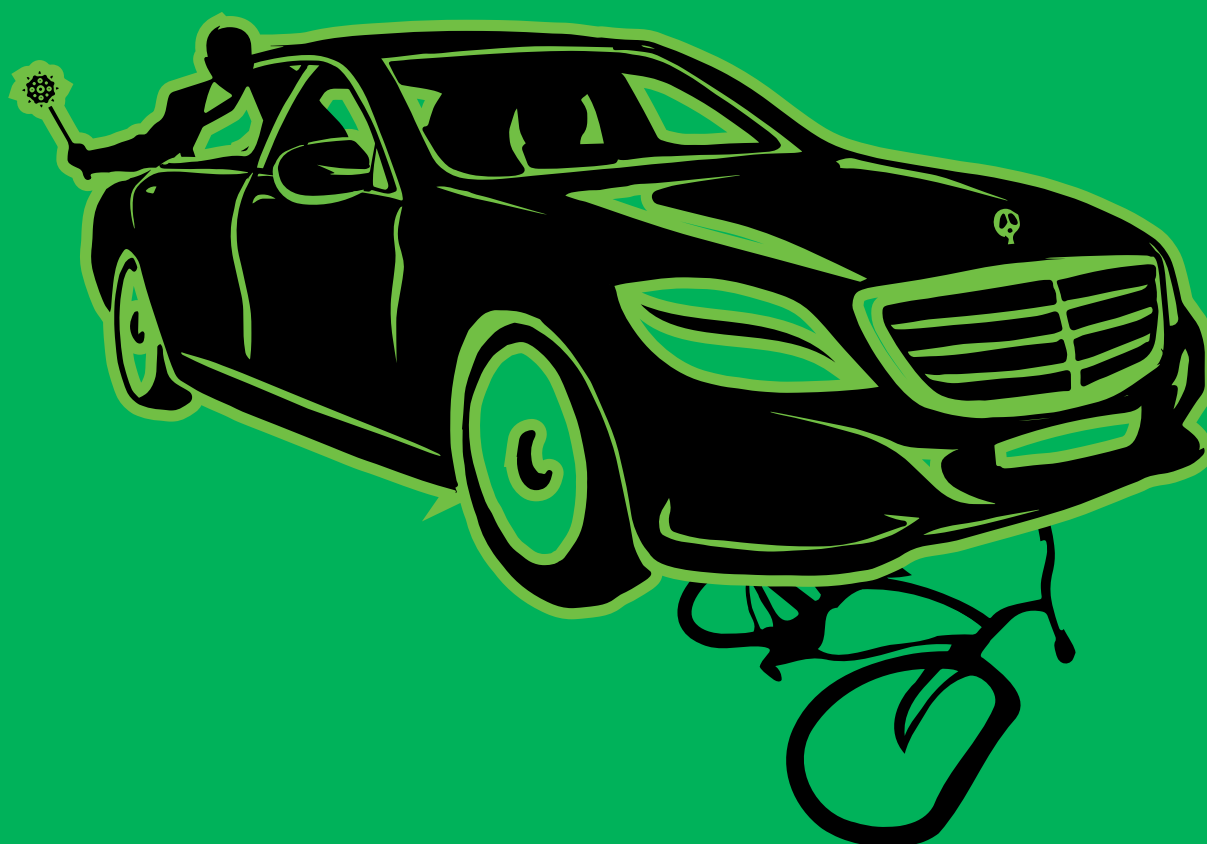
Interview with Turchynov, ex-secretary of the
National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine

The President
and his voters

New multivectoral economy
and Ukraine's oblasts

Ukrainian Hollywood
in 1920s

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The Ukrainian Week

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"I hear you"

Dmytro Krapyvenko

Plenty of theories about the cyclical nature of social development and culture claim that a certain heritage can be observed from the vantage point of several generations. While conflicts between parents and kids are a natural thing, a certain affinity of values between grandparents and their grandkids is also common. The theories aren't flawless, but they sometimes make sense. If we take as an example Ukrainian presidents, Petro Poroshenko was largely the heir of Viktor Yushchenko: a Maidan, Euroatlantic progress, even "dear friends" as an inherited disease.

PHOTO: STANISLAV KOZLUK



Volodymyr Zelenskiy promised not to be his predecessor, and so far has succeeded, but along with that he is, despite his best efforts one would like to believe, beginning to take on some of the features of his political “grandfather,” Viktor Yanukovich.

The first steps of the fourth president’s administration were also accompanied by the slogans “I’ll listen to each of you” and “Ukraine for the people.” This is certainly echoed in Zelenskiy’s rhetoric, especially in his inaugural speech, where he said, “Each of us is president,” and more recently when he stated that the law on the special status of the Donbas would be written “by all of us together.” Of course, Yanukovich was the butt of many jokes as a politician with considerable prison experience and the words “people” and “human” was more likely to be understood by him in the context of the *fenya* prison jargon, where these terms did not extend to all *homo sapiens*, but only to the privileged criminal caste. In this context, the Yanukovich regime was very consistent: the government machine was completely subordinated to the interests of the ruling mafia clan and external control was gradually handed over to Russian “overseers.” The analogy with the Ze Team is not that obvious: while the clannishness of its politics is evident, it’s too soon to call it truly “octopoidal.”

But there are considerable similarities in other ways. Firstly, in the disregard for the press: “Mustafa, I don’t envy you,” said Yanukovich to Mustafa Nayem, a top journalist at the time. Zelenskiy, his Chief-of-Staff Andriy Bohdan, and his spokesperson Yulia

THE WORST THAT HE MIGHT DO RIGHT NOW IS TO TRY TO KEEP APPEALING TO EVERYBODY BY REASSURING THEM THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE JUST FINE AND THAT HE WILL TAKE CARE OF EVERYONE. BECAUSE THERE’S ONE HUGE CONTRADICTION: YOU CAN’T PLEASE BOTH PUTIN AND THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE AT THE SAME TIME

Mendel have in a very short time orchestrated an entire series of incidents against the press, which the current administration apparently considers completely extraneous and unnecessary. All of them in gross violation of proper protocol. Nor is this just about dress codes and the current president’s dislike of ties, but in such situations as the procedure for honoring the victims of Baby Yar.

In a certain primitiveness in his communication policy. In his time, Yanukovich refused to visit Wrocław in Poland, ostensibly because of bad weather, but when it was obvious that the weather wasn’t about to get in the way of a flight, the trip to Poland went ahead, after all. Something similar was seen in the signing of the Steinmeier formula at Minsk, when Zelenskiy permitted himself an awfully long, theatrical pause. But the most noticeable “genetic similarity” was when mass protests against capitulation suddenly erupted in Kyiv. Although Zelenskiy did not resort to the stale cliché of “radical nationalist elements” – there was no noticeable presence of radicals on the streets of the capital – in his supposedly reassuring speech in the “I hear each of you” mode he made sure to mention that protests were convenient to certain politicians who wanted to “reign the opportunity to steal.”

This may be some distance to the meme “Stop that!” but the message is the same: somebody has to be behind the protests and manipulating everybody because the people, of course, aren’t capable of organizing themselves and making demands. Unless they’re paid to do so, adds the president’s chief-of-staff Bohdan. Yet another melody that is anything but new, even if he didn’t mention drug-laced tea and spiked oranges, because the repertoire has to be updated over time, as those who grew up in show business know very well.

In contrast to the situation that Viktor Yanukovich found himself in in November 2013, today’s president has plenty of room to maneuver. The worst that he might do right now is to

try to keep appealing to everybody by reassuring them that everything will be just fine and that he will take care of everyone. Because there’s one huge contradiction: you can’t please both Putin and the Ukrainian people at the same time. Indeed, the most active portion of Ukrainian society has made it pretty clear that peace through capitulation will not pass, while any other terms, as Russian officials have made clear, are of no interest to the Russian Federation.

What’s more, we can see that the situation was taken in hand by members of the veterans’ movement, who are people of action. Despite all the lack of respect to Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s predecessor, this is a factor that should be kept in mind. In his time, Poroshenko and his team were in no hurry to establish an economic blockade of occupied Crimea and Donbas, but then, too, activists from patriotic organizations and veterans joined forces strong enough to persuade the government to do this. There were plenty of misunderstandings with the West over it, never mind Russia. But peace within the country is always more valuable than the reproaches of the “concerned” and the “worried.” Since the new president called himself a “servant,” he should know that serving two masters is not the best choice, and the lives of Ukrainians have little in common with an Italian comedy.

The temptation may be to repeat Yanukovich by getting all the angry Ukrainians who support the presidential course together and demand peace based on the Steinmeier formula. But however popular he may be, his electorate is not prepared for this, leaving Zelenskiy with the tried-and-true tools of administrative leverage, titushky from fight clubs, paid flag-bearers, and an Anti-Maidan. It’s not a pretty script and Ukrainians can only hope that Bankova will decide not to go there.

Still, the new administration continues to push the envelope. The case of Serhiy Pashynskiy is not like the Tymoshenko case, true. And the issue is not the nature of the accusations but the image of the politicians. Pashynskiy was never the favorite of millions and his reputation was always on the shady side. Still, the ominous shadow of Andriy Portnov, yet another servant to two masters, in the Pashynskiy story makes it clear that the comeback of the Yanukovich crowd wasn’t just a horror story invented by the Poroshenko campaign. Under the cover of establishing justice and fighting corruption, the political “granddaddies” like Yanukovich, Azarov and so on, could, through the notorious Pechersk District Court, take their vengeance on many in the Maidan government. In fact, Portnov has made his intentions in this regard very clear. It’s easy enough to interpret Zelenskiy’s responses to the situation: “I’m not the prosecutor or the judge. Let competent bodies figure it out.” That was exactly what Yanukovich said when Yulia Tymoshenko was put on trial.

Notably – and possibly orchestrated by the captains of online skirmishes – there has been a wave of comments online insisting that the Steinmeier formula and the Minsk accords are the burdensome inheritance of the Poroshenko administration. Even if this judgment were taken seriously, it still doesn’t make sense that the new president should take on all these commitments that are so burdensome for Ukraine and reassure everyone that “it’s going to be alright.” A “great leader” ought to be doing the exact opposite.

Instead, Ukrainians get protracted theatrical pauses and a stalemate on withdrawing from Zolote. Coming up is October 14, the Feast of Pokrova – the Intercession of the Mother of God and patroness of the army – and a planned mass march against capitulation to which the response can easily be in the style of Bohdan, Portnov and Yanukovich, but that won’t remove the most urgent issues from the agenda. Shooting a video, reassuring everybody and promising to listen to each one of them are no longer a solution. Viewers are already shouting, “I don’t buy it!” ■

America's fast-depreciating handshake

Peter Zalmayev



On February 15, 1991, American President George Bush Sr. made an appeal on Voice of America radio to Iraqi citizens: "There is another way for the bloodshed to stop: and that is, for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside and then comply with the United Nations' resolutions and rejoin the family of peace-loving nations."

Two of Iraq's largest groups heeded the call and rose up in bloody rebellions: the Shia in the South and the Kurds in the

North. Though the rebel forces initially claimed successes on the battlefield, occupying several population centers, Saddam Hussein's army began to gain the upper hand thanks to its indiscriminate shelling of both the rebel units and civilians. Tens of thousands perished, and over a million Kurds became refugees. Under orders to stand down, the American troops did not intervene, staying put across Iraq's southern border, in Kuwait.

As the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman put it, "Mr. Bush never supported the Kurdish and Shiite rebellions against Mr. Hussein or, for that matter, any democracy movement in Iraq" because Saddam's "iron fist simultaneously held Iraq together, much to the satisfaction of the American allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia."

By the count of leading regional experts, the US has betrayed the Kurds at least "8 times over the past 100 years." And now, capping this ignominious record, for the 8th time, comes Donald Trump with his decision to pull out of Syria's northern Rojava enclave, populated largely by ethnic Kurds. The very Kurds who have been at the forefront of America's clandestine war against the Syrian butcher Bashar al-Assad, and, subsequently, the fight with ISIS. The very Kurds who are now facing the prospect of imminent and indiscriminate slaughter at the hands of their Turkish arch-enemies. The decision apparently followed Trump's conversation with his Turkish counterpart, President Erdogan, and seems to have been made without any consultation with the Pentagon, Trump's military advisers or members of Congress.

Paul Krugman, the Nobel-prize-winning economist encapsulated the policy establishment's bewilderment with Trump's decision on his Twitter, providing a tongue-in-cheek multiple-choice list of possible reasons:

- (a) He has business interests in Turkey
- (b) Erdogan, being a brutal autocrat, is his kind of guy
- (c) His boss Vladimir Putin told him to

Whatever Trump's motivation for the decision was (whether he is bowing to the isolationist wing of his supporters or, as usual, playing politics of distraction, in order to deflect attention from the Ukraine scandal, which I believe may be the reason), Trump, "in his great and unmatched wisdom," as he characterized his decision-making on Twitter, has just

driven another nail in the coffin of America's credibility on the world stage.

Throughout his presidency, Trump has not only betrayed the expectations of his supporters that he would become "more presidential" after he settles in to his new role, but indeed has doubled down on his cynical and transactional approach to politics. No areas of government have been unaffected by his banana-republic-style transactionality, including graft on the part of cabinet members, tax breaks for rich cronies, and the Trump family selling political access to power by luring foreigners to buy, rent or stay at its properties, including the Trump hotel a few blocks down from the White House.

Likewise, matters of national interest, such as security, diplomacy and economy, have been victims of Trump's *quid pro quo* way of doing things — the Latin expression roughly meaning "something in exchange of something," which millions of Americans have now learned as a result of Trump's now legendary, historical phone conversation with the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. Contrary to Trump's in-

THROUGHOUT HIS PRESIDENCY, TRUMP HAS NOT ONLY BETRAYED THE EXPECTATIONS OF HIS SUPPORTERS THAT HE WOULD BECOME "MORE PRESIDENTIAL" AFTER HE SETTLES IN TO HIS NEW ROLE, BUT INDEED HAS DOUBLED DOWN ON HIS CYNICAL AND TRANSACTIONAL APPROACH TO POLITICS

sistence that he had a "perfect conversation" with his Ukrainian counterpart, and that there was "nothing to see there," he comes across rather like an Italian mafia capo "asking" his foot soldier a "favor" in return for protection. "It would be a shame if something happened to all these pretty millions we give you" is Don Trump's clear message to his minion.

Trump's other motivation seems to have been to undermine the legacy of his predecessor, President Barack Obama, apparently just "for the hell of it" and to look like a leader following his own "great and unmatched wisdom." This includes abrogating the nuclear deal with Iran, which has been successful in the opinion of America's European allies, or canceling the NAFTA treaty with Canada and Mexico, subsequently to slightly tweak and repackage it. Not to mention Trump's tariff war on China, which (the war) is doing serious damage to American farmers, his constant disparagement of America's traditional NATO allies and his conspicuous cozying-up to the world's "who's who" list of authoritarian strongmen: Putins, Dutertes, Erdogans, and Kim Jong-uns.

It is hard to match the succinctness of Trump's former envoy in the anti-ISIS operation, Brett McGurk, who, when commenting on Trump's decision to abandon the Syrian Kurds, said: "The value of an American handshake is depreciating". Now that Ukraine has become embroiled in a major scandal that may well lead to Trump's impeachment, it is incumbent on Ukraine's President to heed this message and not to play into his American colleague's depreciated, perfidious hands. ■

The end of the era of moderation

Brexit is splitting British politics, and it is difficult to gauge the scale of this split

Michael Binyon, London

Few British prime ministers have suffered such public humiliation. Summoned back overnight from the United Nations General Assembly, Boris Johnson had to explain to a hostile parliament in London why he had flagrantly broken the law in suspending its sittings, why he had misled the Queen and why he tried to ride rough-shod over Britain's constitution.

Only a day earlier, Britain's Supreme Court had issued one of the most devastating judgments in British political history. Its 11 judges found, unanimously, that Johnson had deliberately tried to prevent Parliament from doing its work in holding the government to account. His decision last month to send members of parliament home at the height of the political crisis over Brexit was invalid. His stated reason for doing so was a lie. Queen Elizabeth had been deceived in issuing the formal order. And the suspension was therefore no more than a "blank sheet of paper" that was null and void. Parliament resumed its work the very next morning.

POLLS SHOW THAT NO PARTY COULD WIN AN OVERALL MAJORITY IN ANY COMING ELECTION — WHICH MAY COME IN NOVEMBER.

UNLESS JOHNSON IS ABLE TO CONCLUDE A BREXIT DEAL BEFORE THAT TIME, THE STALEMATE AND THE ANGER AND FRUSTRATIONS WILL CONTINUE. BRITAIN WILL NEITHER BE IN THE EU NOR OUT OF IT

It was an angry and chaotic session. There were shouts and accusations, denunciations and name-calling. Time and again Opposition members of Parliament traded insults, as Labour party members ridiculed Boris Johnson for his attempt to suspend Parliament and he denounced what he called their "cowardice" in refusing to agree to a new general election. The insults and the name-calling shocked many political observers and disgusted television viewers watching the heated debate. Commentators went as far as asking whether British democracy had lost its way.

At the heart of the row is the mounting political tension over Brexit. Boris Johnson has promised that he will take Britain out of the European Union on October 31st — whatever the consequences ("do or die", as he expressed it). He and his advisers are ready to quit the EU even if there is no agreement reached in time. Almost all British industry has warned that this would be disastrous for Britain's economy, paralysing all trade with Europe, interrupting vital transport and communications links and affecting almost every agreement with Britain's neighbours, including the import

of medicines and nuclear material as well as scientific research and student exchanges.

Britain's Parliament is therefore determined to stop any no-deal Brexit, and has already passed a law making it illegal for Britain to leave the EU without an agreement, and forcing Johnson to ask for a further extension of British membership if negotiations have not led to success by October 19th. That leaves almost no time to negotiate the outstanding difficult issues, especially what to do about the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish republic. And EU negotiators say Britain has put forward no new proposals that have any chance of being accepted by the rest of Europe. They say that the Johnson government is simply pretending to negotiate with the intention of "crashing out" of Europe without a deal at the end of the month.

The Supreme Court ruling, however, will make it difficult for Johnson now to ignore Parliament and the new law on Brexit. If he does, he faces arrest and criminal charges. Politically he is in a very weak position. He has been forced to apologise to the Queen for misleading her over the suspension of Parliament. He no longer has a majority in Parliament after expelling 21 rebel Conservatives from the party. He has lost all seven of the recent votes in Parliament on Brexit. And he cannot call an election to try to rebuild a Conservative majority unless the Opposition agrees to hold one. So far all the opposition parties — Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish nationalists — have said they will not agree to new elections until Johnson either has negotiated a new agreement with the EU or has asked for a further extension to Britain's membership.

Johnson's tactics are now to be as confrontational as possible. He is now ready to fight an election as the champion of the people's wish for Brexit and the opponent of Parliament's wish to delay Brexit. He has been extraordinarily aggressive — in his language, in his actions and in his treatment of those who disagree with him. This has pleased his supporters, but it has alarmed a growing number of ordinary Britons who are worried that the traditions of British democracy — moderation, balance, stability — seem now to be vanishing. All 118 of the bishops and archbishops of the Church of England — Britain's state church — last week signed an open letter calling for an end to the insults and aggressive behaviour in Parliament, which they called "unacceptable".

Johnson, however, is hoping that the unpopularity of Jeremy Corbyn, the left-wing Labour opposition leader, and the growing anger among many voters over the delay in leaving the EU will lead to a sweeping victory for his govern-



Another candidate for impeachment. The opposition intends to apply to Boris Johnson the procedure that the last Parliament of Great Britain resorted to in 1848

ment in any coming election. So he is trying to sharpen the confrontation with Parliament and woo public opinion with promises of huge new sums of money for Britain's health service, for schools, transport and local authority budgets.

But at the very moment that he is hoping to appeal to the party faithful at the annual conference of the Conservative party, he has suddenly been dragged into a new scandal. Newspapers have revealed that when he was mayor of London six years ago, he gave large sums of public money to a blonde American former model who claimed she was helping him to sponsor new business in London. It is said that she received large sums of unauthorised public money, and he changed the rules to take her with him to social events and on three overseas trips. At the weekend, newspapers also alleged that she was his mistress and that he was sleeping with her — although he was still married at the time.

Johnson has denied all the allegations. But they have damaged his image at a time when he is still fighting accusations that he is a philanderer, a liar and a man prepared to ignore Parliament and break the law for his own political ambitions.

Opposition parties are now proposing to impeach him, in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling. This would be an extraordinary political irony as it would come at the same time as Congress is proposing to impeach President Trump,

Johnson's close political ally. The impeachment proceedings have only rarely been used in Britain and not for many years and they would involve a public trial in the House of Commons. The last time a minister was impeached was in 1848, when Lord Palmerston, the foreign secretary, was impeached for entering into a secret treaty with Russia.

The impeachment proposal, on the grounds of "gross misconduct" in suspending Parliament, is unlikely to succeed. And Johnson still has considerable support in the country among those who voted for Brexit, who are increasingly angry with what they see as deliberate delaying tactics in Parliament. But the Conservative party is now split between moderates, who are alarmed at the lunge to the political right, and the hardline Brexiteers who are ready to kick out any disloyal members from the party and pursue an openly right-wing agenda.

Polls show that no party could win an overall majority in any coming election — which may come in November. Unless Johnson is able to conclude a Brexit deal before that time, the stalemate and the anger and frustrations will continue. Britain will neither be in the EU nor out of it. Britain's allies are looking with bewilderment at what is going on. They are asking: what on earth has happened to a country that was once well-known for its stability and political moderation? ■



Oleksandr Turchynov:

“On issues in defense of Ukrainian identity, we can’t back down”

Interviewed by
Dmytro Krapivenko

The Ukrainian Week talks with Oleksandr Turchynov, one-time speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, acting president, and secretary of National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, about shifts in the nature of the war and information security, and the rise of conservative trends in modern politics.

What do you think of the recent exchange of prisoners in terms of state interests? How likely are swaps to continue in the near future?

— The lives of its citizens are the greatest value for a state. The prisoner swap was a very important event. Preparations lasted for over a year and it would not have happened without massive support from the international community, which put serious pressure on Russia.

Russia wanted to cut deals with the lives of people and linked its criminal interests, including the return of Volodymyr Tsemakh, who was involved in the downing of MH17, to this swap. Rather than fulfilling the verdict of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Moscow also added the exchange of the 24 sailors, after taking them hostage like pirates.

Vladimir Putin’s behavior is difficult to predict. Still, we must try to understand what motivates him. He can advance his imperial interests by aggravating the situation in Ukraine or by pushing for “peace on our terms,” which would mean a halt to European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations for Ukraine and would

destabilize the country from within. Putin will not quit his efforts at an imperial comeback, no matter what. That means he won’t give up on his intentions to subordinate Ukraine, as our independence is a threat to his imperial project. Also, we should not exclude the possibility that a conflict provoked by Moscow might expand into a full-scale war. Any dialogue with Putin, including on prisoner exchanges, should be looked at from this perspective. Russia only understands force, and Ukraine’s only chance to defend its interests is to be strong, with a strong army and modern equipment.

How likely is the Normandy Four meeting to enforce peace on Russia’s terms?

— This danger is very real. It is quite unfortunate that our Western partners no longer see the Ukraine issue as their priority. For them, Russia’s war against Ukraine is something they want to remove from the agenda on any terms, including sacrificing Ukraine’s interests. Proposals to restore economic cooperation with Russia are growing louder. Yet, it is only shortsighted politicians who are trying to sideline Ukraine. They don’t understand the threat of this situation for their own countries. Order in Europe and the world cannot be restored as long as aggression and force define reality rather than laws, rights and human interests. It can’t be restored without understanding what Ukraine is going through.

Russia has ruined the international order established in Europe after World War II. Ukrainians have not just been defending their country since 2014 – they’ve been containing Russia’s aggressive advance into Europe. Ukraine has become an outpost, the eastern frontier of European civilization. We need to understand that the danger of a greater military conflict with an unpredictable totalitarian government in Russia is the reality now. Those who think about the future of Europe should care about Ukraine’s survival and victory, because this is a chance to restore a world order based on rights, freedom and the inviolability of borders. If Russia breaks things to its own advantage, we’ll be back to the medieval principle of might makes right. And that is the path towards a new global war.

Ukrainians have grown used to a kind of trench war in the Donbas and have developed many mechanisms that work in this situation. How prepared are we for a sharp change in the nature of the war?

— Russia wanted to establish control over Ukraine from the beginning of the conflict. Clearly, the whole country was its goal, not just Crimea or the Donbas. Moscow planned to complete the Crimean operation by March 1, 2014, and launch a continental assault. That’s why it needed the approval of the Federation Council to use its army abroad. Thanks to those servicemen who were not prepared to betray the country and helped slow the occupation of Crimea, Ukraine gained itself a month in which it was somehow able to restore some fighting capacity in its Armed Forces, move them to the eastern frontier and prepare for defense. At that point, Moscow’s plan was to bring its military into Ukraine without any resistance as the country plunged into chaos, torn into pieces by separatist riots, and to restore the “legitimate” Viktor Yanukovich in power, delivering him to Kyiv in a military convoy. What stopped Moscow? The Russians lost time and suddenly any further advance into Ukraine meant huge losses for them. Ukraine quickly restored its government institutions and quashed separatist riots, from Kharkiv to Odesa. It was showing its capacity to resist.

