

A report
on the condition
of culture and NGOs in



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A report
on the condition
of culture and NGOs in

Ukraine

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PAWEŁ LAUFER



MYKOLA RIABCHUK



ANDRIJ SAWENEĆ

IN UKRAINE

The term “report” used in the title is by all means deliberate and fiddly, similarly to the expression “in Ukraine,” debatable in the Polish language amongst those who got accustomed to the phrase “on Ukraine.”

In the first case, keen to avoid academism and diplomacy in capturing the “Ukrainian issue,” we are unwilling to downgrade the representative status of – sometimes even personal – authors’ “reports.”

In the second case, we would like to contribute to the revision of the cultural and worldview coordinates that “for us” and “according to us” are currently, or continuously, assigned to Ukraine, which in our opinion is reflected by the colonial “on.”

In *A Report*, subject matter experts carry out a cross-sectional evaluation of the condition of culture, alternative culture, and NGOs in Ukraine. It is an attempt to portray the current situation with reference to the European context and the internal conditioning in Ukraine. The report attempts at the diagnosis within such areas of interest as: the publishing market, literature, theater, cinema, musical stage, art as such, cultural infrastructure, the media, civil society, human rights, education, or the legal environment in which NGOs operate.

A Report on the Condition of Culture and NGOs in Ukraine constitutes a specific and sometimes personal guide to the cultural sector and NGOs, consisting of articles, studies, report summaries, as well as interviews of outstanding experts and practitioners in these fields. The authors are predominantly Ukrainian. They have attempted to answer three questions: what is