All this demonstrated that strengthening Ukraine’s defensive capabilities is a guarantee that Russia’s losses will incomparably exceed any gains in a full-scale war. Understanding this has been the only deterrent for Russia. Yes, Russia’s air force, with its experience from the war in Syria, remains a threat for Ukraine. Our air defense system has been ruined for years and is being restored very gradually, but we still have a long way to go. I have proposed to our NATO partners to set up a joint air defense system from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Unfortunately, that initiative did not find the necessary support. But western countries bordering on Russia really do need a unified defense frontier.

How clearly does Ukraine’s current government see this threat and the need to counter it?

— I’m not in contact with the current administration, so it’s hard for me to say much. We need to judge them by their actions and their strategic decisions, not their words. For example, I have not seen a single official decision by the National Security Council yet. There may be some secret documents, but nothing is publicly available, so there is nothing to analyze. It’s hard to draw conclusions on the basis of PR events alone.

How vulnerable is Ukraine to information warfare right now?

— Information is a critical component in a hybrid war. The Russians have been paying a great deal of attention to this. I would say they have even perfected some techniques, so that Russian TV comes first, and Russian tanks follow. What’s more, you don’t always need tanks: military intervention is not necessary if you bring a controlled government to power through propaganda. Information war allows Russia to break the people’s will

Born in Dnipro in 1964, **Oleksandr Turchynov** graduated from the Dnipropetrovsk Metallurgy Institute in 1986. He holds a PhD and is a professor of economics. An MP in six convocations of the Verkhovna Rada, he headed the Security Bureau of Ukraine in 2005 and was First Deputy Premier in the Tymoshenko Government from 2007 to 2010. He was elected Verkhovna Rada speaker on February 22, 2014, and was acting president until June 2014. Turchynov was secretary of the NSC from 2014 to 2019.

to resist, spreading despair and mistrust in the state. We saw this in Crimea, where locals poisoned by Russian propaganda believed that thugs would be instructed by the “junta” in Kyiv to come and kill them because they were Russian-speaking, so they supported Russia’s takeover.

It would be wrong to think that we are now safe from Russia’s information warfare, but we’ve come a long way since 2014. We’ve banned the publication of Russian press and the broadcasting of Russian television. But there’s been a worrying development lately: they are popping up among cable and internet operators lately. The Kremlin’s propaganda machine is working tirelessly and Ukraine remains a priority for it. There is even a clear pattern that whenever Russian TV ramps up its rhetoric against Ukraine, things on the frontline start to heat up, too.

At one point, we also banned access to some Russian websites and social media. It wasn’t an easy move, but we had two challenges in the early days following the victory of the Revolution of Dignity: to protect the country and to move ahead on European integration. Our EU partners were critical of our plans regarding restrictions on social media. We had to explain to them why we were doing this. Only NATO leadership supported us: they understood that this was about information security, not about freedom of speech. Similarly, there’s been a lot of criticism from the West over shutting down TV channels inside Ukraine – even when it’s absolutely clear that these media are working for Russia’s interests. Freedom of speech cannot be used as a cover-up for information attacks on Ukraine.

Cyber security is equally important and Ukraine has made serious progress. There have been many serious attacks against key infrastructure objects, public institutions and so on in Ukraine. We’ve learned our lessons. We set up the National Cyber security Coordination Center to bring the efforts of all entities involved in this under one umbrella. Also, we developed a unified protocol for localizing cyber incidents, we established information sharing with our Western partners, and we started building a protective barrier for public electronic resources. I should note that all the systems protected by this barrier have survived strong cyber attacks over the past two years. We covered presidential and parliamentary elections, but nobody heard about any serious cyber attacks during this time because they were effectively checked.

Ukraine needs modern technology that can track and block any hostile activity to defend itself in the information and cyber domains. Advanced countries have such systems. Ukraine needs to pass the necessary laws to institute them. We tried several times to submit a bill to strengthen cyber security to the Rada, but the populists started screaming that this was an assault on freedom of speech on the internet. So far, that initiative has been blocked.

But an information war can’t be fought with restrictions alone while Russia spends massive amounts of money on active propaganda – money that Ukraine simply doesn’t have. American security experts say that NATO countries can’t always counter ISIS propaganda effectively, even with their big defense budgets. What capacity does

Ukraine have to counterattack Russia? How effective do you think a Russian-language TV channel in Ukraine, as proposed by President Zelenskiy might be?

— Ukraine must be able to act asymmetrically against aggression. Cyber weapons are compared to weapons of mass destruction for a reason. We need to defend ourselves proactively, but I don't think that we should disclose our tools. When it comes to the information component, campaigns on social media could well be enough as guerilla efforts to undermine the enemy. But they aren't enough in the conflict with Russia. Here's a simple example: many people go on vacations abroad and are offered a package of TV channels to view in hotels there. Those packages typically include several Russian channels and not a single one from Ukraine. We need quality information products and resources to promote our own channels. Ukrainian diplomats need to work in the information domain, too. Counterpropaganda by diplomats is very important. Ukrainian ambassadors abroad don't always provide information about Russia's aggressive plans or take the trouble to quickly debunk its misleading messages. Ukraine needs a channel in English, not in Russian, in the first place, to communicate its message to the entire world.

COUNTERPROPAGANDA BY DIPLOMATS IS VERY IMPORTANT. UKRAINIAN AMBASSADORS ABROAD DON'T ALWAYS PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT RUSSIA'S AGGRESSIVE PLANS OR TAKE THE TROUBLE TO QUICKLY DEBUNK ITS MISLEADING MESSAGES. UKRAINE NEEDS A CHANNEL IN ENGLISH, NOT IN RUSSIAN, IN THE FIRST PLACE, TO COMMUNICATE ITS MESSAGE TO THE ENTIRE WORLD

Ukraine is often criticized for violating the rights of national minorities, including in its laws on language. How can we persuade our partners that, as a post-colonial state, we have every reason to promote strong policies to protect our identity?

— This is an extremely important issue. Let me give you my personal example. I was born and raised in Dnipro. I graduated from school and university there. In all of that time, I never met a single person speaking Ukrainian in daily life, and I never thought this would change. When I moved to Kyiv to work as advisor to the PM in the early 1990s, I had to write speeches with a dictionary until I learned the language. The colonial legacy was evident in the shameful fact that people did not know their own language! I believe that many steps have been taken to change this situation since independence, especially in the last five years. Quotas on radio and television and the language law are important accomplishments and we should not reverse them. We should not question what has become a norm for Ukrainian society. National identity is a very important element of national security. The war has united Ukrainians, regardless of what language they speak in everyday life. That's why all the measures to restore national identity within Ukraine have been implemented relatively calmly, despite Russia's hysterical propaganda.

Some in the Zelenskiy team say that language policy should be reconsidered and even suggest different tax rates for programming in Ukrainian and in Russian. They don't seem to understand that Moscow will spend whatever it takes to ensure its presence in Ukraine.

— Firstly, it's a very positive thing that Volodymyr Zelenskiy has been speaking Ukrainian at official appearances ever since he won the presidency. Secondly, he hasn't questioned the constitutional status of the language. But yes, some people on his team have been suggesting such initiatives. I think civil society

needs to take a clear position on this and defend the accomplishments of the Revolution of Dignity. When it comes to issues in defense of Ukrainian identity, we can't back down. Any attempt to walk our progress back will result in strengthened influence from Russia and a domestic political crisis in Ukraine.

Few predicted Brexit, Donald Trump's election in the US, or Volodymyr Zelenskiy becoming president of Ukraine. How would you interpret this speed of change in public opinion?

— We live in an information society where different mechanisms are working, the function of the state is changing and its influence waning catastrophically. When it comes to Ukraine, the role of parties has shrunk dramatically. Until this recent set of elections, parties succeeded on the basis of their networks, their grassroots activists and the penetration of local branches. What we see today is a clash of information resources, not parties. Information resources have become key. With Zelenskiy, I could see the prospect of his becoming president as soon as I saw how many Ukrainians reacted to his then-new series, *Servant of the People*. People were looking for new faces and quick solutions to complicated problems, even if they were not always effective. These two expectations met at one point, and that was effectively highlighted in many episodes of the series and in popular information resources. Of course, the mistakes of the previous administration didn't help: very poor communication, ineffective efforts against corruption, and poor resistance to Russian information aggression all contributed to this. It was Russian propaganda that hammered into the minds of many Ukrainians the idea that the Poroshenko government didn't want to end the war because it was profiteering.

A certain kind of conservatism is on the rise today. The US, Poland and Denmark are just three examples. In Ukraine, however, the liberal path is being promoted as the only viable one, often by leftist-liberal functionaries at NGOs. Whatever does not fit this model is dismissed as outdated, soviet or unpatriotic. How do you explain this phenomenon?

— I wrote about this in an article entitled "Neo-Marxism or a Trip into the Abyss." I tried to explain that Christian and conservative trends are not a Russian monopoly or a product of the soviet system. They are the key to successful state-building and have nothing in common with Russia's imperial fascism. All successful modern western states, including the US, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, South Korea, and more, were built on evangelical foundations. Many downplay the importance of this foundation. If it is destroyed, the modern world will be destroyed, too. When morals, faith and responsibility are destroyed, that's when the Apocalypse of the Scriptures will arrive.

How can Ukraine join the new conservative trend when this flank of European politics sees Russia a kind of defender of spiritual values?

— Where's Russia and where are Christian morals? They are completely incompatible. Russia's attempts to disguise its amoral aggressiveness as a neo-conservative doctrine are doomed to fail. Still, Moscow is clearly flirting with rightwing trends in Europe today, while masking its violent intent. That's a real challenge for us. We need to show that conservative Christian ideology is actually the norm among Ukrainians. That Ukraine is a Christian country that can become the David vs Goliath model of success and victory. The crisis of the left-liberal world has led to harmful centrifugal trends in the EU, the growth of populism and the weakening of collective security. I'm certain that a great, strong and independent Ukraine can only be built on the unbreakable foundation of eternal Christian values. ■



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The IMF test

The troubles of the new government with the IMF signal that oligarchic actors prevail over national interests in its actions

Oleksandr Kramar



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The dark side of Holoborodko. The IMF mission left Ukraine with no intentions of recommending a new lending program after two weeks in Ukraine, counter to the expectations of Ukraine's Government

Like other populists, Volodymyr Zelenskiy is increasingly different as real President from the image elected by 73% of the voters. Cooperation with the IMF offers one of the best illustrations. While his character in the Servant of the People kicked the IMF out to protect the state and the citizens, the real Zelenskiy is trying hard to develop cooperation with it. In his recent meeting with the IMF, Zelenskiy assured it of “full support for structural reforms in the economy, independence of the National Bank of Ukraine and full investigation of fraud in the banking sector.” Meanwhile, the government has been busy drafting laws and preparing public opinion for the fulfillment of long-standing requirements from the IMF: abolition of the ban on the sale of land, market gas prices, restriction of public spending and a number of other steps, such as the law on concession or privatization of attractive government-owned objects.

In late September, however, news emerged that the IMF mission left Ukraine after two weeks with no intentions to recommend a new credit program for Ukraine to the administration, counter to what the Ukrainian Government expected. Allegedly, the trigger was not the usual issues of budget, land or gas, but the scandal caused by Premier Honcharuk's interview

for the Financial Times referring to the readiness for a compromise with oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. While the IMF mission was in Kyiv, Kolomoisky said at the YES 2019 forum that he did see a window of opportunity for an agreement with the new government on the reimbursement of \$ 2bn to him, even if this compensation comes via return of the nationalized PrivatBank.

The new government is thus learning the difficulty of dealing with specific financial interests of the key sponsors, not just with public policy towards them. It is far more difficult to ignore their interests than it is to take other steps, even if unpopular with the majority of the population.

While Premier Honcharuk tried to persuade the audience that his words were misinterpreted and the government was not negotiating anything with Kolomoisky, few seemed reassured. If the new government decides to satisfy the claims of its key sponsor in the election, a good portion or half of the IMF's money will be spent on reimbursement to Kolomoisky. With this approach, the rest can be used to plug the hole created by the privileges that Kolomoisky's business has been enjoying since the first months of Volodymyr Zelenskiy's presidency – including in the energy sector, and may continue to enjoy as attractive objects go under control of the entities associated

with him during the great privatization at discounted prices announced by the government.

The influence of Kolomoisky on decision making by the team in power is obvious both in Ukraine and abroad. The resignation of Oleksandr Danyliuk, Secretary of the National Defense and Security Council, confirms the scale of that influence. He said in Savik Shuster's Freedom of Speech talk show on September 20 that his task was to do everything to prevent Ihor Kolomoisky from getting a lot of power in Ukraine only to resign a week later. Therefore, the likelihood of decisions favoring Kolomoisky in issues that are high on the IMF's agenda is high. Moreover, Kolomoisky himself speaks openly about his attitude towards the IMF, the acceptability or desirability of a default for Ukraine, and the resulting refusal to service its debt further.

In order to continue cooperation with Ukraine, the IMF insists on guaranteed red lines. One to not be crossed is reimbursement for PrivatBank to Kolomoisky. Kyiv, however, is yet to say yes or no to this. Meanwhile, the Commercial Court of Kyiv has postponed the session on the lawsuit whereby PrivatBank ex-shareholders Ihor Kolomoisky and Triantal Investment Ltd. want the purchase of PrivatBank by the state declared invalid from October 1 to October 8. And this may not be the last postponement.

The IMF's demands do not necessarily benefit long term development of the country it works with, while its lending mostly pushes the country further into a debt spiral rather than fixing the reasons of its economic problems – albeit most of the IMF's demands for Ukraine are fair and reasonable. But it is something different that matters now: it is not unacceptable demands for Ukraine's economic interests, the prospects of its development or life quality of its citizens that may freeze relations with the IMF. Ukraine's new government hardly cares about that despite the image the new President portrayed in his film. Freezing relations with the IMF would send the only signal – that it is Kolomoisky's interests that have prevailed, not those of Ukraine or the lobbyists of cooperation with the IMF. Furthermore, the losses caused by freezing cooperation with the IMF would not mean that the government would use this to fix its economic policy in Ukraine's interests when freed from its obligations to the IMF. Quite on the contrary, Ukrainians would pay for the negative impact of such a move without even potentially benefiting from freezing cooperation with the IMF. The price of this would grow further as Ukraine would have to pay dividends to Kolomoisky for his sponsorship of "Zelenskiy presidency" and "Servant of the People" projects, starting with an equivalent of \$ 2bn via stocks of PrivatBank.

Meanwhile, Ukraine is entering the three-year period of peak debt repayment. According to the 2020 draft budget submitted to Parliament, the public debt servicing and repayment is projected at UAH 438.1bn, including UAH 185.6bn for external debt and UAH 252.2bn for the national debt. Ukraine plans to borrow another UAH 361.1bn, including UAH 119.1bn externally and UAH 242.1bn domestically. This shows that the Government is in fact planning to refinance or reborrow the debt on the domestic market, while paying out UAH 66.5bn (or \$ 2.3bn according to the exchange rate projected by the Government) over what it borrows as external debt. This will materialize provided that the Government manages to reborrow the rest of the UAH 119bn external debt (or \$ 4.25bn under the projected exchange rate).

In this, much depends on the IMF's funds. Firstly, they are three-fourfold cheaper compared to the cost of borrowings on the international financial market. Secondly, cooperation with the IMF will define the readiness of private lenders to

buy Ukrainian bonds and the price they are willing to pay for them. Finally, the payment of \$ 2.3bn of external debt which the Government does not plan to reborrow will force it to buy foreign currency. It will have to do so on the interbank market in Ukraine or to use the NBU's reserves. Cooperation with the IMF is thus important in supporting a stable exchange rate on Ukraine's market.

The recent rise of the hryvnia and the high appetite for hryvnia-denominated Ukrainian government bonds are misleading and will vanish soon. The Ministry of Finance started issuing five-year hryvnia bonds in April 2019. It sold over UAH 60bn-worth of these bonds by May while the hryvnia rose from UAH 26.8 to UAH 24.1 per US dollar. In late September, foreign investors poured UAH 100bn into Ukrainian bonds. On October 1, the Ministry of Finance managed to sell a mere UAH 77mn-worth of the bonds, compared to the sale worth UAH 13.2bn in one day just a week before. This sharp decline of sale matched steep devaluation of the hryvnia to UAH 24.93 per US dollar on October 2 from around UAH 24 per US dollar as of September 30. By October 3, the NBU's official rate was UAH 24.98 per US dollar. It looks like the outflow of speculative capital that boosted hryvnia exchange rate in the past months is starting.

According to the 2020 draft budget submitted to Parliament, the public debt servicing and repayment is projected at **UAH 438.1bn**, including **UAH 185.6bn** for external debt and **UAH 252.2bn** for the national debt

There are no fundamental reasons for the revaluation of the hryvnia or for Ukraine's hryvnia-denominated bonds to become more attractive. Its trade deficit for goods rose to \$ 5.01bn over January-August 2019. Export barely grows lately while trade balance improves only marginally, mostly thanks to the temporarily cheaper fuels. Imports in June amounted to \$ 4.65bn compared to \$ 3.57bn of exports; and \$ 5.48bn compared to \$ 4.28bn in July. Despite active exports of this year's harvest, Ukraine still imported more than it exported (\$ 4.28bn). As a result, trade deficit was \$ 1.08bn in June 2019 compared to \$ 0.67bn in June 2018, and \$ 1.3bn in July 2019 compared to \$ 1.42 in July 2018. Even the August trade balance at – \$ 0.76bn was just marginally better this year compared to the same month in 2018 at \$ -0.84bn.

It is obvious that the positive factors are mostly temporary while further downturn on commodity markets will threaten Ukraine's exports revenues from raw materials and semi-finished goods more than it benefits it by shrinking spending on imports. The 2020 draft budget projects trade deficit at \$ 12.5bn by the end of 2019 and \$ 14bn in 2020. Net growth of FDI is projected at just \$ 4-4.5bn in 2020 which is not very optimistic compared to the actual growth of FDI in the past years.

The overall state of the economy and of the key export-oriented sectors is worsening too. The sharp rise of agricultural output in July was followed by a visible decline by 11.8% in August. Industrial output has been declining in the past months, mostly coming from the processing industries. While the output was 5% higher in March 2019 compared to March 2018, and 7.4% in April, the following months saw either stagnation (a growth of nearly zero – growth was a mere 0.7% and 0.3% in May and July 2019 compared to the same months of 2018) or loss of output at a much faster pace (by 6.1% in June and 4.1% in August). ■

Voting as a mirror image of voters

Who voted for whom, or to what extent voter preferences coincide with the results of their choices

Roman Malko

Like many of their counterparts in other democracies, Ukrainians tend to vote with their hearts, their feelings, their moods, their eyes, and their ears – in short, anything but their heads. Even if a voter has read the platforms of all the candidates before heading for the polls, it's very unlikely that when the person decides where to put the check mark on their ballot, it's unlikely to be based on this information but on political expediency, personal preference, habit, or conformity with whatever public opinion dominates at that particular moment.

Ukrainians in general have a hard time giving up their own habits, even when they are harmful. Maybe because they vote the way they do, they keep falling into new traps. They don't seem to learn from the mistakes of the past, logical arguments based on facts have no effect, and preferences for one politician or another are formed quite irrationally. Those who once voted for communists were generally impoverished, felt slighted by fate, and spent decades voting for politicians who only pretended to espouse the ideology, but were in fact very well-to-do, classical bourgeois types – the very embodiment of everything they were supposed to be fighting against. Obviously, between the fans of the CPU there were also old party functionaries or their descendants, but the majority of this electorate was ordinary folks for whom habit was the main driver, together with the principle of supporting “our guy.” All this brotherhood could not but see just how distant their leaders really were from the core ideals, but it meant nothing to them.

Pro-Moscow voters were very similar. For this group support-

nist Party and Party of the Regions, who look at the world exclusively through the prism of Russia. Nor are they interested in any changes whatsoever: 79% are people over 50, based on the 2019 national exit poll, and only 3% are young. Most live in the east and south of Ukraine, with a particularly dangerous concentration remaining in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.

Incidentally, those who prefer to vote for Batkivshchyna also tend to be older. 73% of Yulia Tymoshenko's supporters and supporters of her party are Ukrainians over the age of 50. They tend to live in provincial towns in the central oblasts, have low incomes, don't really understand political platforms, and don't have specific expectations of their leader. This correlates strangely with the quality of the current Batkivshchyna faction in the Rada, which is filled with moneybags and people who belong to various oligarchs, but it can easily be explained. For them, the most important element is the memory of their choice, and so they vote for her again and again. They gratefully remember “Yulia's UAH 1,000,” which she arranged as compensation for the billions Ukrainians lost when the Soviet Union collapsed and Russia took over the state savings bank with all their money. They also remember how she was jailed. When all is said and done, Tymoshenko simply appeals to them, they believe in her, and they get a charge from her emotional speechmaking, which reach their hearts. Whatever platforms Tymoshenko proposes, even if they are inconsistent, her fans will vote for her as long as they are alive, no matter who is in Batkivshchyna: the young and talented or the old and corrupted. They don't even care if oligarchs hold hands with Yulia or scandals swirl around her. She's their eternal symbol.

The relationship between voters and ex-President Petro Poroshenko's team today is very different. These tend to be more pragmatic individuals who are aware of the value of their leader as the most trustworthy of all the Ukrainian presidents, not only as for having stopped enemy aggression and effectively withstood Vladimir Putin, but also for having done more for Ukraine than any other in restoring a functional army and attaining the *tomos* of independence of the Ukrainian church. There is little fanaticism among these voters: having a sober understanding of all the problems and failures of Poroshenko that are nevertheless compensated for by the generally right course he took, guaranteeing the country a certain level of stability combined with a slow but steady movement forward. Put more simply, Poroshenko & Co. basically got the votes of thoughtful patriots who valued the notion of statehood and knew how important it was not to let it start to wobble. Their main requirements of this party were not to allow any comebacks, to continue what had been started as much as possible, and to gather together all the reasonably pro-Ukrainian politicians.

Interestingly, among European Solidarity the different age groups constitute almost the same share. Most of them have a post-secondary education and live in major cities predominantly in central and western Ukraine. The party's faction is also fairly balanced along different indicators. The new legendary faces have blended rather well with the old, but properly cleaned up team of the ex-president's advisors. There are almost no questionable individuals left. Relations between the newly-arrived politicians from *Holos* and their electorate are very different. The largest proportion of Ukrainians who voted for this party, 41%, are under 40. Compared

THE GENERATION OF OFFICE PLANKTON AND TELEVISION THAT IS ALWAYS DISSATISFIED WITH EVERYTHING, WHOSE LIFE MEANING BOILS DOWN TO CARRYING OUT BORING TASKS AND DRINKING BEER EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT, AND WHOSE WORLDVIEW REVOLVES AROUND PRIMITIVE COMIC SKITS APPEARS TO HAVE ELECTED ITS MIRROR IMAGE

ing Party of the Regions, which manipulated them with an entire symphony of promises, from “maintaining stability” to “protecting veterans, that really boiled down to one. In their eyes, these were, first and foremost, the bearers of “Russki Mir,” the Russian world, a guarantee that relations with the capital of their world – Moscow – would remain inviolate, the Moscow to which their muddled views gravitated. It didn't seem to bother them that these “regionals” failed to deliver on any social commitments, while “stability” came down to cultivating post-soviet syndrome.

Meanwhile, the so-called elite was mainly busy robbing the country blind and cultivating its corrupt networks, their kids were getting degrees in the West in bourgeois colleges, and their ill-gotten money was moved offshore where they bought themselves fancy estates. But all these “side effects” were taken as the least evil compared to the loss of inviolable ties to the empire. And even open war between the “brotherly” nations had no effect in adjusting attitudes. Ukraine's fifth column may have thinned out somewhat as accidental co-travelers fell away, it still sets its clocks according to Moscow's chimes.

The current electorate voting for Opposition Platform – Za Zhyttia (OPZZ) is those same one-time supporters of the Commu-



The entertainment industry. Television remains the main meeting place for voters and their elected representatives

to the three classic political projects discussed here and even compared to the unitary nature of SN, this is the youngest voter group, the one that can unhesitatingly be called the independence generation. They want positive change, progress and clear rules for the country to develop further. Unlike the voters who supported the new president's brand, their demands are much more clearly formulated and are definitely not based on experience gained from watching a television serial. Many of them have a higher education, are active in their communities and ambitious.

It may be that some of them engage in youthful maximalism and lack sufficient experience, but in contrast to Ze fans, they are clued in: they know where they are going and how. Of course, part of Holos's electorate also includes voters who were disappointed in the old politicians but voted for Poroshenko in the presidential race because they refused to support Zelenskiy. Most of them were initially drawn to *Holos* because of the new faces that, unlike *Shuha Narodu*, have pretty solid backgrounds – the kind of individual that decided to take on Big Politics in order to try to establish new standards there. Today, this is difficult and things seem, on the contrary. But this is not the last election and *Holos* could become the foundation for a strong party along new lines. Ukrainian society has significant demand for this, so Sviatoslav Vakarchuk's advisors have their work cut out for them, in order not just to hang on to the base of support that gave *Holos* its jump-start, but to expand it.

Obviously, the young party won't be able to fulfill all its promises and its voters understand that. The important thing is to play well, maintain their good reputation, and take complete advantage of the opportunity to grow and to build some muscle. That's going to be the key. The party was able to get into the Rada thanks to support from western Ukraine and Kyiv. Because of the suddenness of the snap election, *Holos* lacked the time to work with voters in the rest of the country. Now, things are a lot more straightforward. Having made it into the Rada, even if in the peanut gallery, it has gained some decent opportunities that simply have to be taken advantage of effectively.

Interestingly, *Shuha Narodu* had a similarly high share of those under 40, 36%, voting for it. However, it's a deceptive indicator as things are more complicated with SN. The correlation between the electorate and its choice is almost linear and that presents problems. The generation of office plankton and television that is always dissatisfied with everything, whose life meaning boils down to carrying out boring tasks and drinking beer every Friday night, and whose worldview revolves around primitive comic skits appears to have elected its mirror image: kitchen hands who think they can run a country and adventurers of all stripes who are prepared to counterfeit anything at all. And yes, quite a number of decent, smart people also fell into the trap, but it's unlikely they will be able to influence anything. This entire honest company has no future and will fall apart quite quickly – but not before it manages to create a real mess.

This is yet another thing for Ukraine to live through, at least so that Ukrainians get sick of irresponsibility and learn to think a little. For a few decades now, the heads of Ukrainians have been filled with terrible chaos. Having abandoned bolshevik ideology, Ukrainians have not found something to fill the ensuing vacuum. The soviet cancer is tightly interwoven with new consumer trends have shaped a generation of “what, me worry?” indifference concerned only with personal survival. Neither attempts to return to traditional values nor specific ideologies nor religious experiments have led to significant results. The country has not developed parties with strong ideologies that might shape a higher quality political culture and, more importantly, offer a national idea that could consolidate Ukrainian society. Should we then look at what's going on today as simply a change in the political elite? Possibly. Some are already saying so. But this entire show looks a lot more like a highly professional manipulation. It's more likely that we are only seeing the prelude and more exciting things are ahead. The windows of opportunity are only opening up now and, sooner or later – provided that the country remains on its feet that long – real political renewal will be irreversible. Hopefully, Ukraine's politicians and its people will also be ready for this. ■

Portrait of the Servant as a young pol

The current powers-that-be obviously reflect their voters, but wherein does the real similarity lie?

Maksym Vikhrov

Two months ago, the term ‘monomajority’ entered the lexicon of Ukraine’s pundits, journalists, and most Ukrainians who are more-or-less paying attention. However, the debate over the nature of this monomajority rages on. After *Sluha Narodu* demonstratively worked in fire-engine mode, the question arose as to just how far and where such a legislature might take the country.

Yet, in the third week of September, unknowns were added to this equation. The Verkhovna Rada unexpectedly failed on two votes – both times thanks to members of the presidential faction. Indeed, it looks like more surprises are in store for Ukraine. However, it’s not enough to track what’s going on in the Rada to understand the current political process. It’s just as important to have some understanding of just who these “servants of the people” are and what forces of Ukrainian society they represent.

AMONG THESE “SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE,” CERTAIN COMMON TRAITS CAN BE SEEN SUCH AS THE NEWNESS OF THEIR FACES, THEIR AGE, AND THEIR GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS, BUT THESE ARE ALL FAIRLY VAGUE FEATURES THAT CREATE A COMPLETELY ARBITRARY PORTRAIT

How and how much the 9th Convocation of the Verkhovna Rada differs from its predecessor has long been written up. The social profile of *Sluha Narodu* can be outlined briefly: the president’s faction firstly distinguishes itself in that all of its members are new faces, that is, they’ve been elected to the Rada for the first time. What’s more, according to the *Slovo i Dilo* portal, nearly 90% have no previous party affiliation of any kind, while 63% have no previous experience in civic activities. Next, they are relatively young, with the average age slightly below 38, making this convocation the youngest in the history of independent Ukraine. Moreover, 52.6% come from the business environment and upper management. But there is also a significant portion that represents small business and physical entity-entrepreneurs (FOPs). In terms of where they come from, 54% come from Kyiv and central oblasts of Ukraine according to official data, the south takes another 20%, and while western Ukraine takes 17%. Only 9% come from the east. Interestingly, the collective portrait of the monomajority coincides pretty accurately with the country’s main “servant,” President Volodymyr Zelenskiy: at 41 he is Ukraine’s youngest president, he has a university degree, he comes from the southeast, and was elected straight out of business.

Meanwhile, a closer look at voters shows that those who elected the current government have similar features. According to the National Exit Poll, the *Sluha Narodu* party won across all age groups but showed greater support among the young: nearly 60% of those age 18-29 voted for SN, reflecting closely the 57% of that age group that voted for Zelenskiy himself in the presidential election. In other age groups, support for Zelenskiy and his party was noticeably lower. In some sense, young voters are also “new faces,” as this segment was considered until now the most passive and traditionally showed the lowest turnout among voters.

Support for SN was considerably stronger at 53% among voters with an incomplete post-secondary education, that is, among students. This was true for Zelenskiy himself as well: he had more than 42% of the student vote in the first round of the presidential election. Unfortunately, there is no information about the professional backgrounds of voters. Still, the SN students and entrepreneurs are united by the fact that those with a higher education at least formally belong to the middle class, where the qualified professionals also are today.

Regionally, the most support for SN was in the center and southern Ukraine. Where in Lviv and Donetsk Oblasts, Zelenskiy’s party got 22% and 27%, in Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts it got 46% and 57%, according to the CEC. The picture with Zelenskiy himself was very similar: in the first round of the presidential election, he got 42% in the south, and very similar results in the center at 29% and the east with 31%, with the least in western Ukraine, 22%, according to the 2019 National Exit Poll.

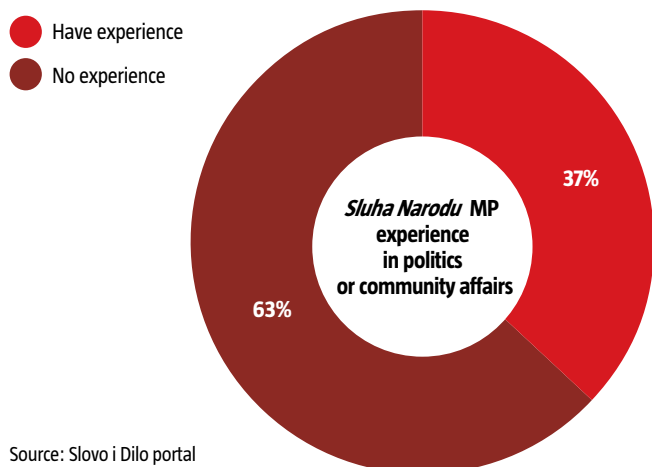
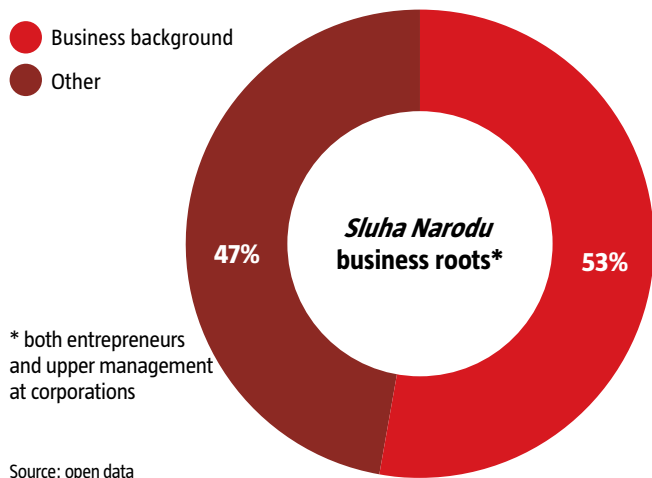
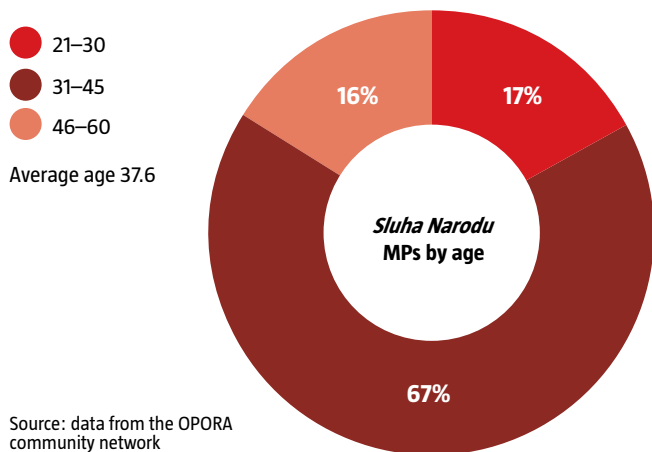
The 2019 electoral map substantially differs from the traditional division of the political field into central-western (post-orange) and southern-eastern (post-regional). Neither *Sluha Narodu* nor Zelenskiy can be easily categorized into the pro-European or pro-Russian camp. Based on the portrait so far, it seems, logically, that they represent the interests of the relatively young middle class and those who would like to join it. The regional aspect can be explained as the Zelenskiy electorate being less ideologically inclined and therefore less loyal to both the pro-European and pro-Russian parties. It also looks like the typical Zelenskiy and SN voter is a new category of Ukrainians who have outgrown the old divisions between relative West and East and refuse to think politically in terms of coordinates, linguistic, historical, geopolitical issues, and so on. Still, this analytical conclusion is very original—and very wrong. The link

between the “servants of the people” and their voters exists, but it’s on a completely different plane.

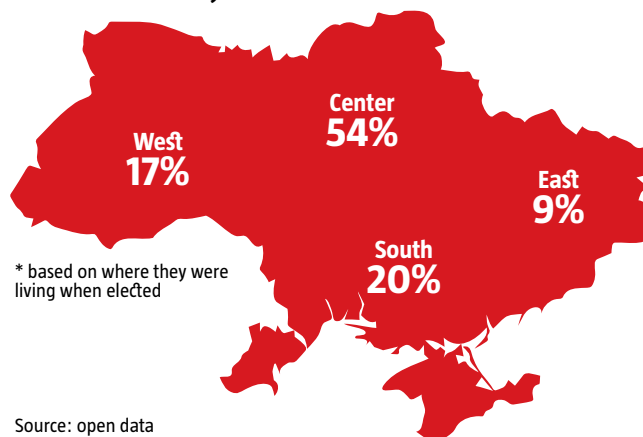
First of all, it’s important to look carefully at the conditions under which this new government came to be. The electoral success formula of the main “servant” of the country has long been figured out. Zelenskiy received the mace of power only because he took advantage of the right moment – or was taken advantage of at the right moment – becoming a symbol of the protest mood

and riding on a wave of mass emotion. This allowed him to take over the presidency on a fast-track basis, despite having no previous political history at all.

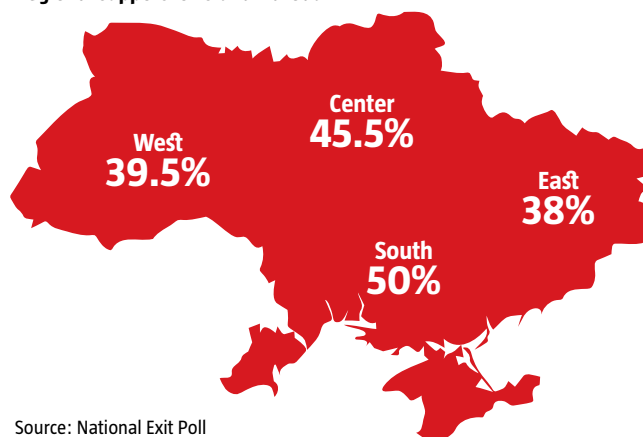
His party was no different. It’s no secret that *Sluha Narodu* was slapped together at high speed within a few months before the VR election. Based on projections by pollsters, the human resource gap was enormous and had to be filled by whatever was close at hand. As a result, the Verkhovna Rada suddenly had a faction that was



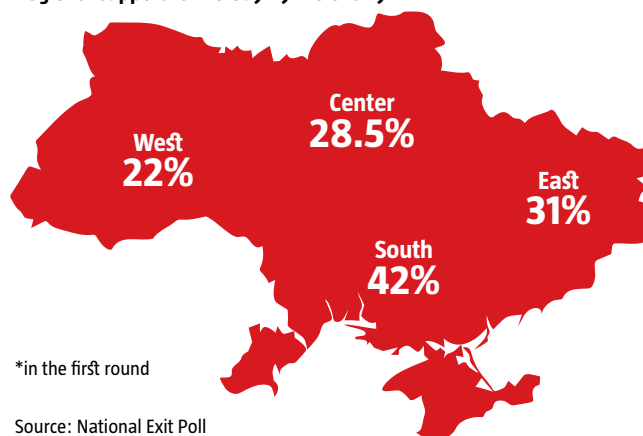
Sluha Narodu MPs by location*



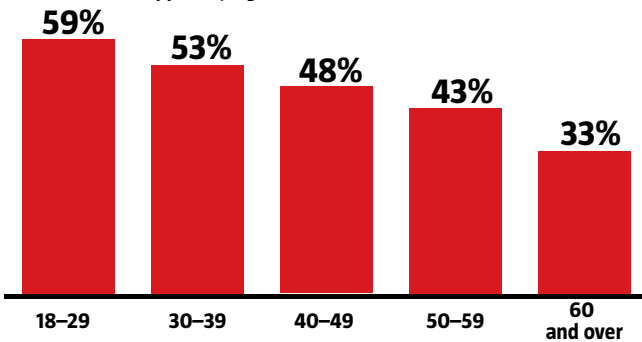
Regional support for Sluha Narodu



Regional support for Volodymyr Zelenskiy*

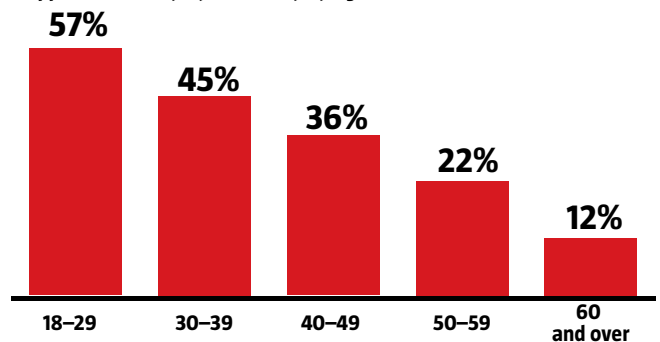


Sluha Narodu support by age



Source: National Exit Poll

Support for Volodymyr Zelenskiy by age*



*in the first round

Source: National Exit Poll

largely formed by accidental MPs. “There are fruit sellers, wedding photographers, all kinds of different people... some of them insane or psychologically ill,” says Andriy Bohdan, Chief-of-Staff at the Office of the President in describing the presidential faction. “It’s a real cross-section of society.” It’s hard not to agree with him. Among these “servants of the people,” certain common traits can be seen such as the newness of their faces, their age, and their geographic origins, but these are all fairly vague features that create a completely arbitrary portrait.

What unites them far more is the very brand, “servant of the people,” under which they entered the Verkhovna Rada, even though this may seem a fairly nominal trait. The only basic characteristic that is common to all the MPs of the monomajority is that they entered Big Politics as a result of strictly situational factors. Their actual role in this process was marginal, as their victory was completely and fully ensured by the personal brand of Zelenskiy-as-Holoborodko.

MORE LIKELY, ZELENSKIY’S PARTY WILL FIND ITS NICHE IN THE CAMP OF RELATIVELY PRO-EUROPEAN OR PRO-RUSSIAN FORCES. THE CONTRADICTIONS THAT LIE AT THE FOUNDATION OF THESE DIVISIONS WILL BE POSSIBLE TO FORGET AT SOME POINT. BUT, SO FAR, NO ONE HAS MANAGED TO TAKE THEM OUT OF THE UKRAINIAN EQUATION

This is equally true of those who voted for the country’s “servant-in-chief.” The mythologized 73% who voted for him in the second round, or even the 30% who voted for him in the first one, do not constitute some kind of socio-political unit. Although some kind of social portrait of the Zelenskiy or *Sluha Narodu* voter can certainly be put together, it’s impossible to say for certain that this is the face of the Ukrainian middle class, Ukrainian youth, central-southern voters, or any other stable collective entity. For one thing, the *Sluha Narodu* voter only emerged in this year’s presidential and VR elections, whereas the political profile of central-western and southern-eastern regions was built up over decades, so it’s early to say that this trend has been broken for good. In May 2014, Poroshenko’s victory in all parts of the country was also hailed as unifying East and West. But opinion polls have shown that ideological markers regarding history, language, the war, geopolitics and a number of other issues shift far more slowly: the old divides have still not disappeared. Poroshenko could credit the situation at the time,

especially the collapse of the pro-Russian camp, for his nationwide victory.

The Zelenskiy-*Sluha Narodu* voter similarly emerged as a result of the specific circumstances at this time. It’s unsurprising that the election campaign of the current administration was built around effective show-business effects, and not on the specifics of a platform: the latter could have easily splintered their very eclectic electorate. Zelenskiy was able to take advantage of the protest vote. The main motive driving those who voted for *Sluha Narodu* was the desire to ensure support in the Rada for President Zelenskiy. Similarly, what motivated people to choose a specific candidate in FPTP ridings was whether the individual was a member of SN or not. Moreover, party affiliation proved far more important than the personal qualities of the candidate according to the 2019 KIIS poll.

And so it seems that the only feature that can identify the electorate of the current powers-that-be is dissatisfaction with the previous administration. In this sense, Zelenskiy, his team, and his legislative guard really do reflect their electoral constituency: all of them arose due to external circumstances and are unlikely to form a long-term unity. In order to do so, they will have to undergo an internal maturation process, forming common values, a basic platform, a political identity, and so on. Indeed, few Ukrainian parties have managed at different times to go along this path, or at least a substantial part of it.

It’s hard to say whether the servants of the people will move in this direction. It’s quite possible that the party will remain a classic example of a political overnight sensation that proves short-lived despite its enormous success. Otherwise, both the SN factions and its voters can expect times to get tough. The feelings of protest that brought them together and pushed them into the pages of history will sooner or later die out. When that happens, the old existential questions that SN leadership so confidently promised to “take out of the equation” will fill the agenda all on their own. Will the resolution of these issues lead to a split in the Rada’s monomajority? Not necessarily. It’s also possible that the crystallization of specific political content could actually strengthen it. Even so, *Sluha Narodu* is unlikely to hold onto its current electorate. More likely, Zelenskiy’s party will find its niche in the camp of relatively pro-European or pro-Russian forces. The contradictions that lie at the foundation of these divisions will be possible to forget at some point. But, so far, no one has managed to take them out of the Ukrainian equation. ■



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Between the officious and the odious

A look at the current online strategies of the two main rivals in the 2019 presidential campaign

Stanislav Kozliuk

This past year's presidential and Verkhovna Rada elections were distinguished by a relatively new trend in Ukraine. Social networks proved to be a vast field on which it was possible to solidify an electorate and get it to help attract new voters. In party and candidate headquarters, budgets included separate spending on advertising on the internet, so, in addition to using the standard promotional kiosks, billboards and free newspapers, politicians were promoting themselves online for the first time. What's more, this was not just contextual ads on news sites or video portals, as in the past, but through their own pages in social networks like Facebook and Instagram.

NETWORKING ONLINE

When social nets are seen as tools for political agitation, their advantages are clear: cheaper than traditional media, direct contact with your target audience, and effective at rallying support. This is even more so if the person leading the political party is a well-known media figure. *Sluha Narodu* was publicly established at the very beginning of the VR election, but it was highly popular as a concept among Ukrainian TV viewers. After all, its face was the new president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, a well-known comedian who had built up his own media empire. His most successful project, *Vechirniy Kvartal*, meaning Evening Quarter, was launched 14 years ago on the Inter channel and moved to 1+1 in 2012. Along the way, he launched production of a series of comedy and entertainment projects, some of which were clearly political. But probably the most popular one was the TV serial called "*Sluha Narodu*" or "Servant of the People." In addition, his company handled advertising campaigns, film dubbing and more. In short, in less than 15 years, Zelenskiy managed to become one of the highest-profile individuals in Ukraine. This public capital was used during his presidential election campaign and, later, during the *Sluha Narodu* election campaign for MPs to the VR. And, of course, a lot of the campaigning went on in social nets.

According to data from a joint study by Internews Ukraine CSO and the online platform UkraineWorld called "Social Networks on #elections: What are people voting for in Facebook, Instagram and vKontakte," nearly all the Instagram posts about politics were, one way or another, about *Sluha Narodu*. "82% of all unique Instagram posts were about the *Sluha Narodu* party, while second-place European Solidarity was mentioned in only 17% of posts about the election," explained UkraineWorld Editor-in-Chief Volodymyr Yermolenko during a presentation of the study results.

"The interesting trend was that the hashtags of Kvartal-95 constituted a significant share of the hashtag empire of Zelenskiy fans. And this was probably one of the big successes of the Ze-campaign: winning over viewers of Kvartal 95 to Zelenskiy's political project and the mass migration of an entertainment audience into an electorate."

The study was undertaken between May 1 and June 17, and examined more than 5.6 million posts by users in Ukraine. The results for Facebook were also interesting: according to study data, the most popular social network in Ukraine has polarized Ukrainian society. Moreover, users have scattered into micro-groups, thus creating informational bubbles that prevent them from seeing the whole picture of events. The researchers noted that people tended to join political online communities that matched their preferences. In short, users of social nets voluntarily cut themselves off from alternate views, a phenomenon that has been recognized for several years now.



“This is precisely where the problem of informational security in Facebook lies,” says Yevhen Musienko, director of the Singularex analytical service that also participated in the study. “We can’t know the real correlation between opinions, because every thread delivers ‘yours’ to every user.”

BOT ARMIES VS INFORMATION FORCES

Meanwhile, according to VoxUkraine, the pages of high-profile Ukrainian politicians are actively being used by armies of bots. Nor were President Poroshenko and Zelenskiy any exception. The study analyzed the most commented-on posts in Facebook between May 1 and July 8, 2019. Using a special algorithm developed for this study it was possible to identify posts that were most likely left by fake users. It turns out that most bots, nearly 28,000 fake accounts, were writing on Zelenskiy’s page, while Poroshenko’s page was attacked by nearly 20,000 bots. The researchers also reported that the share of negative comments on both presidents’ pages was substantial: 61% of all comments against the former president and 48% against the new one. VoxUkraine also noted that they did not identify who the bots belonged to, as this was a much more difficult issue than to simply identify bot accounts.

Still, *Sluha Narodu* has officially stated that they don’t use “bot farms.” In an April interview with Hromadske TV, Mykhailo Fedorov, who is responsible for digital communications at Zelenskiy headquarters, said: “We have never used bots or software that generates something. With 100% recognition and the kind of support we have among the general public, we don’t need anything like that. For every comment by some bot from outside, we have 15 comments from real people. We developed our own system.”

Still, prior to this interview Bihus.info researchers published a communication between Fedorov and Serhiy Shefir, the artistic director of Studio Kvartal 95, in which Fedorov requested UAH 240,000 or almost US \$10,000 “for bots to protect us against attacks.” Later, Zelenskiy HQ denied this, explaining that this was the system Fedorov was taking about. This system, in fact, exists to this day and is called Zepeople: those who are linked to the network through Facebook receive notices about manipulative posts or fake news about *Sluha Narodu* or the president with a request to respond to them. If the counter on the site is to be believed, more than 630,000 people are connected to this network.

Of course, the idea is hardly new. During the presidency of Petro Poroshenko, for instance, this is how volunteer “information armies” were set up to counter Russian propaganda in social networks. The way they worked was almost the same as Zepeople. Indeed, Zelenskiy’s predecessor was accused of organizing his own bot army through such “information forces,” which were later nicknamed *porokhobots*. Opinion leaders and popular bloggers also countered fakes on the go and promoted a positive image of the president. They would interpret Poroshenko’s statements and actions. Some of them, understandably, stopped doing this after the election.

Comparing content

If we try to compare the content of the official sites of the two politicians, they are nearly identical. Although he is no longer president, Petro Poroshenko’s page continues to post official-sounding statements: meetings with political partners, greetings on holidays, and updates on the current political situation in the country. Little has changed since the time when he was president, except that Poroshenko is now in the opposition. Meanwhile, Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s page has become more official-sounding, with notices about meetings with international partners, greetings on holidays, and reactions to ongoing political events. Under the posts of the two politicians,

hundreds of comments are posted, by both supporters and opponents.

What’s more interesting is the unofficial groups of supporters of both presidents. They are also worth a more in-depth look. *Sluha Narodu* has an entire network of regional communities in Facebook through which it disseminates, among others, all kinds of official information, such as about votes in the Rada or the restoration of infrastructure in the Donbas. With this, however, similarities to the two parties’ press services end. The content of the news stream differs depending on the region: some might be publishing vlogs on eliminating illiteracy, others might be more focused on local politics.

However, in almost all these SN communities, participants post memes about the members of the previous administration. This is where there will be references to former NBU Governor Valeria Hontareva for supposedly destroying the hryvnia, and about Poroshenko, who supposedly “did nothing but rob the army and the country for five years.” In effect, for Zelenskiy fans, the former president has been turned into a real punching bag, on which they so far are taking out some of their anger against those in power.

It turns out that most bots, nearly **28,000** fake accounts, were writing on Zelenskiy’s page, while Poroshenko’s page was attacked by nearly **20,000** bots. The researchers also reported that the share of negative comments on both presidents’ pages was substantial: **61%** of all comments against the former president and **48%** against the new one. VoxUkraine also noted that they did not identify who the bots belonged to, as this was a much more difficult issue than to simply identify bot accounts

The styles of the unofficial communities of the former president don’t differ much. Before the elections, for instance, they were mainly memorable for their video clips about Zelenskiy being struck by a truck, playing the piano with his penis (supposedly), and passages about the drug-using candidate. Needless to say, there’s no direct link between Poroshenko himself and such public posts, but the general tone of the posts shows that the administrators of these groups continue to favor the former president. Today, these sites contain criticisms of the new administration for violating voting procedures in the Rada or about the speed with which bills are being passed. At the same time, there are also obviously manipulative posts, such as claims that SN is submitting a bill to protect the right to peaceably gather or zero tax declarations that supposedly will actually restrict the rights of Ukrainians. The only problem is that the authors of these posts are members of Poroshenko’s European Solidarity – not that this stops the administrators of these groups or supporters of the fifth president.

All told, the situation is fairly disheartening. Members of both political camps, despite all their official declarations about “uniting society,” are using social nets to isolate and marginalize themselves in information bubbles, sometimes even nurturing outright hatred towards their opponents. From time to time, this even leaks into official statements. The only way to ease this strained situation is to engage completely real, not virtual, dialog and in efforts to find common ground. For now, unfortunately, it seems that neither President Zelenskiy, nor his opponent Petro Poroshenko, see any benefit to this – the former because he can use his predecessor as lightning rod for public anger, the latter because it is convenient to be able to criticize those who are in power today. ■

The great balancing act

Oleksandr Kramar

What kind of impact is long-term uneven economic growth in Ukraine's regions likely to have?

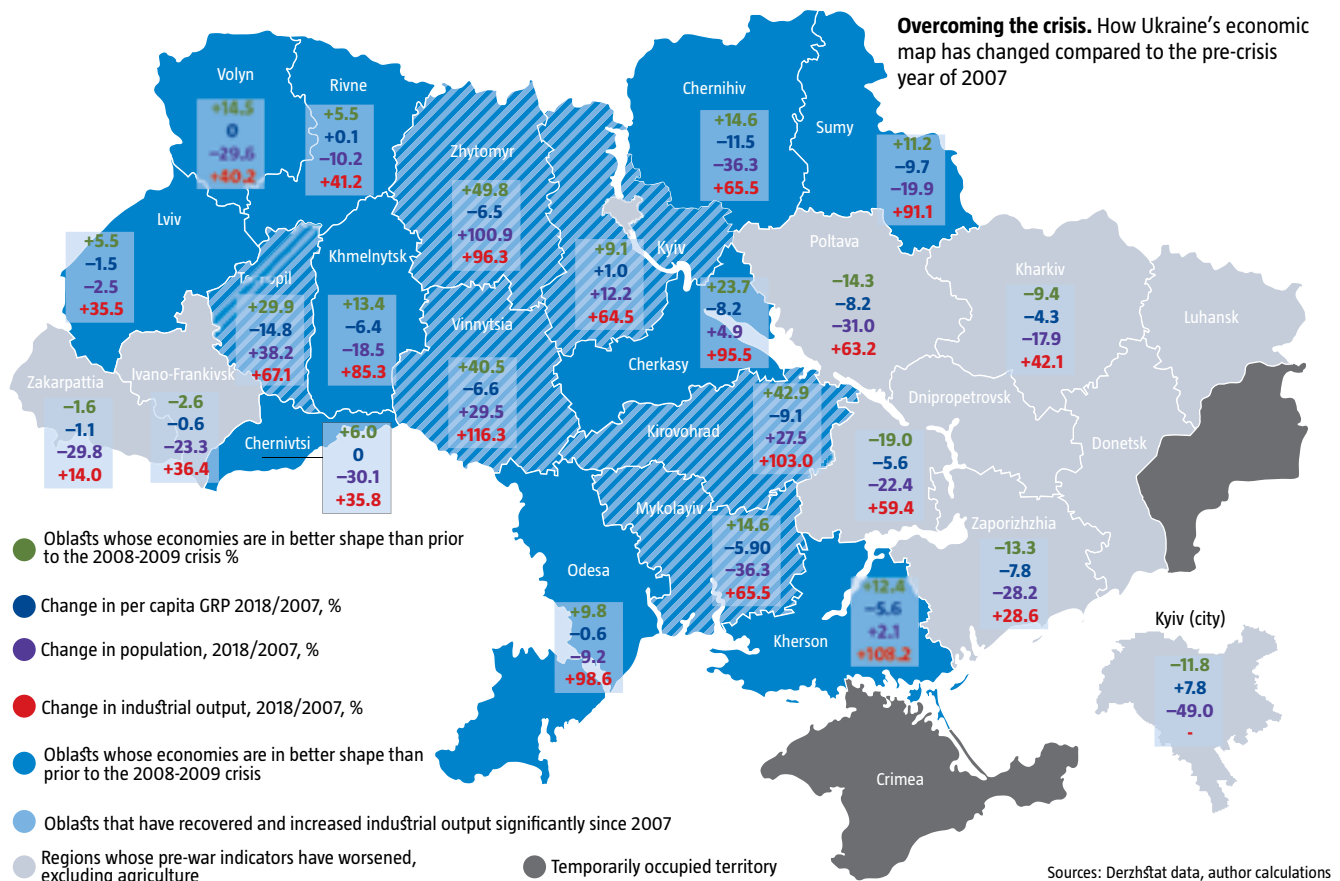
While all eyes in Ukraine were on the presidential election followed by the parliamentary campaign, Q2'19 saw the fastest economic growth for the past seven years, with GDP growing 4.6% compared to Q2'18. This final note nicely summarized Ukraine's development in the five-year post-revolutionary wartime period from 2014 to 2019 as economic indicators outside of territories occupied by Russia have moved past 2013 levels.

According to the Derzhstat, the state statistics bureau, although 2018 GDP was 8.7% below 2013 GDP in Ukraine – excluding occupied Crimea – gross regional product (GRP) in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts plummeted 62.1% over those same five years. This was mainly the result of the loss of territory, not because of a steep economic decline in the areas not occupied by Russia, as *The Ukrainian Week* has reported in the past. However, lack of accurate statistics on the dynamics in the non-occupied areas of the two frontline oblasts means that both oblasts need to be completely excluded from estimates. Whereas in 2013, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts accounted for over 15% of Ukraine's GDP less Crimea, in 2018, GDP for the rest of the country was 0.7% higher than in 2013, ignoring the noted loss of GRP in these two oblasts. Since Ukraine's population shrank by 1.6%, 2018 per capita GDP was 2.3% above the 2013 indicator, leaving out Crimea and frontline Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. With 3.7% GDP growth posted in H1'19, it looks like GDP growth will be 4-4.5% higher than in 2013 even without adjusting for population change, and 6-6.5% higher on a per capita basis.

While the economy and key sectors have already passed pre-war indicators in non-occupied Ukraine, individual oblasts are going through a real economic revolution. Some are in a much better shape economically than in 2013, while former economic leaders still have not recovered to pre-war levels. The trends of the past five years partly match the long-term trends that emerged in Ukraine during the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, whose consequences most regions still are a long way from recovery, in contrast to the decline in 2014-2015 provoked by Russia's aggression. Two features in Ukraine's economic picture that could be seen both before and after Russia's aggression began are a lag or stagnation in southeastern oblasts and farm sector growth that outpaced the industrial sector (see *Overcoming the crisis*).

In 2018, 16 out of 25 oblasts posted better results than in 2007, with per capita GRP 24-50% up in five of them. This economic growth belt spans Zhytomyr with +49.8%, Kirovohrad +42.9%, Vinnytsia +40.5% and Cherkasy +23.7%, and Ternopil with +29.9%. Sandwiched between them, Khmelnytskyi Oblast is the odd man out, up only +13.4% compared to 2007, but still posting significant growth. The group of oblasts with economic indicators up 9-17% since 2007 includes eight more that are adjacent to the core growth belt from the south, southeast and west: Odesa, Kherson, Mykolayiv, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy and Volyn Oblasts. GRP in Lviv, Rivne and Chernivtsi Oblasts is up only 5.5-6% since 2007.

Ivano-Frankivsk and Zakarpattia Oblasts are only on the verge of recovering to 2007 levels, posting -2.6% and 1.6% and should



beat their 2007 indicators this year if this year's trends hold. Meanwhile, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, the ones directly adjacent to the conflict zone, remain far from pre 2008 crisis peaks, as does the neighboring Poltava Oblast. All three are 10-20% behind 2007 levels and will have a hard time catching up any time soon: most of them are still struggling to recover to 2013 levels. Kharkiv and Poltava oblasts are still 2.8-3.4% behind, while Dnipro Oblast remains down 8.3%. Zaporizhzhia Oblast is the only one in this depressed group that has managed to improve its indicators by a symbolic 1.8%. The rest of Ukraine's oblasts have seen per capita GRP improve strongly in 2018 compared to 2013. Given overall growth by 3.7% in H1'19, even Kyiv (-2.2%), Rivne (-1.7%) and Zakarpattia (-0.5%) oblasts are probably on the way to recovery to pre-war figures.

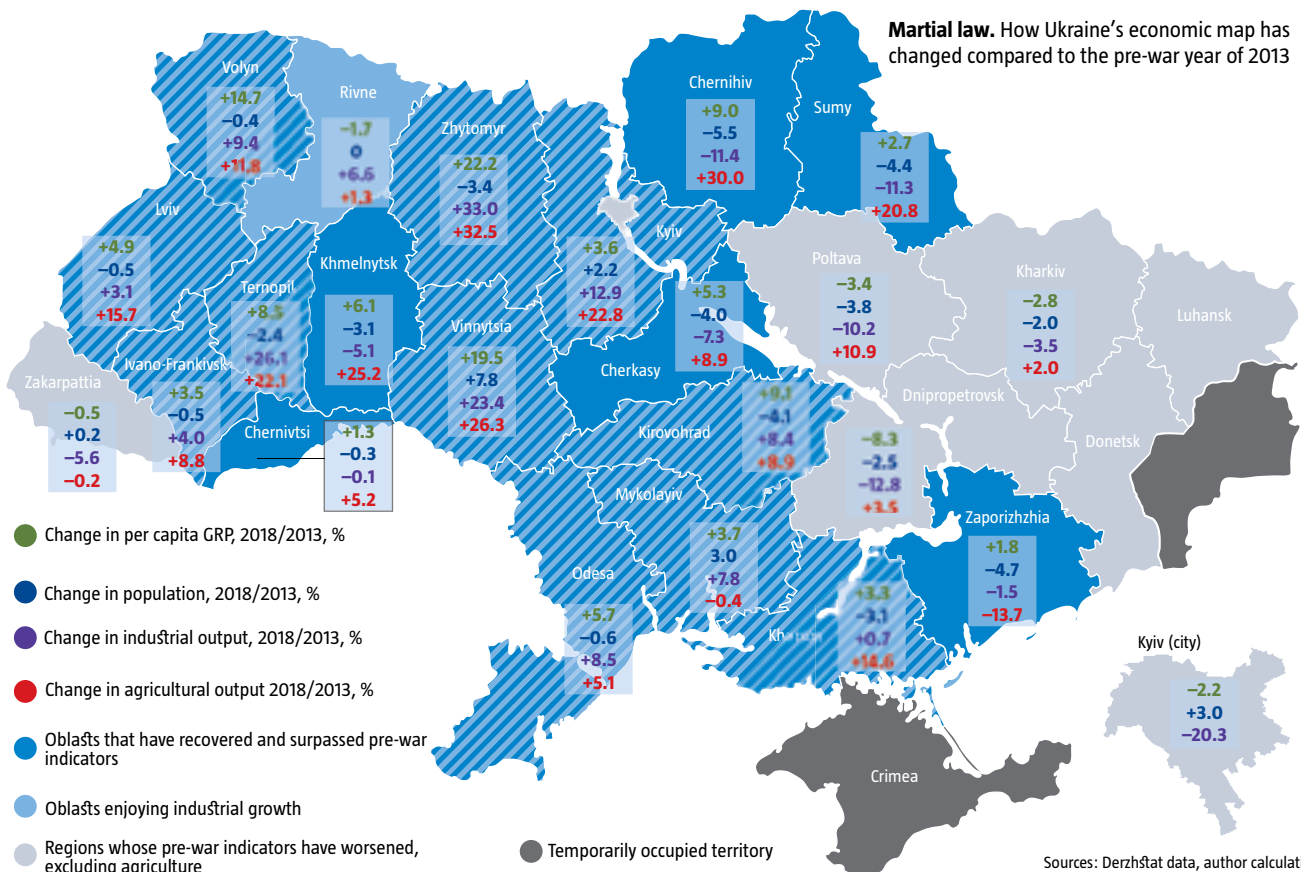
The economic dynamics of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts have to be analyzed separately, as most of their one-time economic potential is now under Russian occupation. On one hand, the available statistics show a deep decline in these oblasts compared to 2013, let alone 2007. On the other, this steep decline was primarily caused by the loss of control over territory. As *The Ukrainian Week* has written before, based on fragmentary economic data from Ukraine-controlled parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and their major urban areas, the real economic decline there is definitely not as deep as official data from Derzhstat suggests, and some parts are also recovering or improving compared to 2013 or 2007.

At the same time, talking about positive dynamics in some oblasts and depression in others is precisely about their dynamic, not their current level of development. Faster development in the growth belt centered on Right Bank Ukraine does not mean that these oblast economies are wealthier or more advanced now. What they are mostly doing is catching up with the oblasts that were more successful in the past. The oblasts whose economies have been in decline since 2008 are often still far more developed than most of

those that are growing rapidly now. Moreover, the change in average salaries across oblasts in the past three years does not always match other economic indicators (see **Broken connection**). The average salary in those oblasts with serious economic growth over 2016-2019 is now lower than before. In others, where the economy is worse compared to 2016, the average salary is the same or higher than three years ago.

Among other things, this leaves open the question of how fairly the benefits of stronger economic growth are distributed in these oblasts. Just like in the 2000s, distribution is very uneven in the southeast. A large share of profit leaks out of individual oblasts and out of the country altogether through transfer pricing. Moreover, the oblasts with the fastest economic growth have some of the lowest official employment rates, their local budgets and social funds are poorly funded, infrastructure continues to fall apart, and many of their residents have been looking to find a better life elsewhere.

Over the past five years, regional economic trends are increasingly different from those that were observed after the 2008-2009 crisis. Economic recovery, especially in the growth belt, is tied to unusually dynamic growth in Ukraine's EU neighbors, which are growing more intensely than Ukraine or even its most successful oblasts. For instance, Volyn and Chernihiv Oblasts have joined the top five economic leaders, although they've never been in that league before. Khmelnytskyi and Lviv Oblasts have seriously improved their economic position after lagging behind prior to 2013 and struggling to recover to pre-crisis 2007 levels. Interestingly, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast joined the growth belt too, although it was struggling to recover from the 2008-2009 crisis in the previous five-year period. Kyiv, Odesa and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts have far better economic dynamics now, compared to pre-2013, while Ternopil and Cherkasy Oblasts have slipped lower. Kirovohrad Oblast has declined compared to pre-war 2013, ranking fourth with economic growth of +9.1%. Even Kharkiv and Poltava Oblasts are among the



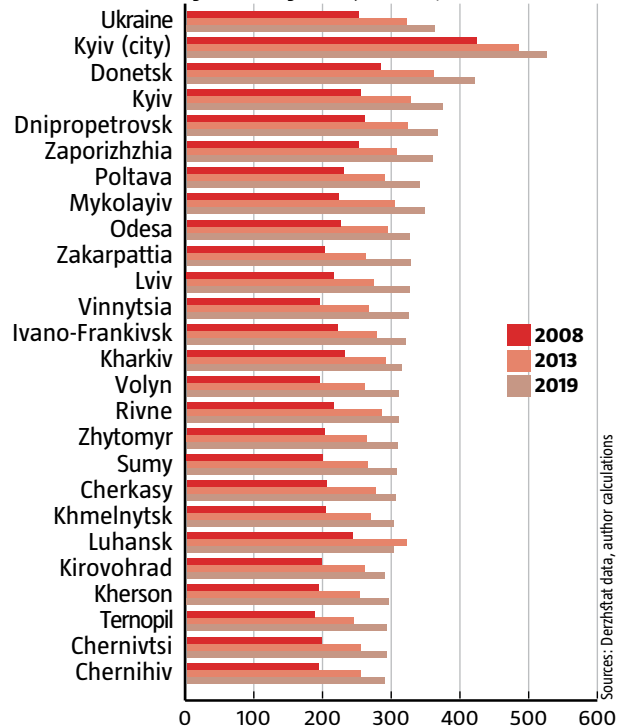
leading oblasts, although they have not caught up with 2013 levels. But these quibbles seem insignificant compared to the deep crash of 2008-2009, from which they had not recovered by the previous economic peak in 2013 – and still haven't. Interestingly, the epicenter of the growth belt has been shifting north in recent years and, to a lesser extent, west. By contrast, Cherkasy and Kirovohrad Oblasts have been really lost position. This is even more astonishing given the fact that economic growth per capita in these central oblasts has had a serious boost as their populations shrink rapidly. A comparison of populations in different oblasts between 2007 and 2018, and between 2013 and 2018 shows how important, sometimes critical, this factor is for the recovery and growth of per capita GRP. In the city of Kyiv, for example, per capita GRP has been lower for both 2007-2018, and 2013-2018, as the pace of economic growth has been slower than population growth.

Still, regional economic dynamics should not be compared without taking into account population change. The latter determines employment in key sectors and the number of consumers generating income. In most central oblasts, the population has been shrinking faster than in western Ukraine, where it has barely changed over a long period, metropolitan Kyiv, where the population continues to grow steadily, and even some oblasts in southeastern Ukraine.

Ever since the global economic crisis of 2008-2009, agriculture has been the main driver of Ukraine's economy overall and of most of its oblasts. More recently, however, several agricultural drivers of the past in southern and eastern Ukraine have slowed down. Mykolayiv, Kherson, Kirovohrad and Odesa Oblasts saw the highest increase in agricultural output – up 99-128% – between 2007 and 2018, while growth on the Right Bank central and western oblasts was severalfold slower after 2007. Since 2013, however, the situation has been radically different. The epicenter of both industrial and agricultural growth is increasingly shifting to the Right Bank, with further offshoots towards the west and northeast. Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Khmelnytskyi, Chernihiv, Kyiv, and Ternopil Oblasts have taken over leadership in agricultural growth. Dynamics in Lviv, Volyn and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts have improved significantly compared to the one-time leaders in the southern steppe, such as Odesa, Dnipro and Kharkiv Oblasts. In Mykolayiv and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, agricultural production is in a worse state than it was in 2013 (see **Martial law**). Overall, agricultural growth is not much faster than industrial growth, especially in successful oblasts. Meanwhile, industry has been showing better recovery and growth than in the previous five years. 2008-2015 were the years of shrinking, sometimes tumbling industrial output, interrupted by a brief spurt of growth in 2010-2011. As a result, industrial output was at 66.6% of 2007 levels in 2015, according to Derzhstat.

Most regions have not yet recovered from the deep crisis that hit Ukraine's industry after 2008. In fact, just six oblasts saw better industrial results in 2018 than in 2007, and these were the ones with relatively small output to begin with. Zhytomyr Oblast saw the highest growth, +100.9%, mostly thanks to a boom in extraction and mining. Industrial sectors in Vinnytsia, Kirovohrad and Ternopil Oblasts grew a modest 27-38%, while industrial output grew just 12.2% in Kyiv Oblast and a paltry 2.1% in Mykolayiv Oblast. These are mostly regions from the economic growth belt and this trend has been growing stronger. The seven leaders of industrial growth in 2013-2018 include Zhytomyr, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Kyiv, Volyn, Odesa, and Kirovohrad Oblasts. Mykolayiv, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Kherson Oblasts trail them with somewhat slower growth. But half of Ukraine's oblasts, including the southeastern industrial giants that account for the lion's share of output and employment, are far behind both 2013 and 2007 levels. These include Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, down 12.8% compared to 2013 and down 22.4% compared to 2007; Poltava Oblast, down 10.2% and 31%; Kharkiv Oblast, down 3.5% 17.9%; and Zaporizhzhia Oblast, down 1.5% and 28.2%. Kyiv is no exception, even if it remains the largest industrial

Broken connection. Change in average salary in euros, 2007–2019



hub in Central Ukraine: industrial output in 2018 was 20% lower than in 2013, and barely half of 2007 levels. The striking gap between 2018 and 2013 or 2007 shows that Ukraine's industrial sector was hit very hard by the 2008-2009 crisis, not by Russia's aggression or crumbling economic relations with Russia since 2013, and is still struggling to recover. The best evidence of this are industrial powerhouses like Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv Oblasts, where output has almost recovered to 2013 levels, but is still far behind 2007.

The comparison of data from different oblasts at the peaks of previous economic waves followed by steep declines is deliberate. Global economic trends and vaster imbalances in Ukraine's domestic economy increasingly suggest that it is now close to yet another peak of growth that could well be followed by a painful decline in the not-too-distant future. Another cyclical crisis appears to be looming in the global economy, and it will once again hit Ukraine's economy, which is excessively dependent on the international situation and still very poorly diversified.

The situation will be worse if this cyclical decline comes hand-in-hand with the new government's inability to offset the negative effects of the looming economic troubles and its inability to implement policies to encourage accelerated economic growth down the line. If this happens, Ukraine risks finding itself in a downward spiral where every new boom-and-bust cycle leaves the economy in a worse position. Despite periods of relatively dynamic growth in 2000-2007, 2010-2012, and 2016-2019, real GDP remains 1.5 times below the level in 1990. Moreover, Ukraine continues to lag far behind its more successful EU neighbors: where Ukraine's economy grew 3%, Poland, Hungary and Romania grew 4-5%. Indeed, their economies are now 25-30% bigger than in 2013, whereas Ukraine's economy has expanded just 4-6%. In the end, it won't be enough for Ukraine to recover to 2013 levels from 2013 or even the far higher indicators of 2008 or 1991. If it wants to break through from the developing world and become a developed European state, the country needs to pull out of the downward spiral, where every economic cycle leaves it worse off than before. This means long-term double-digit growth, and that will only be possible with profound changes in Ukraine's economic policies. ■

The new multivectoral economy

What export markets are different oblasts focused on and what might the impact be, both on the regions and on the country?

Oleksandr Kramar

General indicators show that Ukraine's economy has re-oriented itself towards trade with the EU: the share of member countries in overall volumes of Ukrainian exports is more than 42% today. However, some significant divergences can be seen at the regional level in recent years,

ADJUSTING TO NEW REALITIES

The old dilemma, EU or Russia – or the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) run by Russia—is no longer a reality. New divergences in foreign trade orientations have replaced the old ones, but this time at the regional level (see **Various orientations**). In time, these could become not just a factor affecting domestic policy but even the economic foundation for different geopolitical orientations in those regions. It's no secret that even in the past, polls in the central and more particularly southern oblasts showed far more support for joining neither the EU nor NATO, nor Russo-centric entities. Still, the coming cyclical economic crisis in the world economy and specific regions of the globe will have a very real impact on the resilience of certain oblasts and the country as a whole.

Despite the serious geographic shift in domestic exports driven by Russia's aggression and, as *The Ukrainian Week* has written, equally by a contraction in Russian imports from all countries because of the growing economic crisis in recent years in Russia itself, the absolute majority of Ukraine's regions exported noticeably more in 2018 than they had in 2014, in euro terms. Significant declines outside of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, which are suffering the impact of Russia's occupation of major chunks of their territories, occurred in only three other oblasts: Kherson with -15.6%, Kharkiv with -21.0%, Kirovohrad with -28.4%. Two more oblasts, Dnipropetrovsk with -0.8% and Rivne with -2.3% in 2018 already posted growth early this year that outpaced 2014.

All the remaining regions have shown a positive growth dynamic to a greater or lesser extent, ranging from 0.6% in Kyiv and 1.0% in Poltava, all the way to 101% in Ivano-Frankivsk and 117% in Vinnytsia. Since 2014, exports to the EU have grown in 22 of Ukraine's 25 regions that are not occupied. Even in Donetsk Oblast, which has lost half of its economic potential as a result of Russia's occupation, exports to the EU from just the free territory were 4.6% more in 2018 than from the entire oblast in 2014: €2.07bn vs €1.98bn.

UNEVEN GROWTH

But all this growth was fairly uneven. For instance, Kharkiv Oblast grew "a mere" 12.3%, from €227.1mn to €255.2mn, Odesa went up 13.6%, from €343.9mn to €390.7mn, Zaporizhzhia grew 17.0%, from €656.5mn to €768.3mn, and the city of Kyiv improved 21.3%, from €2.615bn to €3.171bn. Meanwhile, a slew of other oblasts saw their exports grow by factors: Kyiv improved 170%, from €385.2mn to €648.9mn, Dnipropetrovsk went up 180%, from €1.3bn to €2.3bn, Zhytomyr nearly doubled, from €185.6mn to €364.3mn, Sumy rose 220%, from €103.2mn to €220.8mn, Vinnytsia went up 240%, from €177.9mn to €422.6mn, Chernivtsi jumped 270%, from €45.9mn to €122.7mn, and so on. Only in three oblast did exports to the EU decline since

2014: Firstly, Kirovohrad fell 22.7%, from €127.1mn to €98.2mn and Kherson slipped 17.2%, from €99.5mn to €82.4mn. But what really stood behind a more than tenfold collapse in Luhansk Oblast, which went from €650.3mn to €62.7mn? Part of its territory taken over by an enemy and companies that contributed critically to pre-war exports from the oblast, or a decline in the latter on non-occupied territory? Today, it's impossible to answer this properly given the lack of access to reliable statistics on external trade in specific counties and cities.

Some oblasts – Zakarpattia, Volyn, Rivne, Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Zhytomyr –have almost completely reoriented themselves towards the EU market, which now takes 65-90% of their export goods. This is almost the same level as Ukraine's Central European EU neighbors. Moreover, these oblasts sell a healthy range of goods to European markets, compared to other areas of Ukraine. A handful of other oblasts – Khmelnytsk, Poltava and Donetsk – have so far only oriented about half of their exports to the EU, but both the volumes and the shares have been growing strongly in recent years, which means that they are slowly pulling up to the rest of the EU-oriented group.

Meanwhile the bulk of Ukraine, meaning most of the central and southern oblasts including economic dynamos like the city of Kyiv and the Lower Dnipro Valley, with Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, continue to post geographically diversified trade numbers, with a substantial share going to Asia, Africa and the USA – and generally in that order. The Russo-centric markets of the Eurasian Economic Union have long since become secondary for them, while the share going to Europe remains at the 25-35% level (see **Export priorities**).

What's more, in most of the oblasts in this group, the share of trade with Asia, Africa and the USA has been growing in the last few years, as has its euro value. The reason is not only because these oblasts have been slowly curtailing trade with Russia or the EAEU. For some of them, the share of sales of goods to the EU has been going down, such as in Cherkasy and Kherson, or has been growing much more slowly, such as Vinnytsia and Zaporizhzhia. But there is a subgroup within the Asia, Africa and the USA group whose share of exports to the EU has been growing sharply: Kyiv, Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolayiv. Still, it's too soon to say how far most of them will move in this direction.

TURNING BACKS ON RUSSIA

The group of oblasts that lie at the Russian border – Luhansk, Kharkiv and Sumy – remain very dependent on the markets of Russia and its EAEU satellites, for 31-38% of their trade. For most other oblasts, this line of trade has shrunk to 5-15% at this point. Today, only a small number of oblasts that showed modest but growing trade with the EAEU in 2014 continue to show growth: Mykolayiv has gone from €468.9mn to €479.2mn, Odesa from €102.4mn to €115.6mn, Ivano-Frankivsk from €75.8mn to €78.6mn, and Ternopil from €22.7mn to €28.6mn. However, only in Odesa Oblast has this been accompanied by a marginal increase in the share of the EAEU of all exports for the oblast. In the other three oblasts, even though volumes are inch-

ing up, this market is far slower than others, especially if we consider that sales to the EU are skyrocketing: from €188.5mn to €474.5mn in Ivano-Frankivsk, from €152mn to €397.2mn in Mykolayiv, and from €189.2mn to €269.4mn in Ternopil.

In all the remaining regions of Ukraine, there has been a more-or-less steady shrinkage, not only of the share but also the absolute volumes of exports to countries in the Russo-centric EAEU. In most of them, the decline in absolute volumes since 2014 ranges between 40% and 60%, while their share of overall exports is down 50-80%. In some cases, the decline has been over 90%. For instance, deliveries from Zakarpattia to the EAEU fell from €135.0mn in 2014 to €8.7mn in 2018, or down to barely 6% of what it was and the shares of these countries' markets of total volumes shipped from the oblast have fallen from 13.0% to 0.6%.

Indeed, even the three oblasts on the Russian border can't rightly be spoken about as "oriented on Russia" today, as the share of trade going to Russia is steadily declining and is almost at the same level as deliveries to EU markets or countries in Asia, Africa and the USA (see **Export priorities**). In Sumy Oblast, exports to the EU are already greater than those to the EAEU, while in Luhansk they are only slightly behind already.

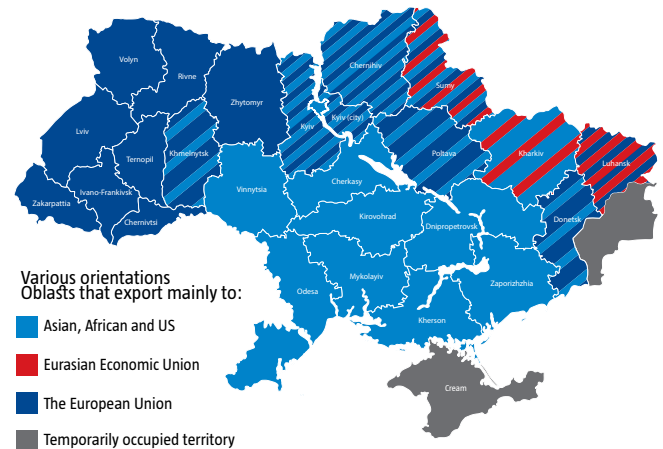
In short, developments on the Russian market will now have a noticeable impact on the overall Ukrainian economy and its trade relations, as well as on individual regions, especially in view of the likely shakedown Russia is likely to experience as its role as a supplier of oil and gas on the world market declines.

EU = HEALTHY DIVERSIFICATION

Trade in goods from western oblasts to the EU is becoming a lot more diversified in terms of the range of goods although it is focused on the markets of a single world region. For instance, Volyn Oblast reoriented on the European market mainly with machinery, which constituted 45.8% of its trade and was worth €274.7mn in 2018. This export item has kept growing dynamically over the last few years, both in absolute volume and in its share of total exports from the oblast: in 2014, it was 43.2% and worth €222.6mn. This includes mainly parts for European companies as part of the manufacturing cooperation that has been developing, with electronics going from €139.8mn in 2014 to €190.4mn in 2018. Today, this is the leading item in Volyn Oblast's exports. Wood products, furniture and paper products constitute 28.2% and are worth €172.3mn. In 2018, furniture exports were worth €44.6mn, while paper and cardboard products were worth €10.9mn. Foodstuffs constitute another 17.9% of Volyn's exports, led by oilseed at €40.6mn and grain at €18.7mn. Processed foods are already at €14.1mn and meats at €12.8mn, with fruits and vegetables not far behind at €9.2mn. Finally, Volyn also exports a substantial €13.7mn worth of clothing.

The situation is similar in Lviv Oblast. The region's main export is machinery, up to €429.6mn from only €279.0mn in 2014. Here, too, electronics have constituted the bulk of this growth, going from €247.9mn in 2014 to €384.5mn in 2018. However, at 24.7%, the share of furniture, processed wood and paper products is much higher than in Volyn, with furniture taking the lion's share in its expansion, up at €198.2mn in 2018, compared to €84.9mn in 2014, together with paper and cardboard products at €39.5mn. Similarly, a larger share in absolute volumes and in relation to overall exports from Lviv Oblast is taken by clothing, footwear and other finished leather and textile products, 11.0%, having gone up to €177.9mn from €123.1mn in 2014. Foodstuffs account for 27.8% of all exports from Lviv Oblast, but their share of overall exports is higher than in neighboring Volyn, thanks to processed foods, which account for 14.9% and have gone up from €153.7mn in 2014 to €239.6mn in 2018. This is considerably more than shipments of grain and oilseed contribute, at €173.3mn or 10.8%. Among other items in the foodstuffs category,

Various orientations



Lviv exports €15.2mn of fruits and vegetables, up from €4.1mn in 2014, and €8.3mn of meat, up from €6.3mn in 2014.

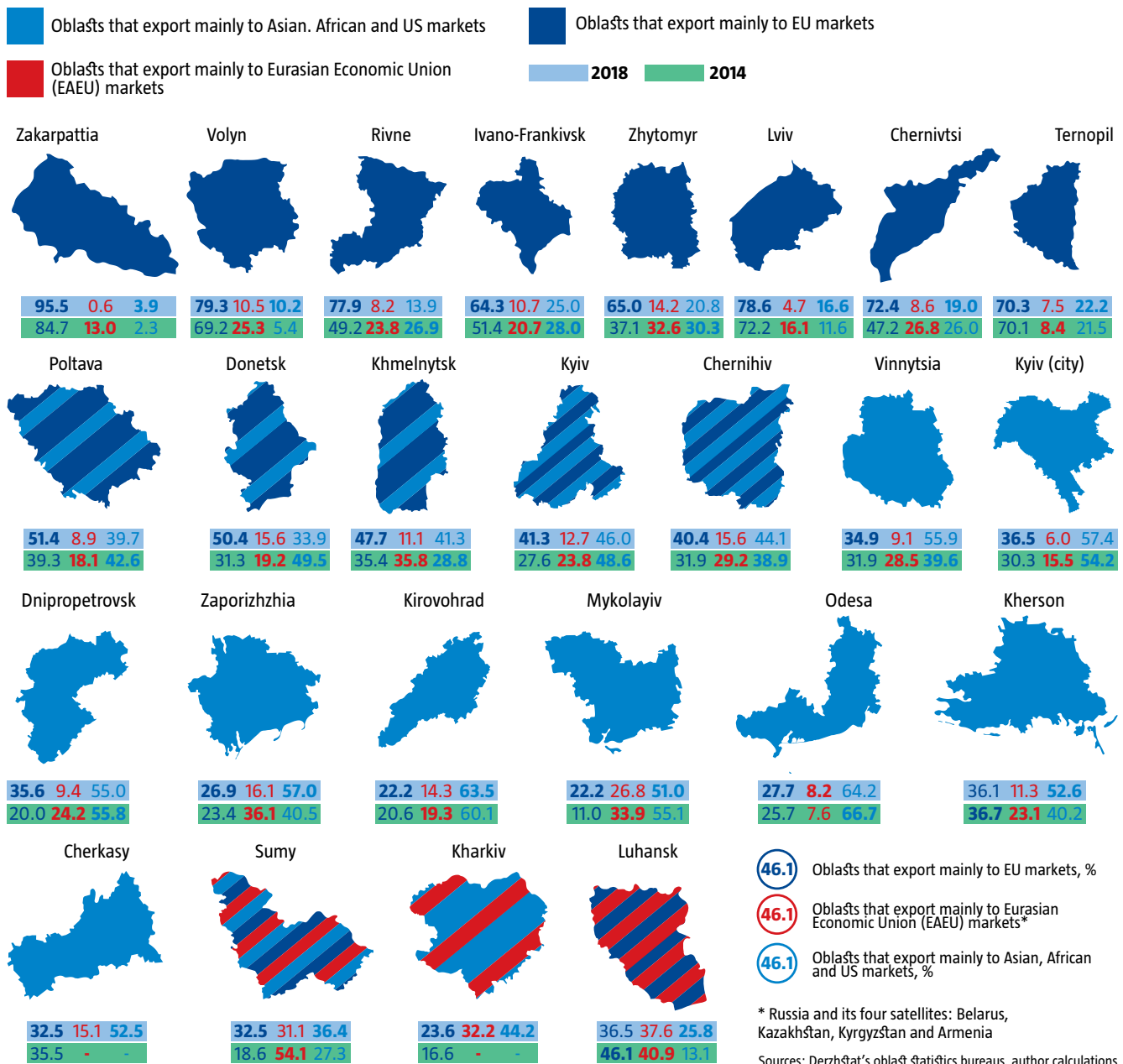
Given that the European market is relatively stable and even during a recession demand is unlikely to drop sharply, the coming crisis will likely lead to fewer tremors in the regions of Ukraine that are exporting 65-90% of their goods to the EU. If the range of goods in these exports continues to diversify, they should survive the next recession relatively painlessly.

THE DANGER OF EXPORT MONOCULTURE

But this diversification of goods and expanding share of products with a higher added value is lacking in the extreme in most of Ukraine's central and southern oblasts. Even among those that are seeing export deliveries abroad grow more quickly in recent years, it's still mostly based on the outdated tradition of mostly raw materials or products from branches of industry that have few prospects, such as the old steel industry.

For example, in Vinnytsia Oblast, 79.7% of exports are agricultural products, with 42.7% of it from the oil and fats industry and 19.2% grain. Only 3.8% is machinery, although electronic parts dominate on the European market. In Cherkasy, too, more than 83.0% of exports are also farm products, with 43% oils and fats, and 26.6% grains and oilseeds. The share of machinery is only 3.0%. Still, the share of wood products, furniture and clothing is growing in this oblast. Odesa Oblast also exports more than 72.0% farm products, mostly grain and oilseed accounting for 41.1%, while oil and fat products account for the remaining 20.9%. Processed foods constitute less than 3.0% of the oblast's exports, while meats are an insignificant 0.1%. Although machinery represents over 16.0% of its export income, the shipbuilding industry covers 10.9%. The oblast basically does not export any of its finished products from the light industry. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, 23.4% of export earnings in 2018 came from ore, while another 45.0% came from semi-finished steel products. All told, products from the mining and metallurgy sector accounts for 78.5% of the oblast's exports, while machinery is only 3.9%.

In some oblasts, the lack of options for expanding export has already led to stagnation and even step declines in trade. Kirovohrad, for instance, belongs to those oblasts with the greatest losses in exports in recent years. In 2018, 80.2% of its exports were agricultural products and ores. Moreover, in contrast to western oblasts oriented on the EU, the lion's share, 42.3%, of this oblast's farm exports are oil and meal by-product and 24.6% is grain. The share and volume of processed foods with a higher added value is minimal. Exports of other processed foods, light industry and furniture are all marginal as well. Only 14.0% of Kirovohrad's exports are machine-building products, key among

Export priorities. Dynamics of goods going to foreign markets by oblast, 2014-2018

them not components that are integrated into global technology production chains, in contrast, once again, to western oblasts, but outdated leftovers of soviet manufacture that are ever less able to compete on world markets.

A comparison of the oblast's exports in 2014 and 2018 shows that the main losses have come as a result of a steep decline in the volumes of oil and meal delivered to foreign markets, which accounted for 70.0% of its exports in 2014. No alternate markets for these products have been found so far. A similar situation faces in Kherson Oblast, another of the regions that has lost the most over the last four years. There, as well, 64.5% of exports were farm products and only 12.9% was machinery.

The more narrowly-focused profile of exports in oblasts oriented on Asia, Africa and the USA makes them also more vulnerable to fluctuations on global commodity markets and to potential crises on these markets. The likelihood of high volatility is ever

present as rising prices for different commodities can spur strong growth, but when prices collapse, they can also lead to serious problems. Considerable geographic diversification in their export of goods is unlikely to be much of a bulwark as any collapse in prices is likely to be worldwide.

However, excessive export monoculture is a perpetual curse in all the central oblasts. For instance, Kyiv Oblast the share of farm products in total exports is also 64.4%. Unlike other central oblasts, however, the share of meat in its total exports is 25.0%, and the share of processed food is 9.2%, while 9.9% of the oblast's exports are processed wood, paper products and furniture, 9.1% is chemical products, and 6.9% is machinery, with electronics taking the lead. Moreover, here the profile of exports is being reorganized as the share of exports to the EU grows (see map). Indeed, it looks like this oblast will soon join the group of EU-oriented regions. ■

Exchange rate

About Ukraine's prisoners who left jail early and ended up in Moscow

Denys Kazanskiy



PHOTO: STANISLAV KOZLUK



PHOTO: ILYA PITAEV / SPUTNIK

Such different welcomes. Ukraine greeted freed hostages, Russia its failed agents

The long-awaited exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and Russia that had been talked about on and off for several years and was rumored to be about to collapse at the last minute, took place, after all. On September 7, 35 Ukrainian citizens who had been kept captive in the prisons of the Russian Federation finally came home. All of them had spent different times imprisoned. Ukraine's seamen, captured outside the Kerch Strait, were there less than 10 months, while Oleh Sentsov and Oleksandr Kolchenko were held more than five years.

The names of Russia's Ukrainian hostages were well known because they were constantly spoken about while in captivity and so the names on the list of those being returned to Ukraine were relatively predictable. But the list of Russian prisoners was kept under covers until the very last minute. In Russia, no one paid much attention to them, other than to journalist Kiril Vishinskiy, and no other names were spoken of. And so it was very intriguing to see whom Moscow would decide to bring home in the end.

Of course, there were surprises, the first among these being that the majority were not Russian citizens. Only 13 were Russian and three of them, including Vishinskiy, hold both Ukrainian and Russian passports, meaning that only 10 were really Russian citizens – mostly mercenaries in the hybrid war who came to Ukraine to fight on the side of the DNR militants. This included a soldier, Viktor Ageyev, who was the only one of all the prisoners to admit that he was in active service in the Russian Federation and provided the number of his military unit.

Where the situation with Russian citizens is clear, the question arises, what on earth Russia wanted with the others it requested. An absurd situation arises: Moscow exchanged one group of Ukrainian citizens for another. What principle underlay this choice? Why, of the thousands of criminals who

are sitting in Ukraine's jails today, what made Russia choose precisely these 20 Ukrainians?

Russia claims that it is not fighting in Ukraine. According to its narrative, Ukraine is in the midst of a civil war. However, some of the participants Moscow appears to have equated to Russian citizens and decided to take them in. For starters, there's Volodymyr Tsemakh from Snizhne, who, although he's a Ukrainian citizen, was the most important name among the 35. Indeed, the general understanding is that it was for the sake of getting this key witness in the downing of MH17 on July 17, 2014, out of Ukraine that the exchange went ahead at all. For the previous five years, Moscow had never shown any interest in getting its own citizens released. Even the very high-profile Kiril Vishinskiy was really not needed at home, otherwise he could have been swapped for Oleh Sentsov long ago and not forced to stew behind bars in the land of the "bloody junta" for an entire year.

There's even less to say about other Ukrainian citizens on the RF list whose names are completely unfamiliar to the public. It's unlikely that even one resident of Russia, even one who has been tracking events in the Donbas, could explain who these people are and why Russia might have chosen to exchange them. There's only one possible explanation: Russia took away those whom it considers its own, regardless of their passports. It has taken back its agency – the same agents of Putin whose existence in Ukraine everyone so vehemently denied and certain politicians and analysts treated as a joke.

Who are all these people? First of all, there are five participants in the Odesa Union fire of May 2, 2014: Yevhen Mefiodov, Olena Bobova, Valeriy Pikalov, Denys Khytrov and Petru Melnichuk. Three of them are Ukrainian citizens, while Mefiodov is Russian while Melnichuk is a Moldovan from Transnistria. With Mefiodov, the motives are pretty clear, but with the other four it's not clear why they would have been taken? What's more, Serhiy Dolzhenkov, another individual connected to the

Odesa fire appears not to have been needed in Russia and was not exchanged. What underlies this selectiveness?

Everything becomes a lot clearer if we dig a little deeper into the case of the participants in the Odesa fire. Olena Bobova, Valeriy Pikalov, Denys Khytrov and Petru Melnichuk were only detained by the SBU counterintelligence team in 2017. All of them were accused of being Russian spies whose activities were coordinated by the GRU, Russia's military intelligence branch. At the time, pro-Russian media did its best to present the story as if the SBU had arrested random individuals and was making up fake cases. However, the very fact that these four were included in the list for people to be exchanged meant that Russia was admitting that they were Moscow's people. Which also means that the events of May 2, 2014, are finally visible in a completely different light. In the past, Russian propaganda tried to portray the situation as though pro-Russian activists in Odesa had taken to the streets spontaneously, on their own initiative. Now, Moscow has effectively admitted that its agents were involved. And this suggests, as many suspected at the time, that the carnage of May 2 was planned in advance and its planners were watching off-stage.

Yet another fact is curious: Mefiodov, the Russian, was released from the detention center at the end of August, together with Sergei Dolzhenkov. It was understood that they had been released for the purpose of the exchange, and at the time, the release did not attract outrage. But in the end, Mefiodov was exchanged, but Dolzhenkov was not. He left the detention center and somehow got lost along the way. It can be surmised that, unlike other participants in the May 2 fire in Odesa, he wasn't actually a Russian agent and was therefore not needed by Moscow. But then why was he released at all, if

he wasn't going to be exchanged? This question needs to be put to Ukraine's law enforcement agencies.

Another well-known individual on the Russian list was Stanislav Yezhov, a translator in Premier Groysman's Office who turned out to be a Russian informer. He, too, was arrested in 2017, but admitted his guilt in court and plea-bargained with the investigation. Another individual often mentioned in the press was Yulia Prasolova, who had been recruited by Russian security services to carry out a terrorist act in Mariupol that led to the death of SBU Lieutenant Oleksandr Kharaberiush. This ends the well-known names on the list. It's hard to say anything specific about the other Ukrainians who were included in Russia's list.

There was no information to be found about Andriy Kostenko, Mykola Yeriomin, Aslan Baskhanov, Oleksandr Tarasenko or Oleh Khomenko. Still, the very fact that Russia wanted these individuals turned over suggests that they really were somehow connected to its special forces and were its agents.

In Russia, meanwhile, no one bothered to explain to the country why Moscow wanted to release these individuals from Ukrainian prisons. The 35 were met swiftly in Moscow, in private and with no fanfare, in contrast to Ukraine. Not one Russian politician showed up at the airport to meet the prisoners, nor were their families allowed to join them. The airplane from Kyiv was met only by propagandists who ensured that the necessary image was created and only those faces were shown that were allowed to be shown on television. In short, Russia greeted its spies in a in an embarrassed and unfriendly manner, just the way one always meets those one is ashamed of. But then informers, terrorists and militants don't usually arouse any other feelings. ■



A strategy for political hostages

What was overlooked during the return of Ukraine's kidnapped sailors and political hostages from Russia

Stanislav Kozliuk

On September 7, 2019, 35 hostages were returned to Ukraine after being released from Russian prisons: 11 political prisoners and 24 naval servicemen. Russia had accused all of them of fabricated crimes. Moreover, the range of accusations was very broad, from “illegally crossing the border” in the case of the sailors, to “terrorist activity and sabotage” in the case of filmmaker Oleh Sentsov and the Crimean “saboteur” Yevhen Panov. In return, Ukraine sent more than 30 individuals to Russia, among whom were, among others, participants in the May 2, 2014 fire at the Union building in Odesa, terrorists who blew up Ukrainian police officers, and Volodymyr Tsemakh, whom the media called a “valuable witness” in the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Boeing MH17 in July 2014.

As of July of this year, the Russian Federation was holding close to 100 Ukrainians in its jails and in occupied Crimea whom it was persecuting for political reasons. According to human rights activists from the Center for Civil Rights, which has been working to help political prisoners for nearly six years now, the RF continues to hold at least 86 Ukrainians. In addition, the Security Bureau of Ukraine (SBU) reports that nearly 230 prisoners are being held in occupied Donbas, including many civilians. So far, no mechanism has been found to gain their release, as all the prisoner exchanges that have taken place so far have been completely coincidental. Moreover, every time, new approaches were involved and new agreements between Kyiv and Moscow. After the September swap, however, it's possible to see certain trends.

Russia is still holding at least **86** Ukrainians for political reasons. At the same time, the SBU is talking about **227** POWs and civilians being held in ORDiLO

“This was the first large-scale exchange because every other time in the last six years, only a dozen or two hostages were released,” explains Oleksandra Matviychuk, coordinator of the #SaveOlegSentsov campaign and chair of the board of the Center for Civil Rights, a CSO. “There are two obvious things going on. First, far from everyone was released. According to our sources, Russia is still holding at least 86 Ukrainians for political reasons. Ombudsman Liudmyla Denisova has mentioned 110 individuals, but she hasn't published the full list, so we can't confirm who's on it. At the same time, the SBU is talking about 227 POWs and civilians being held in ORDiLO. But this is probably just the tip of the iceberg, because even the International Committee of the Red Cross has full access to those territories. So we don't really know exactly how many are being held in ORDiLO.”

Matviychuk also points out that the political prisoners who were returned to Ukraine on September 7 were generally individuals who had high profiles thanks to the press. This, she says, suggests that public support and constant reminders in the press could help get more Ukrainians released.

“I'm convinced that the new administration in Ukraine is standing on two pillars: PR and technology,” says Matviychuk. “And I think it's a major accomplishment of civil society that it raised the question of Moscow's hostages to such a high level. Polls have shown that the PR the current leadership gains from can only be positive. With Ukraine's international partners, things are not so straightforward. If we don't start talking, right now, about the fact that hundreds more are still being held, then international leaders will be tempted to forget about this history, thinking, ‘Russia released Sentsov, so what more do you want?’ They all have more than enough important stuff of their own distracting them.”

If we consider the purely Ukrainian dimension of this issue, the first issue is that the ombudsman to represent Moscow's hostages still hasn't been appointed. It's worth pointing out that, after his inauguration on May 21, newly-elected President Volodymyr Zelenskiy met with the families of Russia's political prisoners and made a series of promises, one of which was to appoint such an ombudsman and to establish a Coordinating Office under the Office of the President.

“Officially there's still no person who is authorized by the president to engage in negotiations,” says Ihor Kotelianets, brother of political prisoner Yevhen Panov and director of United Parents of Kremlin Political Prisoners, a CSO. “Such a person is needed, in order to coordinate all agencies working to release our prisoners. A major role in the last talks that ended in the release of 35 Ukrainian was played by President Zelenskiy's aide Andriy Yermak. From what I know, it was he who led negotiations on behalf of Ukraine. Liudmyla Denisova was responsible for making sure the agreements were carried out. I think that they will continue to work this way going forward as well. Without establishing a separate entity. In fact, we requested that a non-politician to engage in this work without publicity. This was, in fact, Yermak. And from what I know, there won't be a Coordinating Council under the president, although they are planning something similar that they expect to announce shortly.”

The legislative base also remains hard to understand. Over the last few years, various MPs have tried to submit bills on the status of individuals persecuted for political reasons. The documents were more broadly known as bills on political prisoners. However, not one of them managed to get complete support, whether among the families of Moscow's hostages, or among human rights activists.

“From a legal point of view, they weren't done right,” explains Kotelianets. “That those who were released were provided with excellent medical care is entirely thanks to the president. Meaning hand-management. But there are other cases, as well. Take political prisoner Roman Ternovskiy, who was arrested in Russia in October 2017 and charged with ‘involvement in the activities of a banned organization, Praviy Sektor.’ He was released and returned home two weeks before the official exchange, and now he's trying to get rehabilitated. He lives in the city of Izium in Kharkiv Oblast. He has to travel to Kharkiv nearly every day, to undergo tests and do a lot of paperwork. And he's doing it

all out of his own pocket. Of course, he has no job and he's at the point of collapse. At the same time, everything possible was done for those who managed to be part of the exchange. Yes, that deserves enormous gratitude. But the issue has to be properly regulated in law. Right now, the president has a monomajority in the Rada and the Government appears to be prepared to approve the necessary changes to existing laws by the end of the year."

At the same time, says the rights activist, there is a slew of bills that the previous Rada failed to pass. One of them is the bill on war crimes, which is supposed to harmonize Ukrainian legislation with international humanitarian law. Among others, it has to introduce the concept of a "crime against humanity." The previous legislature only passed first reading of the bill and now it's up to the new Rada.

Another important step, for both political prisoners and POWS would be ratifying the Rome Statute, which would allow Ukraine to cooperate closely with the International Criminal Court. "There are too many myths surrounding this document,"



Free Stanislav Aseyev. *The Ukrainian Week* journalist has been held in captivity by DNR terrorists for nearly three years now

says Oleksandra Matviychuk. "For instance, one ex-MP once wrote that once we ratify it, all the Ukrainians who defended their country with rifles in their hands would be taken to court – because we never officially declared war. But this is nonsense. What's more, the ICC focuses on 'big fish,' not only those who carried out orders, but those who issued them. This is actually an opportunity to bring Vladimir Putin to justice. Let's assume Ukraine doesn't want to work with this court because it supposedly doesn't believe in the ICC's effectiveness. But what's the alternative?"

Meanwhile, Ukraine needs to keep in mind that several million Ukrainians live in occupied Crimea and Donbas. In effect, they are all hostages to Russia. As the previous imprisonments have shown, even approving the annexation of Crimea or the war in the Donbas doesn't protect anyone against being persecuted for political reasons. In fact, we shouldn't forget that Russia continues to actively use its anti-terrorist legislation... The most notable arrests in the occupied peninsula at the end of March all involved Crimean Tatars who were accused to belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has been declared an extremist organization in Russia and banned, although it has no history of extremist activity and is completely legal in Ukraine. More than half of those arrested were members of an organization called "Crimean Solidarity," which was established by the families of political prisoners from Crimea. These people went to court hearings and they collected and delivered "care packages" to detention centers. In effect, they were arrested for non-violent protests, but what Russia used against them was anti-terrorist legislation.

The relatives themselves note that the only possible effective way to avoid future arrests right now is probably further economic sanctions for violating human rights and freedoms. "If a thief steals something or someone and is not punished, he will continue to do so," says Kotelianets. "That's why I think sanctions might help. Today, for instance, there's a lot of talk about Nord Stream II. If the project is completed it will allow the Russian powers-that-be to survive without harm. But how can anyone build relations with a partner whose arms are covered in blood to the elbow? Europe may express 'concern,' but Russia happily ignores that 'concern.' It only understands when its wallet is hit. And so this wallet needs to be linked to Russia's violations of human rights, to its persecution of individuals for political reasons."

Getting back to the new administration, it's hard to say whether it has a strategic vision of resolving the issue of Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia. So far, there doesn't seem to be a strategy in place. However paradoxical this may sound, the actual negotiations process needs to take place outside the public eye, because unnecessary publicity is likely to get in the way of the return of these Ukrainians.

As sources close to the negotiations process told *The Ukrainian Week*, this has already happened before: Russia saw heightened interest in specific individuals and began to issue new demands, often demands that Ukraine could not meet.

The final strategic objective that those in power need to remember, as well as ordinary Ukrainians, is that even if every single hostage and POW were released, nothing would really stop Russia from turning around and arresting a whole lot more hostages among those who currently live in occupied parts of Ukraine. What is really needed is something to prevent Moscow from such actions in the first place. ■



PHOTO: YURIY LAPAYEV

Federico Aznar Fernandez-Montesinos:

“We need to be prepared to live with lower levels of security, which does not mean that we do not have to fight for maintaining a proper level of freedom”

Interviewed by
Yuriy Lapayev

During the 29th Economic Forum in Krynitsa-Zdroi, *The Ukrainian Week* has met professor of the Spain's National Defense Advanced Studies Center Federico Aznar Fernandez-Montesinos to discuss modern terrorism, ways to defend the core democratic values and possible solutions against existing threats.

How do you see the evolution of terrorism nowadays? What is terrorism in the post-truth era?

— Despite terrorism is illegitimate in nature, it is still politics. From my point of view, terrorism is the use of a certain degree of violence in order to achieve certain political objectives through media. In fact, modern terrorism starts with the coming of mass media. Terrorists try to control media timetable. In Spain and from the 60's to the new century, we suffered several terrorist attacks (from ETA) which happened at around 8 o'clock in the morning, because they wanted to be present in the 9 o'clock news, and then in the following daily editions, capturing media attention the whole day for them. Terrorism is a kind of theater. It is a fiction of war — war is a clash of powers — because they are a fiction of power. But fiction of power is, at the end, also Power. That's why it is very much related to the post-truth. Terrorism appeals to our emotions, to our feelings, our imagination,

instead of to our rationality. Terrorists are trying to control the imagination of people. This is very similar to post-truth. Terrorists need people to look at them, like actors. If you do not pay attention to the theatre, it becomes obsolete, it dies. That is why terrorism itself is connected to media; it needs coverage to be amplified, thus to be taken into account. And at the same time media need news too. A perfect symbiosis, let's say with all the reservations and differences, is therefore achieved. And the solution is not censorship at all, because media are a cornerstone of democracies. By implementing censorship we will only erode our values, which we want to protect and preserve. It will not work, because we cannot, we must not control the media. Any exception will make us to lose legitimacy, which is in this context another key issue. We must interact and be able to pass the message to the media professionals, so they decide by themselves what to cover or not; deontology is key as well. We need to contribute to raise some kind of self-control among the media against the post-truth and terrorism.

What is your view on activity of ISIS in Europe?

— ISIS, as a terrorist movement, is a reaction to globalization; it plays a role of antithesis to it. In Europe, some

700 people died because of Islamic terrorism since 2001. Of course, every lost human life is a tragedy. However, despite the impact of the attacks cannot be measured by the number of victims, but from psychological and political point of view, from my perspective, the scale of the Islamic terrorism threat is overrated. The drama of war is that it has a political sense, all is connected; it is a symphony. We can say that the actions of these so called lonely wolves is noise, unconnected noise, purely designed for media. From a military point of view the outcomes could be considered very poor. ISIS is still able to conduct its operations because the regional situation in Middle East is as it is; they failed to employ any firearm for their attacks, which were done mostly with knives, trucks... In fact I think they will change the tactic soon and will come back once more to massive attacks. In any case, it is necessary to find any kind of regional, endurable solution. It is needed and agreement among all parts involved. But the resolution of this crisis could take long time, as we have seen in other hot spots. Once we enter in a crisis, to leave it will be a problem.

Is it possible to bring security in current dynamic global situation?

— What is globalization? — it is interrelation. What happens with relations — conflicts? The more relations exist, the more conflicts are triggered. But, at the same time, I consider the size of those conflicts will be reduced, because other relations show up. The real problem is that they could become uncontrolled, and weapons of mass destruction could be used. In that case the escalation process could be also out of control, entering in an irrational dynamic. World War I started as a trade conflict, but led to the total destruction of Europe. Globalization allows improvement and development, but at same time, international security is getting lower.

On the other hand, my belief is that security is just a feeling. A person who lives in a very dangerous part of the world may feel himself quite safe. And a 100% security cannot be achieved. We live now in a unusual security situation, especially in Western Europe. But the globalization means that any international security problem in another part of the world could directly affect you. So we need to be prepared to live with lower levels of security, which does not mean that we do not have to fight for maintaining a proper level of freedom. This is the best way to defeat the problems, in my opinion.

Which modern threats you see as the most dangerous?

— The threats could be to a territory, as it is the case of Ukraine, to an organization or to values. Having that in mind, the society must prioritize what to protect. At the same time if the focus is purely threat-centric, the answer to terrorism would always be a kind of police state, and the answer to post-truth would be inevitably censorship. This is how we can lose our initiative and waste our time. And we are risking our values. Now, when we have more or less secure borders in Europe, the most important issue, which we cannot control, are manipulations. There is no real democracy if someone is controlling people's feelings and thoughts. Things like that are killing democracy.

Which tools we should use against manipulations?

— Today national borders could be considered a fictitious heritage from the past. One problem could be common

Federico Aznar Fernandez-Montesinos. Commander, from 1990 to 1991 served in Spanish Fleet. 1991-2002 — had military service in various units of the Fleet, Submarine Fleet and Maritime Action Force. In 2003-2005 was in General Staff of the Navy. From 2005 to 2012 — Professor. Higher Center for National Defense Studies. Higher School of the Armed Forces. Department of Strategy and International Relations. Since 2012 - Professor in the Spain's National Defense Advanced Studies Center and Principal Analyst of the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies (IEEE). He is Doctor in Political Science and Administration, Specialist in Religion Culture and Islamic Civilization and in relations of Spain with North Africa. Author of four books and more than two hundred academic articles mainly on topics related to Strategic Leadership, Theory of War, Terrorism, Polemology and Sociology

for all humanity. So to control internal or external manipulations cooperation between states is a must. Democracy is an expression of the will of millions of people acting together. This fact motivates that reactions are very slow, although they have a tremendous potential strength. We are not agile, we need time to respond. Taking that into account, consensus among democratic countries provides legitimacy to respond. The action of one country can be an example to others to act in the same direction. We can fight against manipulations with common laws, with courts to protect our core values and with media as a regulatory mechanism. Because democ-

DESPITE TERRORISM IS ILLEGITIMATE IN NATURE, IT IS STILL POLITICS. FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, TERRORISM IS THE USE OF A CERTAIN DEGREE OF VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE CERTAIN POLITICAL OBJECTIVES THROUGH MEDIA. IN FACT, MODERN TERRORISM STARTS WITH THE COMING OF MASS MEDIA. TERRORISTS TRY TO CONTROL MEDIA TIMETABLE

racy is always a balance. International consensus of democracies gives us effectivity and legitimacy both at the same time.

How to fight the state-level or state-sponsored terrorism?

— Due to globalization it can be said that we all have common borders, we are in touch with almost everyone, especially on the Internet. Democracies have relations with other countries, with lower levels of freedom. They have for example, companies which somehow are connected to government, they are actually the part of a state. How can we cope with this? In the same way we have discussed before — the answer is looking for international consensus. So any decision should come not from a single country, but from several, from 28 democracies in the case of the European Union. The problem is that international law is always behind the globalization dynamic. There are lot of gaps, which can be used by terrorists. At the same time, when dealing with terrorism you have to act rationally, not emotionally, so sometimes you have to act with some delay, step by step, thinking about the future. What has been done yet, cannot be changed, that is why we need to be cautious with our actions. We need to protect our values, because they make us as we are. ■

Scenic authoritarianism

Will Ukraine's new authorities be able to use populism to ruin democracy and usurp power?

Maksym Vikhrov

It is not always easy to see a real prototype behind fictional characters. Ukrainian politics proves otherwise. Analysts and journalists have spent the past few months trying to figure out how similar President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be to his former alter ego, Vasyl Holoborodko, the protagonist in his *Servant of the People* show.

The image of Holoborodko is not very original. The story of a “common-folk teacher” going on a fight against oligarchs for people’s happiness is an archetypical plot often used for official biographies of authoritarian leaders. The context allows to construct a legend about “outstanding personal qualities” of the leader and to present him as a champion of what “common people” want. Authoritarians use this will of the people to justify their tyranny as demolishing a “corrupt system” while playing by its rules is impossible. The Verkhovna Rada can be dissolved under a questionable procedure, if need be, or shot down with a machine gun as Holoborodko did in the movie. In his public work, Zelenskyy replicates Aliaksandr Lukashenka rather than Holoborodko: he acted tough on camera against local officials in Boryspil and customs officers in Uzhhorod. He made a bet for Dnipro mayor Borys Filatov to resign if he fails to finish the construction of the Central Bridge on time. President Zelenskyy happily accepted the proposal of his Chief of Staff Andriy Bohdan to be first to drive across that bridge in a KamAZ truck — exactly what Vladimir Putin did when he opened the Kerch Bridge. It is blatantly obvious that Zelenskyy and his party came to power through populism, and they are not go-

ing to quit populism anytime soon. Will their populism be a prologue to authoritarianism?

No authoritarian order or dictatorship rises from the will of an individual political leader or a team, but rather from a combination of circumstances and context. First, it needs tools to excessively concentrate power — in the hands of the president in Ukraine’s case. Ukrainian judiciary is a weak spot as it has proven ready to accommodate to political changes. But no authoritarianism was established



thanks to courts alone so far. More than a loyal court, it needs strong political hierarchy in power. Viktor Yanukovich had the Party of Regions, a disciplined force seasoned by business and political battles and cemented in a system of patron-clientele loyalties. Zelenskiy has no such instrument. The Servant of the People is the largest entity in the new Verkhovna Rada, but its capacity to act in a consolidated manner is questionable. Just like Zelenskiy's team, the Servant of the People has members with diverging views or without any views, representing different camps or getting in power by accident thanks to the rushed recruitment of candidates for the election. The President's party and team will, of course, streamline their structure with time. But that will not necessarily save them from internal divisions. So far, the Servant of the People looks too loose to become an iron fist of the President in the Verkhovna Rada.

The only way to authoritarianism without solid support base in parliament is through force. That is what happened in Russia where *siloviki*, the law enforcers, and officials with background in security agencies constitute the backbone of the regime. It is far more difficult to usurp power by force in Ukraine. The case of Yanukovich proved this.

Firstly, the protest potential of Ukrainian society is far higher compared to that in Russia or Belarus. At the very least, nobody can usurp power in Ukraine quietly without attracting the attention of the international community. The international community is perfectly willing to cooperate with Putin, as proven by the latest return of Russia to PACE. But it applies harsher standards to Ukraine, even if Ukraine's geopolitical and nuclear status is different from that of Russia. The EU could have signed the Association Agreement with Viktor Yanukovich. But his use of violence against his people immediately turned him into a pariah in the eyes of the West. This means that the West can still tolerate a semi-democratic president like Orban or Yanukovich at the dawn of his presidency. But open usurpation of power is a red line. Coupled with the potential of civic protest, this creates the first obstacle on the way to authoritarianism.

Secondly, Ukrainian elite lacks consensus. The notorious "oligarchate" exists as a notion while the real political and economic interests of oligarchs are quite contradictory. While Putinism survives on corporate discipline of *siloviki*, the Ukrainian elite will hardly ever put all its eggs in one basket. Nor will it do so to give the basket to an adventurer dreaming of replicating Yanukovich's "success".

Thirdly, for authoritarianism to happen, society must want it. 60% of Ukrainians agree to a greater or a lesser extent that Ukraine needs "a strong leader" rather than "talk about democracy", according to a 2018 survey by the Democratic Initiatives foundation. But this must be interpreted with caution, as other surveys show something different. For example, 21% Ukrainians agree that Ukraine cannot do without a Stalin-type leader who will "come and put things in order". 61% believe otherwise, a survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in 2019 finds. Only 14% support change to the presidential republic, and 25% support the expansion of the president's powers, a 2019 survey by the Democratic Initiatives shows.

It looks like rhetoric in favour of a strong leader largely reflects frustration with ineffective governance rather than the actual demolition of democracy in Ukraine. While Zelenskiy got unprecedented support in the second round, this hardly means that Ukrainians see a messiah in him and are willing to hand over their freedom and

destiny to him. His actual result is the 30% gained in the first round. The rest is the vote of protest. It is possible to get to power with protest vote, but it is hardly possible to stay in power with it. Even the 30% were accumulated thanks to the fact that Zelenskiy avoided to say anything specific throughout his campaign so that all categories of voters liked him.

He will no longer be able to act like this as President, therefore his support will inevitably fade — just like it did for any of Ukraine's presidents. So, this base of support will grow weaker. Mass media are an important tool of influence on public opinion. The phenomenon of Zelenskiy is the best proof as he literally came to office from TV screens. But he will hardly be able to rely on TV to rescue him. Trust for Ukrainian TV channels is not as high as is often believed, normally measuring at half of any channel's popularity rate. While nearly 60% of Ukrainians watch 1+1, just 35% trust it. For Ukrayina, the ratio is 44% versus 22%, or 48% versus 22% for Inter, a 2019 survey by the Kyiv International Institute

NO AUTHORITARIAN ORDER OR DICTATORSHIP RISES FROM THE WILL OF AN INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL LEADER OR A TEAM, BUT RATHER FROM A COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONTEXT.

FIRST, IT NEEDS TOOLS TO EXCESSIVELY CONCENTRATE POWER

of Sociology finds. So to claim that Zelenskiy became president thanks to the authority of 1+1 would be to unnecessarily simplify things. Furthermore, Ukraine's top TV channels are owned by the oligarchs whose interests are not identical. Therefore, they are unlikely to act for a cumulative effect. In Ukraine's modern history, media coalitions have mostly emerged to kill the popularity of the incumbents, not to boost it. The same is true for the rest of mass media which will hardly persuade Ukrainians to accept authoritarianism, even if they join forces. Nor will they persuade people to accept authoritarianism from Zelenskiy's team.

As a result, Ukraine is unlikely to drift towards authoritarianism anytime soon. The new government has as few chances to accomplish it as any previous government had. What can happen is Zelenskiy playing Holoborodko, Lukachenka or Putin on camera which will hardly reinforce his power, but it will entertain the audience — something he does professionally. Public scolding of officials and trolling of political opponents is what the protest electorate wants given its unsatisfied frustration with the previous government. We may still see the President at a gym, on an airplane, riding a horse or diving in the sea — the show cannot be mundane.

When it comes to arbitrary use and abuse of power, Ukraine's flawed democracy leaves vast space for that. While authoritarian inclinations of the new leadership are still a vague concern, its readiness to use institutional weak spots for its benefit is already a fact of life. It is now important for civil society to not find itself in a position of generals preparing for wars of the past. It should prepare to quickly bloc relatively small but massive manipulations implemented through parliament, courts and other creative channels rather than for a frontal attack from yet another usurper. This is not an invitation to relax. Pooled together, small manipulations could damage Ukraine as much as an open demarche from those in power. ■

Following a foreign script

In international relations, Ukraine keeps reacting to foreign initiatives rather than coming up with its own

Alla Lazareva, Paris



A supporting role. Lately, the world press has often brought up the name of Ukraine's president—but in the context of domestic American political games

"Crimea is a disputed territory today, but let's not talk politics," says Svetlana Adaskina with a charming smile. She is the deputy general manager of the Hermitage. Today, the new Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Center in Paris built at Kremlin cost is hosting a roundtable, called "The South Coast of Crimea – territory of a global heritage." The hall is half-full, mostly with Russian émigrés living in France, but also a few Frenchmen interested in business contacts with the Russian Federation. Colorful slides with gorgeous Crimean landscapes, an interesting historical excursion, and the insinuating tones of erudite speakers... "Science beyond politics," is one of the memes of the information war that has been given new life with the help of Emmanuel Macron's new Russian policy.

The time is past when Russians quietly waited for the world to get used to "Russian Crimea." Now they can boldly brag about what they stole while the French Ministry of Culture not only does not react but, on the contrary, posts information about events that just half a year ago would have been called controversial, if not provocative – on its own site. "You yourselves elected a president who promised 'peace soon' and is demonstratively 'ready to compromise,'" is how French colleagues justify it when asked about the new thaw in Franco-Russian relations is mentioned.

"I'm shocked by the open promotion of Russian propaganda from the Ministry of Culture of France, which, as part of its Days of European Heritage sees no problem – even after numerous appeals! – to hold an event under

its aegis that effectively legitimizes the occupation of Crimea,” Ukrainian Ambassador to France Oleh Sham-pur wrote in his Twitter account. “A strange disconnect with the official position.” Indeed, there were quite a few appeals – from the embassy, from community activists, and from Ukrainian organizations. And still. The “new opportunities” that Macron seemed so excited about during President Zelenskyy’s visit appear to refer to a new “flexibility” in Paris’s attitudes to the standards of international law.

“When will Russia return stolen Crimea to Ukraine?” asks local activist Volodymyr Kohutiak. “Never,” the audience responded in Russian. “Crimea’s ours.” The organizers clearly felt very much at home. Intellectual “non-political” discussions were saturated by insistent references to French investments in the 19th and early 20th centuries. “Tatar monuments? There are hardly any,” the deputy manager of the Hermitage assured her audience when commenting on her personal photographs of archaeological digs on the southern shore. Unique archeological finds on this illegally taken territory are being removed to the renowned St. Petersburg museum. Without mincing words, this is the documented theft of cultural property. It’s clear that the well-known, erudite, distinguished French art critics who enthusiastically applaud Marian Lacombe’s film “The cultural heritage of the south coast of Crimea and its custodians” clearly don’t care.

“It’s not important to whom Crimea belongs today: Russia, Ukraine or someone else,” is how Russian Ambassador to France Aleksei Myeshkov puts it. “The main thing is for us all preserve and develop this unique corner of human cultural heritage together.”

Unconvincing conversations about a new agreement “à la Budapest memorandum” with the participation of Moscow and a Russian roundtable on Crimea a few steps from the Eiffel Tower may indeed be phenomena of different orders, but their roots are the same. Both of them about Ukraine slipping from a subject of foreign policy to an object. Vague rhetoric, the lack of reference to a victory over the aggressor state on Bankova, direct phone talks between Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Master of the Kremlin – all these novelties not only are not only chilling the country’s western partners, but also allow them to assume that Kyiv is basically not against capitulating on Moscow’s terms, provided that everything is nicely wrapped and nicely presented.

“Kyiv and Moscow understand the notion of ‘establishing peace’ quite differently,” tweets Kostiantyn Yelyseyev, former ambassador to Brussels and a one-time diplomatic advisor to ex-President Poroshenko. For Ukraine, peace means the restoration of territorial integrity, while for Russia, it’s the slow *post-factum* legitimization of its theft of Ukrainian territory. According to experts at the Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies, the compromise in the recent release of hostages was a “tactical retreat” intended to “draw Bankova into a network of informal contacts and shadowy commitments.”

According to French lawyer Bernard Poitou, the biggest danger of such direct negotiations is not even the loss of such a valuable diplomatic resource as the international support of Ukraine’s allies but, more importantly, the establishment of a dangerous precedent: swapping the very clear requirements of international law with verbal agreements. “This kind of acquiescence to authoritarianism will have bad long-term consequences for all of Eastern Europe,” says Poitou. “It strengthens both Putin and

all the other authoritarian leaders, who will see that time overcomes principles, and force beats rules.”

Yet another ambiguous precedent that is being very cautiously commented on in human rights circles is Ukraine’s consent to exchange its own citizens, from Volodymyr Tsemakh to supporters of the separatists, at Putin’s whim. No matter how guilty these individuals are before their own country, they should be judged by a Ukrainian court. Where is the guarantee that President Zelenskyy’s next step won’t be to agree to turn over to Russia those who are opposed to his administration, so that Moscow can settle other accounts? Until not long ago, prisoners were exchanged on the basic principle of standing up for our own, whatever the reason might have turned out to be for their imprisonment. Has trading in Ukrainian citizens become the new tactic? And if so, how far is the new administration prepared to go in its desire for easy popularity?

THE INABILITY TO PROMOTE HIS OWN POLICY
INITIATIVES WILL PUSH THE PLAYER INTO
THE PAWS OF FUTILE OBJECTIFICATION.
THEN OTHERS BEGIN TO PLAY ON HIS BEHALF
AND FOR HIM, INSTEAD OF HIM

Compromising with the enemy is always, one way or another, capitulation on the part of the victim. All the more so when the victim is the first to declare that it wants peace... Macron can and should be criticized for his shortsighted haste in relations with Russia, but this is unlikely to remove the most painful issue for Ukraine from the agenda: with what and how is its new president prepared to pay for a “quick peace”? After the trilateral group met in Minsk on September 18, Moscow began screaming from all its media outlets that Ukraine had “once again torn up the peace agreement.” You’d think that Ukrainian tanks had entered Kursk and begun shooting. But if the enemy is so interested in the “Steinmeier formula,” whose interests does it serve and who stands to risk the most in following it?

According to estimates by French diplomatic sources, a meeting in Paris in the Normandy format might take place on October 15. Macron can’t wait to become a successful peacemaker. Moscow, meanwhile, will take full advantage of the opportunity to catch some more fish in the muddied waters. Kyiv has supposedly agreed to a mysterious “Zelenskyy formula” whose contents have not been revealed. As experienced diplomat Yelyseyev suggests on his Twitter page, “It makes sense to take the idea of a ‘Zelenskyy formula’ and try to turn it into a real Ukrainian formula for peace in the Donbas and to get together at the Normandy summit with this vision. Three components: no damage to the state structure, no damage to the sovereignty and territorial integrity, including Crimea, and no damage to the rights of Ukrainian citizens.” Whether Bankova takes these ideas to heart remains to be seen.

In general, it’s only in chess that you can start as black and win the game. The inability to promote his own policy initiatives will push the player into the paws of futile objectification. Then others begin to play on his behalf and for him, instead of him. Five years of war finally brought Ukraine, through pain and blood, into its own – imperfect but having accomplished something through its suffering. The risk now is that all this will be lost. ■

Hollywood on the Black Sea coast

Odesa in the life of Yuriy Yanovskiy

Volodymyr Panchenko

"Our steps in cinematography were attempts of a child learning to walk"

Yuriy Yanovskiy

The Sailing Master, 1927

Cinema triggered a lot of excitement in the 1920s. Ukraine was no exception to this trend: millions were curious about the art of motion pictures. Film studios in Yalta and Odesa made films since the pre-revolution time but intensified production. Established in 1922 in Kharkiv, then capital of the Ukrainian SSR, a special state entity called All-Ukrainian Department for Cinematography better known under the abbreviation VUFKU was in charge of this mass art.

Demand created supply. The new industry needed screenwriters, and many writers switched to that: Dmytro Buzko, Mike Johansen, Hryhoriy Epik, Oles Dosvitniy. Writer Valerian Pidmohylnyi initially intended his *Misto* (City), a popular novel, for cinematography; so did Volodymyr Vynnychenko, a veteran of counter-revolution who then lived in Prague, with his *Sonachna mashyna* (The Sun Machine), the first utopian sci-fi novel in Ukraine.

The magazine *Kino* (Cinema) was launched in 1925. Thanks to Mykhail Semenko, an unstoppable generator of ideas, poet and founder of Ukrainian futurism in literature, futurist poet Mykola Bazhan, then 21, was appointed its chief editor. Another of Semenko's proteges joining the creation of Ukrainian cinematography at its very birth was Yuriy Yanovskiy (1902–1954). He had spent some time working at the screenwriting section of the All-Ukrainian Department for Cinematography before he was appointed art editor of the Odesa Film Studio, also referred to as a Hollywood on the Black Sea coast, in the spring of 1925 at just 25. But his affair with cinematography began somewhat earlier with his novella *Mamutovi byuni* (A Mammoth's Tusks) written in 1924. Complex in composition and images, somewhat playful with its parodic component, it ended with mysterious words from the protagonist: "Let the flute cry all it needs, at least at the end of the screening!", making the audience realize that this was a cry from the heart of an artist longing to do



Thinking in images. Yuriy Yanovskiy, 1927

real cinematography, not to simply satisfy the primitive taste of the viewers who were "in love with tricks". Mykhail Semenko was happy: "His (Yuriy Yanovskiy's – **Ed.**) novellas are cinematographic. You can make a film out of every novella. He thinks in shots. That's someone who should make films!" he said.

Yanovskiy had to move to Odesa to make films. Studio director Pavlo Nechesa, a former sailor, recalled later: "No film was released from Odesa Film Studio until Yanovskiy or Babel who actively cooperated with us reacted or wrote a new script." Babel fit the Black Sea Hollywood perfectly. His scripts were used for a number of films, including *Travelling Stars* and *Benya the Scream*. The author of the famous *Odesa Stories*, he often featured in *Kino*. Yuriy Yanovskiy admired the unusual portrayal of events and people in Babel's *Red Cavalry*. "I love reading Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Allan Poe, Jack London, O. Henry, Ambrose Bierce, Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, Chesterton, Tennyson, Voltaire, Anatole France, Gogol, Babel. I don't like any Ukrainian writers, other than his-

tory by Mykhailo Hrushevsky," Yanovskiy once admitted. Isaac Babel's ironic and passionate novellas were part of Yanovskiy's personal model of literature. Illustrative of this are similarities to the *Red Cavalry* in Yanovskiy's description of the war conditions in Ukraine in 1919–1920 in his own works.

Just like Babel, Yanovskiy edited and "improved" scripts of other people and wrote some of his own. One old poster had the following announcement: "Produced by the All-Ukrainian Department of Cinematography. HAMBURG. An uprising of Hamburg workers in 1923. Script by S. Shreiber and Yu. Yanovskiy." Director Volodymyr Balleziuk shot the film. Shreiber was a co-author only nominally. He was the captain of a German ship. Yanovskiy met him in Odesa and used his stories for the script. It was *Hamburg on Barricades* by Larysa Raisner that served as the starting point for him.

Posters looked intriguing. "All Odesa will speak about the extraordinary film Hamburg," they claimed. Professor Oleh Babushkin, the author of *Yuriy Yanovskiy's Film Legacy*, a research book published in 1987, claimed that the film was indeed successful. Critics wrote much and well about it. *Kino* magazine (No8, 1926) described it as "a great event in Ukrainian cinematography" pointing to the "profound coverage of the revolutionary topic", directing and technical accomplishments. The audience will no longer have a chance to make its own opinion about the film – it survived as a fragmented copy and researchers never found the original script for Hamburg.

WORK WITH YURIY TIUTIUNNYK

In 1926, a film titled *PKP* – for *Polska koleia panstwowa* or the Polish State Railway, or Poland Bought Petliura in an unofficial version, – was shot at the Odesa Film Studio. Yuriy Tiutiunnyk, a general and commander with the UNR (Ukrainian People's Republic) army, played himself in the film: he had been commandant of Odesa seven years earlier when the army led by Otaman Nikifor Grigoriev entered the city in the spring of 1919. In early May 1919, Yuriy Yanovskiy, 17 at that time, heard and saw Tiutiunnyk read out Grigo-

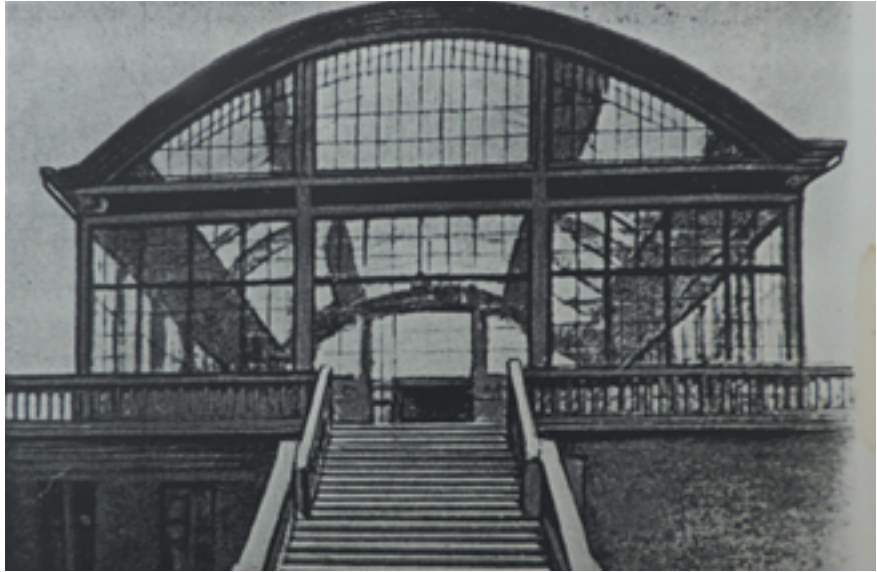
riev's proclamation about quitting the Red Army at the church square in his native Yelysavethrad, later Kirovohrad and now Kropyvnytskyi. Their paths crossed shortly after.

UNR Army General Tiutiunnyk was among the key organizers of the Winter Campaigns. In April 1922, the Kyiv newspaper *Proletarian Truth* published a tough decree of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee: "Declare beyond law the following persistent criminals attacking the freedom of Ukrainian working people, irreconcilable enemies of Ukraine's peasants and workers: Pavlo Skoropadsky, Symon Petliura, Yurko Tiutiunnyk, Nestor Makhno, Petro Vranghel, Kutepov and Borys Savinkov." Tiutiunnyk was granted amnesty in 1923. Just like Savinkov, he was first lured to return to Ukraine from abroad, then arrested, then used for propaganda purposes – including in the PKP film.

The former army commander was a talented writer, so the bolsheviks allowed him to work at the Book Union publishing house. He attended the meetings of VAPLITE, a literature club led by writer Mykola Khvyliovyi. Shortly after that, following the trendy infatuation with cinema, Tiutiunnyk turned into screenwriter under the name Yurtyk. He and Mike Johansen wrote the first script for Oleksandr Dovzhenko's *Zvenyhora*. He brought in the key metaphor of *Zvenyhora* as Ukraine, and it was further enriched with fragments inspired by Taras Shevchenko's mystique poem *The Great Dungeon*. Because Tiutiunnyk's life was closely tied to *Zvenyhorodka*, a town in Cherkasy Oblast, he shared the local legend of the treasure buried by the haidamaky in one of the town's hills with Johansen and the story was used for the original script.

The two Yuriys – Tiutiunnyk and Yanovskiy – became friends in Odesa. Yanovskiy grew fascinated with the experienced general-turned-scriptwriter. When a fragment of Yanovskiy's novel *Chotyry shabli* (Four Swords) came out in issue 2-3 of the *Life and Revolution* magazine in 1926, the character Shakhai was clearly inspired by Yurko Tiutiunnyk. A "leader of the peasants' element", a person of steel will: "He was extremely in control. Looking calm as a hypnotist, he held the keys to the soul of the entire army." In Yanovskiy's novel, Shakhai is an unusual hero in exceptional circumstances. With his unbreakable will, wit and disregard for death, he looks like Jack London's Sea Wolf and cossacks from Ukrainian heroic epos combined. That symbiosis featured in much of Yanovskiy's prose.

The fragment has many battle scenes, but it was no place for scrupulous descrip-



Ukrainian Hollywood. The pavilion where Odesa Film Studio started

tion of reality. It hardly said who exactly Shakhai's guerillas and their enemies were, making just one reference to the red flag, "intolerably hostile to the blueness and seen from afar... Like a bird bathing in twilight colors... it emerged and soared, waving its wings." Shakhai's units fought under this flag. But who was their opponent? Yanovskiy had little interest in historical accuracy. He was fascinated with the creation of "a new poem" to glorify the heroes of the modern time caught in the storm of the history of Ukrainian peasants. Hence the epic element of the story where the author mixes pompous lyricism ("Shakhai looked at his guerillas covered in the *dust of victory*...") with "diminished heroism" ("The horsemen, covered in blood like butchers, swayed in their sad-

dles..."). Also, the fragment was material for cinema. It had elements similar to the style of Dovzhenko's films and to Ukrainian poetic cinema of the 1960s.

"The steppe seemed greener overnight. The grass grew by the hour, not by the day. You could take it in your hand and feel it extend and grow. The horse-trodden path extended all the way to the horizon. Horses were rushing.

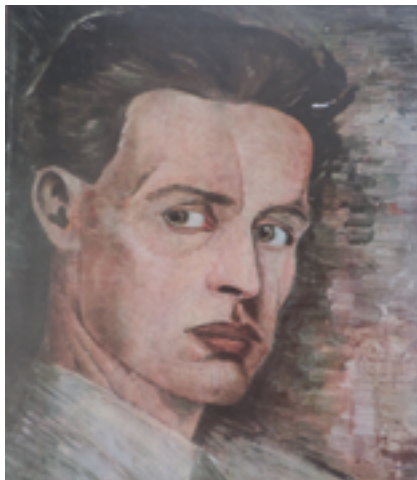
All of a sudden, the clinging of swords, hats flying in the air and horses neighing notified of Shakhai's victory. A horseman stormed to the top of the mound and stood there like a monument. His extended hand froze pointing forward as if bronze ran through his veins. The southern sky was burning in the background."

This is how this fragment titled *Raid* ends. These could perfectly be episodes from a poetic film with a rapid change of background, a play on metaphors, beautiful movement and a monumental freeze frame at the end. This was literature moving closer to cinema, arming itself with film techniques. Jack London, Guillaume Apollinaire, John Dos Passos did similar experimenting.

Could Tiutiunnyk the screenwriter possibly know that Yanovskiy's *Four Swords*, inspired by his Odesa stories about guerilla war, would eventually become a major work of his life?

YANOVSKIY AND DOVZHENKO

Yanovskiy's closest friendship in Odesa was with Oleksandr Dovzhenko. It started back in Kharkiv where Dovzhenko worked as cartoonist at *Visti* (News) newspaper under the name Sashko. Yanovskiy knew that his friend just recently returned from



Artist-turned-director. Oleksandr Dovzhenko's self-portrait. 1924



The duet in art. One of Oleksandr Dovzhenko's illustrations for Yanukovsky's article. Yanovskiy wrote a humorous comment for it: "... Odesa will say on day one that Charlie Chaplin was born from the merry heaver Kaplan"

Berlin in 1923 where he had been Secretary of the Ukrainian SSR Consulate General and studied at Willy Jaeckel's private art college in Berlin. Now, in 1926, Yuriy Yanovskiy as art editor of the All-Ukrainian Department for Cinematography easily lured Dovzhenko with opportunities in filmmaking. He first commissioned a poster for the Blue Bag film from him. Then, author Oleksandr Hryshchenko writes in his memoirs, he said to Dovzhenko that "We have few scripts. We need to start it all from scratch. And no script for a children's film. But we need to develop cinematography for children. Would you write a script for a children's movie? Be a champion in this genre." Dovzhenko got excited about the idea. He sat down to think about the storyline that night and was writing a script titled *Vasya the Reformer* in the coming days.

Did Yanovskiy bring Dovzhenko to filmmaking then? Yes. But one thing to remember is that the seed fell into the ground that had by then been fully prepared for it. Dovzhenko already felt and realized that his purpose as an artist was not limited to drawing cartoons. A great talent, Dovzhenko could not stay away from the booming cinema. All he needed was some sort of an impulse, and Yanovskiy provided that with his attractive proposals.

The friendship of Yanovskiy and Dovzhenko is good enough for a book. In fact, Yanovskiy wrote those, making Oleksandr Dovzhenko protagonist in his novella *V*

lystopadi (In November, 1925), essay *Bayhorod* (1927), novel *Mayster korablia* (The Sailing Master, 1928), and Hollywood on the Black Sea Coast, a book of essays from 1930.

"In November was inspired by my conversations with Dovzhenko," Yanovskiy wrote later, somewhat mystifying the readers with the reference to "we, the publisher". "This sweet friend, then an artist, could tell beautiful stories and make up adventures: he was a great adventurer. Once Dovzhenko came home (he shared an apartment with one of our other authors), perplexed and anxious. Sipping wine at night, Dovzhenko told our authors, Bazhan and Melnyk, that it would be nice to blow up the Church of the Myrrhbearers. All the friends, tipsy on the wine, made some of their own stories. Everyone liked that trick. Our author then wrote *In November*. Now, four years later, we, the publisher proclaim that the spot where the church stood is now vacant. In the future, Kharkiv Theater of Mass Plays large enough for four thousand viewers would stand on the ruins. We have to recognize the author's accuracy of prediction. The ruining of churches was unthinkable in 1926 and became reality in 1930."

This betrays Yanovskiy's style: play with the audience, some scandal, a mix of irony and exaltation. The novella itself, titled after November of 1925, displays a symbiosis of scandalous irony and exaltation, a game and "lyricism encrypted in

a personal code". It features two characters: an artist newly returned from Berlin (Dovzhenko) and his friend, ironically referring to himself as a scribbler (Yanovskiy). Its centerpiece conflict is perfectly in style of classic tradition of Romanticism: an artist's fantasy clashes with trivial stereotypes of the environment. The artist's extravagant imagination paints a "grandiose giant city" where there is no dirt and an unusual sculpture of a girl with a sheaf is where the church used to stand. But the prose of sinful reality crushes his soaring fantasy time and again. This creates an effect of the two worlds of Romanticism: the fantastic imaginary one and the trivial real one that stand in contrast to each other. German Romantic author E. T. A. Hoffmann had similar images of castaway and tragic artists rejected by reality that is hostile to art. In this regard, *In November* may be one of the most Hoffmann-like works by Yanovskiy. It is filled with provocative jokes and coated in a feeling of mystery. The novella portrays Dovzhenko as a young dreamer, even if his hair starts to grey early, with his unpredictable genius artistic imagination free of banality. It exudes faith in the power of a friend's restless talent. It also has a trace of an alarming prophecy of the aggressive misunderstanding Dovzhenko would often face in the future.

Some time later, Yanovskiy dedicated an essay titled *Istoriya maistra* (A Story of a Master) to Dovzhenko. Published in *Kino* magazine in 1927, it had words that sounded like a comment to the novella: "Dovzhenko's soul searching started after he arrived in Berlin where he went to an art school. He would sit at 'the lawn' in our room and explain his interpretation of art. That interpretation was paradoxical. He summarized his work. His paintings, full of sense and storyline, seemed to glimmer in colors. Here an incredible motion froze, a thought reflected on the forehead and painted with a brush. Yet, something small was missing. If only one could touch the context of that painting, turn the character's head just a little bit more and look at it from a different angle. 'There are few of these static moments – I want the living motion of space in the drawing, a story that links emotions of people, alive and warm.'"

Yanovskiy shows Dovzhenko's intense search for places to apply his talent in art in his memories of their nights at the Kharkiv apartment, in "the lawn" – a carpet big enough for several families – where heated discussions about ways of literature, art and cinema took place. Still a cartoonist, Oleksandr Dovzhenko was then at a crossroads in his artistic life. When another friend, poet Mykola Bazhan re-

flected on those heated conventions in November 1925, he claimed that it was “a breaking point in life” for Dovzhenko, further aggravated by a major tragedy in his family – his wife Varvara got seriously sick and both faced a tough choice. Dovzhenko chose Odesa and cinematography.

“Sev is my first friend. When he came into cinematography as director, he directed the first small comedy and failed brilliantly,” says Editor in Yanovskiy’s *Sailing Master*. That’s what happened in reality. Dovzhenko’s first films *Vasya the Reformer* and *A Berry of Love* directed in Odesa were not successful. Still, his friends believed that his time of triumph would come. “Yanovskiy was fascinated with Dovzhenko, and Dovzhenko was fascinated with Yanovskiy”, writer Oleksandr Hryshchenko recounted. “Impressed by Yanovskiy’s early prose, Sashko (short for Oleksandr – Ed.) said to me: Yanovskiy has a great future. Another time, after Yanovskiy watched *Zvenyhora*, he told me: Dovzhenko has a great future... They were such great friends, like-minded brothers, to the point that both fell in love with the stunning (actress and film director, Dovzhenko’s second wife – Ed.) Yulia Solntseva who came from Moscow to star in

some films. Solntseva chose Dovzhenko. Yanovskiy survived this intimate crash stoically.”

Describing this as an “intimate crash” for Yanovskiy was perhaps an exaggeration. But he definitely shared mutual fascination with Dovzhenko. Whoever has doubts about that should read Bayhorod, Hollywood on the Black Sea Coast and the *Sailing Master*. Here is one fragment from Bayhorod inspired by memories of young years with a character matching Dovzhenko’s features and biography: “A young man in a short coat and a grey hat is waiting for a tram. His clothes are good but look poorly fit, and the hat seems redundant on his big head.” The character works in some institution in Berlin. The image of Dovzhenko is coated in soft romantic irony, as always in Yanovskiy’s works.

LOSING THE JOB

Things started turning bad for Yanovskiy as art editor of Odesa Film Studio in the late summer of 1927, even though “director ... trusted him fully in all artistic matters, and was benevolent in financial matters”, according to memoirs of Mykola Bazhan. “I fear that *The Little Golden Calf* by Ilf and Petrov used Yuriy as a prototype for their generous editor willing to offer

advance payments and proposing them even to the Ostap Bender characters of which there were plenty around the studio then,” Bazhan wrote ironically.

Heorhiy Ostrovsky, a film expert from Odesa and the author of the well-researched *All That Remains* book, found an instruction dated August 20, 1927 from Oleksandr Shub, the All-Ukrainian Department of Cinematography board director, where para 6 was a verdict for Yanovskiy: “From this date, art editor of Odesa Film Studio, Comrade Yuriy Yanovskiy is fired for absolute lack of knowledge in cinematography, ruining of films with his editing, and for writing humorous scripts alien to the soviet spirit.” The instruction betrays Shub’s irritation. Something that studio director Pavlo Nechesa turned a blind eye to triggered administrative rage in the high offices. With his arguments on the knowledge of cinematography, poor editing and humorous scripts, Shub took this too far. Apparently, his notion of cinema art made him suspicious of Yanovskiy’s experiments and his exalting and ironic style.

Yanovskiy remained at the Odesa Film Studio until August 1927. He was fired a week before turning 25. Still, his affair with cinematography was to continue. ■



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Tertium non datur

The key stages of Ukraine's independence, important lessons and agenda for the current government

Volodymyr Vasylenko

Declaration of Ukraine's independence in August 1991 was a remarkable historical event. It broke the chain of Russian imperial enslavement that long bound the Ukrainian nation, marking the ultimate crash of the communist system in Europe and the world.

TECTONIC SHIFTS

The restoration of Ukraine's independent statehood was a geopolitical triumph for its national liberation movement. As a result, the USSR vanished as a communist empire – the “evil empire” in Ronald Reagan's words – and as a threat for the democratic world. Ukraine's independent statehood is a monument to all fighters for its freedom and an essential element of its development as a successful nation-state of European type.

In its path since declaring independence, Ukraine has seen a number of undeniable accomplishments. Despite all efforts by Russia, its agents and the fifth column, Ukraine still develops as an independent state where democratic institutions function and respect for human rights is ensured.

THE RESTORATION OF UKRAINE'S INDEPENDENT STATEHOOD WAS A GEOPOLITICAL TRIUMPH FOR ITS NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT.

AS A RESULT, THE USSR VANISHED AS A COMMUNIST EMPIRE

Ukraine is a universally acknowledged full-fledged member of the international community. It has not caved in to Russia's blackmail and pressure. Instead, it has made its civilizational choice by signing the Association Agreement with the EU and taking a path towards membership in the EU and NATO.

Ukraine has succeeded in confronting Russia's armed aggression which gained a temporary tactical victory by occupying Crimea and some parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts but faced defeat strategically. Resistance to the Russian aggression has proven that Ukraine has patriotic leading class and citizens, as well as the will of the majority to live in an independent state of the European, not Asian type.

Tectonic shifts in the mindset of most Ukrainian citizens accompany resistance to Russia's armed aggression as they opt for European civilizational values as the reference point for the development of Ukrainian society and state. Civil society has emerged in Ukraine and makes the government listen to it. A driver and a guarantor of progressive development in the country, it resents communist ideology.

Ukraine has embarked on the path towards energy and economic independence from Russia. Decommunization is ongoing and conditions are in place for the independ-

ent Ukrainian Church to develop. Ukraine has managed to overcome dangerous economic crises and ensure economic growth, reform the banking system, conduct decentralization, launch a series of reforms – including in the pension and health care systems – and create the legal and institutional infrastructure for fighting corruption.

At the same time, the government failed to ensure quick economic growth and fair distribution of national wealth, or to create an environment for Ukrainians to accomplish decent quality of life. The economy critically depends on the growing foreign borrowings that burden the budget. A large part of the population struggles beyond the poverty line. Judiciary reform failed. Anti-corruption mechanisms do not work effectively. Some essential spheres, such as humanitarian and environmental, lack effective instruments to protect vital national interests.

Some Ukrainians, mostly older, believe that Ukraine's independence is the source of all current problems. In fact, the deep and fundamental reason for the lack of the much wanted progress in Ukraine's development is the ruinous impact of two empires, the tsarist and its communist heir, that forcefully held the Ukrainian nation in their chains.

THE DIFFICULT LEGACY

Once it restored its independence, Ukraine became the master of its life. Yet, it also inherited an extremely complex package of problems. Its development as a successful state depends on the way these problems are solved.

Ukraine was seen and actually was a gem in the tsar's crown, then in the communist empire. Their power institutions consistently took steps to destroy national identity of Ukrainians preventing any attempts of Ukraine's political self-identification as an independent and self-sufficient national body.

As a result of determined anti-Ukrainian politics in both empires, Ukraine long developed as a dependent fragment of the imperial whole. That development was framed by imperial problems, not the needs of the Ukrainian nation. The Kremlin's policy became especially cunning, violent and massive after the 1917 October Revolution. The communist regime in Ukraine was built to be very resilient while its punitive apparatus was used for permanent persecutions and purges of Ukrainian national elite.

As a result, Ukraine's national statehood structure was seriously distorted by the time it restored independence. Based on rejection of private property, its economy was part of the heavily centralized imperial economic complex. Its development strategy was planned from Moscow. It was primarily oriented at expanding the capacity of the soviet military industry. After independence, Ukraine had to build a self-sufficient national economy on the fragment of the imperial command economy it inherited.



PHOTO: UKRINFORM

Historic decisions. The Verkhovna Rada banned the Communist Party on August 30, 1991, shortly after Ukraine's independence was declared. But it revived just two years later, up until it was banned again in 2015

This was a powerful fragment but it barely had any full production cycles of its own. Its enterprises were oriented at servicing the entire Soviet Union, had no proper international connections and were not integrated into the global economy.

Based on totalitarian paternalism and aimed at cultivating consumerist mentality, the social sphere received leftover funding from the state. It satisfied people's basic needs but failed to provide proper quality and standards of life. Salaries and pensions set by the state were identical within every given professional sector, but they were quite low. Queues for everything and deficit of everything, from food to clothes, household appliances, cars, homes, quality medical services etc., were two landmark features of the soviet realm. On the other hand, soviet party nomenclature had political and material privileges. The communist regime created total material dependence of society from the state, using it for powerful leverage and totalitarian control over society.

A strong part of the USSR Armed Forces was stationed in Ukraine's territory. But it did not have its national army, so it needed to create one basically from scratch.

Throughout the existence of the Soviet Union, the population of Ukraine was a target for permanent indoctrination through the soviet system of education and through daily communist propaganda. A great share of the population in many cities around Ukraine, especially in the

South and the East, was zombified and denationalized mass, not conscious citizens. Soviet cultural policy was fully integrated into the overall strategy for the liquidation of the Ukrainian nation with signs of racist discrimination. The USSR leadership allocated 3.8 karbovantsi per capita for cultural development in the Ukrainian SSR compared to 12.8 karbovantsi for the same purpose in the Russian SSR. Inferiority complex was constantly cultivated in Ukrainians through manipulative claims about the supreme status of the Russian language and culture.

The communist regime focused its efforts on implementing the concept of merging nations into the soviet people, a uniform Russian-speaking community. For this purpose, massive russification was conducted in Ukraine.

The "soviet people" was indoctrinated with hostility towards the capitalist West, its culture, values and institutions, especially NATO labelled as an aggressive military bloc.

The task of all soviet entities was to cultivate imperial mindset in Ukrainians where there was no place for an independent Ukraine or for its self-sufficient cultural development.

As a summary, it is fair to say that the imperial humanitarian policy focused on dismantling Ukrainian national identity as the deep foundation of Ukrainian statehood. Therefore, Ukraine had to start overcoming its imperial legacy in the humanitarian domain from below the base- ►



Accomplishments. Civil society has emerged in Ukraine as a result of three Ukrainian

line. Another important aspect is the massive demographic losses the Ukrainian nation suffered as a result of its war against Russian oppressors, famines and two world wars. These losses seriously undermined Ukraine's demographic potential and led to quality losses in the top intellectual class. As a result of active and constant fight of the communist regime against what it labelled Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism, as well as the lasting russification policy, the part of Ukrainian intelligentsia that escaped repressions was terrified and confused, and major groups of it were exterminated.

STRATEGIC MISTAKES

Despite massive efforts of the communist regime to crush Ukrainian national liberation movement, the best representatives of the nation never stopped fighting for Ukraine's national rights and freedom openly or underground, legally or illegally throughout the 20th century. Their resistance to the imperial oppression at different stages of history took different forms, scales and methods, but it never stopped. They enjoyed the understanding and moral support of the silent Ukrainian majority that always existed and never accepted the communist regime. *Narodnyi Rukh* (People's Movement) woke this energy of the Ukrainian majority, using its power in the struggle to restore Ukraine's independent statehood.

The People's Movement fulfilled its historical mission by playing a crucial role in the restoration of independence. However, its leadership failed to use all of the potential available then to deal with the consequences of the imperial legacy and to further develop Ukrainian statehood on the foundation of different quality. People in the movement, including its proactive part, subconsciously assumed that all issues of statebuilding would be solved as soon as Ukraine declared independence, and it would automatically become a successful state.

But the miracle never happened: Ukraine's society and political establishment were divided ideologically, the nation-state mechanism remained underreformed, and no systemic policy of statebuilding was developed. Quite a few average citizens and politicians, including the sup-

porters of Ukraine's statehood, advocated for keeping close ties with Russia and opposed Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO. A part of the political establishment linked successful development to unconditional economic assistance and strong political support of the West. At the same time, a segment of the political establishment supported by some layers of society was hostile to the mere idea of Ukraine's independence, trying to sabotage and undermine the establishment of a European-type Ukrainian national democratic state. This segment was represented by part of the soviet party nomenclature whose members stayed in power in independent Ukraine. The Verkhovna Rada in the transition period was the reflection of that social divide. Elected before independence in the spring of 1990, it passed the act of independence and stayed in place after that.

Given the lack of professional knowledge and experience of statebuilding, as well as underrating of the threat of an imperial revanche, the leaders of Ukrainian national democratic forces made at least three strategic mistakes:

- they did not create one strong ideological party on the basis of the People's Movement that would be Ukraine-centric and capable of resisting the Communist Party of Ukraine and other pro-Russian forces in Ukrainian politics;

- they failed to nominate a single candidate in the first presidential election;

- they failed to reach an agreement to support the proposal of the newly-elected president Leonid Kuchma to hold snap general election as soon as possible.

When most of the 239 MPs from the communist majority voted for the Act of Independence and the Rada Presidium then banned the Communist Party on August 30, the democratic opposition assumed that the communists would be "obedient" from then on. According to that illusionary assumption, the communists would vote in line with the MPs from the People's Council, a group of around 120 MPs that constituted the opposition minority.

Naturally, these assumptions proved false. The Communist Party of Ukraine was indeed banned for some time. But the communist majority in parliament stayed



PHOTO: UKRINFORM



PHOTO: ANDRIY LOMAKIN

in place represented by its MPs. It wasn't long before the communists rebounded, pushing a new resolution of the Presidium on May 14, 1993 to allow "citizens of Ukraine that share communist ideas" to create party organizations in line with the legislation. The communists held their founding convention on June 19, 1993 in Kyiv declaring the establishment of the new Communist Party of Ukraine. That convention was numbered XXIX while the foundation documents claimed that the newly-established party entity was "the heir of ideas and traditions" of the banned old Communist Party of Ukraine. The restored Communist Party was registered with the Ministry of Justice on October 9, 1993, and ran in the 1994 parliamentary election conducted under the first-the-post system in two rounds over March-April. After the election, the Communist Party of Ukraine had 85 MPs in the new Rada. Another 39 mandates went to the ideologically related parties, including 18 to the Peasants' Party, 14 to the Socialist Party, 4 to the Labor Party, 2 to the Civic Congress and 1 to the Party for Revival of Crimea. The People's Movement of Ukraine, transformed into a party by then, had 20 MPs. Other centrist and right political parties had 25 mandates: 9 for the Ukrainian Republican Party; 5 for the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists; 3 for the Ukrainian Republican Party; 2 for the Democratic Party; 2 for the Socialist-Democratic Party; 2 for the Ukrainian Conservative Party; 1 for the Christian Democratic Party and 1 for the Ukrainian National Assembly. 168 MPs were elected to the Rada as non-aligned with any party.

Because the leaders of the anticommunist segment of Ukraine's political establishment failed to create one powerful ideological party in the first years of independence, the Communist Party of Ukraine consolidated while national democrats fragmented. As a result, the Rada failed to 1) pass a law on lustration and the formation of a new truly Ukrainian government; 2) keep representatives of security services and the Kremlin's agents out of parliament, and 3) launch effective reforms to overcome communist legacy and develop European-type Ukrainian nation-state.

THE CORNERSTONES OF UKRAINE'S FOUNDATION

The government bodies established after Ukraine declared independence lacked a critical mass of patriotic professionals with Ukraine-centric mindset and experience in state building. The lack of worldview and ideological unity amongst representatives of legislature and executive power led to uncertainty about Ukraine's civilizational choice and its notorious multivector foreign policy. The absence of well educated people with experience in nation-state building and strategic thinking in the country's leadership and civil service resulted in their underestimating the Russian threat and overrating the opportunities of Western support.

The sense of national inferiority that infected most of Ukraine's elite prevented the realization that they could build an independent Ukrainian state relying on themselves in the first place. Few realized that this was not a one-time act, but a complex and painful process that had to develop in line with objective laws of nation-state shaping and operation in place at that time, and taking into account the need to fix the distortions the Ukrainian nation had experienced in the years of forced stay in the communist empire.

The elite in power did not have a clear understanding of the fact that any state should stand on a solid foundation with five cornerstones – the economic, security, social, humanitarian and legal blocs. Nor does it seem to have a clear understanding of it now. These cornerstones are the basis and the source of survival for the state, society and citizens.

The function of the economic bloc is to create national wealth and material resources to sustain all state structures and apparatus, and to provide proper living standards for its citizens. The security bloc should defend the state from domestic and foreign threats. The social bloc should take care of the nation's physical health by implementing a fair social policy and creating the environment allowing every citizen to freely fulfill his or her potential and meet his or her material needs. The humanitarian bloc is responsible for the mental health of the nation, preservation and strengthening of its identity via nation-



An easy choice. Volodymyr Zelenskyy is doomed to face defeat in the clash with Russia without a well-thought through Ukrainocentric policy

centric humanitarian policy in language, education, media, history and religious segments. The legal bloc is a system of laws and regulations based on the Constitution to regulate social relations in the key sectors, and the judiciary system that should operate in line with the rule of law, ensure constitutional order, proper legal protection of the citizens' rights and justice in society.

Each of these blocs should interact closely in a balanced way, not operate autonomously. That is the only way for the state to be an effective and self-sufficient social body that can properly guarantee national security, social justice and welfare for its citizens. Unfortunately, Ukraine's state-building, reform and modernization in the key spheres is still unbalanced, inconsistent and chaotic.

The system of oligarch clans remains a huge factor that hampers Ukraine's development. Unless dismantled, it will never allow Ukraine to overcome corruption, build fair justice, restructure and modernize national economy, identify priority spheres of economic development, create competitive business environment and encourage the emergence of small and mid-sized owners whose work creates national wealth and ensures their own well-being.

Ukraine has successfully countered Russian armed aggression but it temporarily lost part of its territory after long overlooking the needs of the national armed forces, which culminated in intentional demolition of the army under the Yanukovich regime. Ukraine's current leadership and part

of society realize that the country needs to strengthen and increase its defense capabilities. However, defense of the country and victory in the war never grew into a cause of the whole society because of government policy.

Ukraine still lacks consistent Ukrainocentric humanitarian policy. This creates a threat for national unity and undermines the country's identity, the deep foundation of national statehood. It is important to remember that Russia conducts armed and humanitarian aggression against Ukraine aimed at more than hostile anti-Ukrainian propaganda, poisoning of Ukrainians with the Russian World ideologemes or denial of Ukraine's right to statehood. Its goal is the total destruction of Ukrainian identity that would lead to the ultimate elimination of Ukraine as a nation, a state and as part of the geopolitical realm.

Proactive and consistent humanitarian policy is a tool that can shape national elite and the leading governing class – Ukraine could not operate effectively without it. In other words, the lack of a consistent Ukrainocentric humanitarian policy for language, culture, education, information, religion and historical memory is a strategic threat No1 for the existence of Ukraine's statehood. Launching this policy alongside strengthening Ukraine's defense capacity, eliminating the system of oligarch clans and improving well-being of Ukrainians should be the top priority of the new government if it is Ukrainian and cares about Ukraine's future.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's team has found itself in a unique situation after it won the presidential and parliamentary elections. Never in Ukraine's history had the pro-presidential parliamentary faction such an overwhelming majority in the Verkhovna Rada. So any law or other act supported with the political will of the President and his team will be passed by the Parliament. According to Art. 93 of Ukraine's Constitution, the President has the right to sponsor laws, and the Verkhovna Rada considers the laws he defines as urgent in the priority order. All this makes Zelenskyy's powers virtually unrestrained politically, even if not necessarily in *de jure*, allowing him to quickly create the legislative base to reform and reorganize the country, and to remove distortions and imbalances in its development. President Zelenskyy has a unique opportunity now to preserve high trust of society by launching effective reforms in economic, defense, social, humanitarian and rule of law spheres.

AFTER THREE REVOLUTIONS

Ukraine evolved as an independent state through three main stages:

- the 1990 Revolution on Granite, a symbol of the nation's aspiration for independence;
- the 2004 Orange Revolution, a protest against the anti-democratic regime of Leonid Kuchma and violations of the citizens' right to the freedom of election; and
- the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity, a protest against the criminal regime of Viktor Yanukovich and an attempt to deprive the Ukrainian state from its right to free choice of its civilizational path.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's presidency can be a victorious and final stage in the peaceful construction of Ukraine as a successful national democratic state of European type, or yet another intermediary stage in the modern Ukrainian revolution, and not a necessarily peaceful one. Whether or not Ukraine goes through another revolution depends on the conduct of its new leadership. Given the current state of the Ukrainian society, the new government may trigger a strong social explosion if it repeats the mistakes of its predecessors, imitates reforms and abuses its powers. The power of that explosion will be equal to the level of expectations that were never higher before and never spanned so wide across the young population, including the people involved in countering Russia's aggression.

As a result of three Ukrainian revolutions – or three stages of the modern Ukrainian revolution, to be more precise, – civil society has emerged in Ukraine along with the trend of supporting the political forces that choose to strengthen Ukraine's independent democratic national statehood and its further European and Euro-Atlantic development.

Still, some politicians remain in Ukraine that enjoy the support of the electoral minority zombified by the Russian propaganda. They try to impose initiatives and decisions on the entire society that will undermine Ukraine's independent statehood, turning it into a Russian World gubernia with no rights. These backward political outsiders are now mostly in the Opposition Platform – For Life faction in parliament. Led by Viktor Medvedchuk and Vadym Rabinovich, this platform is not parliamentary opposition, but a group of people taking an anti-state, anti-people and anti-national position and defending Russia's imperial interests. It is unsurprising that one of the newly-elected MPs recently referred to it as "occupation platform".

Three other factions in the new Rada, including Batkivshchyna (Fatherland), European Solidarity and Holos (Voice), can and should create democratic parliamentary opposition and suggest that the Servant of the People refrains from any moves to legitimize Medvedchuk's and Rabinovich's group, i.e. refuse to give it any quotas in parliamentary or executive authorities.

At the same time, the democratic opposition should agree with the Servant of the People to constructively cooperate and determine red lines. The parties should agree that the following things are unacceptable:

- a change of Ukraine's civilizational choice of full-fledged membership in NATO and EU as recorded in the Constitution;
- any territorial concessions to Russia or special status to any parts of Ukraine;

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT RUSSIA CONDUCTS ARMED AND HUMANITARIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE AIMED AT MORE THAN HOSTILE ANTI-UKRAINIAN PROPAGANDA, POISONING OF UKRAINIANS WITH THE RUSSIAN WORLD IDEOLOGEMES OR DENIAL OF UKRAINE'S RIGHT TO STATEHOOD.

ITS GOAL IS THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF UKRAINIAN IDENTITY

– amnesty to people involved in war crimes or crimes against peace during Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine;

– total lustration and politically-motivated persecution of the previous government;

– abolition of the moratorium on free sale of land without recording "private family farms as the basis of Ukraine's land system" in legislation and without legal regulation of rules for the sale of farmland; and

– abolition of laws on decommunization, the policy to ensure Ukraine's sovereignty in the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, and on ensuring the use of Ukrainian as the state language.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the leaders of three parliamentary factions, including Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, Petro Poroshenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, should assume that parliamentary opposition is in power, too. They should cooperate constructively in the issues related to Ukraine's statehood, strengthening of its identity and political unity, improving its defense and national security, countering any imperial ambitions, including Russia's armed aggression, and overcoming the consequences of this aggression. This is an imperative requirement. Ukrainian forces that are not in parliament could and should play an important role in defending Ukraine's national interests. For now, they are fragmented and have not yet managed to agree on establishing a powerful Ukrainian ideological party. President Zelenskyy could play a positive role in bringing them together and encouraging them to act jointly to benefit the state.

Successful development of Ukraine and success of Volodymyr Zelenskyy as President will depend on whether he and his team deliver consistent Ukrainocentric domestic and international policies, or on whether they cave in to the pressure of domestic and foreign anti-Ukrainian forces to undermine the foundation of Ukraine's independent statehood. Volodymyr Zelenskyy could enter history as a great president of Ukraine relying on the Ukrainian majority. Or he could face total defeat if he opts to satisfy imperial ambitions of other states and play into the aspirations of the anti-Ukrainian minority. *Tertium non datur.* ■

October 13, 19:00**Dakh Daughters Band****Glinka Concert Hall
(prospekt Soborniy 183,
Zaporizhzhia)**

This flamboyant freak-cabaret continues to astound its fans with amazing surprises. In the fall, the girls start their national tour in which they will premier their original interpretations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*. The musicians will accompany Alice during her mysterious wanderings while creating their parallel reality. Don't expect to see the world that Carroll invented, but be prepared to dive into its atmosphere. That's Act I. The second part of the evening will be dedicated to hits and compositions that have already won over Dakh Daughters' fans.

**October 18–20****Feast of Wine & Cheese****Potocki Palace
(vul. Kopernyka 17, Lviv)**

In Lviv, the fall is associated with the delicious Feast of Wine & Cheese. For three days, you can try out all the cheeses and wines you want, whether you're a real gourmet taster or just love good food at this huge wine and cheese fair. Degustations galore to test your taste buds on all sorts of fare, master classes in culinary arts, and even a craft studio to tempt you to try your creative cooking magic. Winemakers will share some of the secrets of their craft. Bonus feature: *Syrnyk Day*. Ukrainian-style farmer's cheese dollar pancakes will be fried according to an ancient Lviv recipe for anyone who wants a true taste sensation. Not to be missed!

**October 24, 19:00****Spirit of Georgia****Opera House
(prospekt Dmytra Yavornytskoho
72A, Dnipro)**

Spirit of Georgia is the concert program that awaits audiences when the *MKHEDRULI* State Song & Dance Ensemble of Georgia comes to Dnipro. The premier of this excellent troupe has been anticipated for a long time in Ukraine, so a full house is guaranteed. Concertgoers will be entertained with an entire series of amazing performances, from whirlwind fighting scenes with real Georgian swords to colorful presentations of Georgian lifestyles, traditions and history in song and dance form. And that's not even to mention the dramatic ethnic costumes, fantastic lighting and brilliant Georgian music...

**October 25, 19:00****Onuka and NAONI****International Center of Culture
and the Arts
(Alleya Heroyiv Nebesnoyi Sotni 1)**

This has to be one of the most awaited musical events this fall. The inimitable ONUKA presents an entire concert based on her *MO-ZAIKA* album: *Vsesvit* [Universe], *Holos* [Voice], *Strum* [Stream], Guns don't shoot and other songs performed live. What's more, these favorite hits will be accompanied by Ukraine's renowned National Academic Orchestra of Folk Instruments (NAONI), with more than 40 folk instruments, powerful acoustics, enormous energy, and unique arrangements. But most of all, that personal connection with the audience for which fans love ONUKA so much.

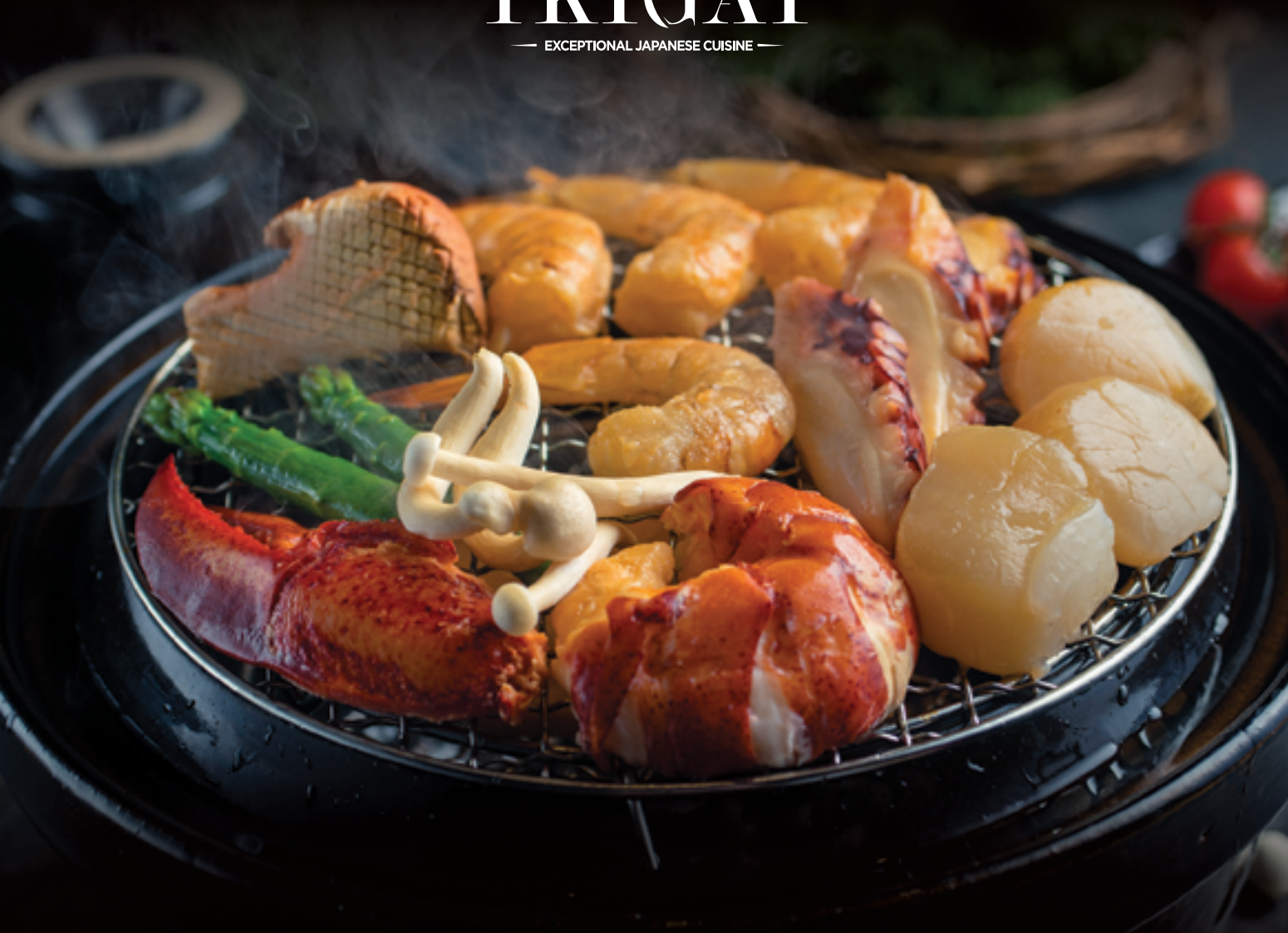
**October 27, 20:00****The Rasmus****Lviv Arena
(vul. Striyska 199, Lviv)**

Time flies, but musical legends live on and on, never quite disappearing from the radars of music lovers. Rasmus's fifth studio album, *Dead Letters* (2003), marks 15 years of performing together! So the band has decided to celebrate together with its fans with a big European tour. Fans in both Lviv and Kyiv have been invited, too, so the end of October this year promises to be HOT in Ukraine! This most popular band in Finland has put out 9 studio albums, won many music industry awards at home and abroad, and boasts an army of fans around the world.

**October 31, 19:00****Michael Gira (Swans)****CARIBBEAN Club
(vul. S. Petliury 4, Kyiv)**

Michael Gira is known in the music world mainly as the frontman for the group Swans, but this time he will perform in a different capacity: just him, his guitar, and his own music. Come enjoy the depth of the execution and the mellow mood. Although it's not Gira's first solo tour, it's a format he himself is just evolving. "Sitting by yourself on the stage holding a piece of dead wood and wires and hearing your own voice is no easy challenge that I gave myself many years ago..." His full houses and excited reviews suggest that the public likes this musician's solo concerts very much indeed.





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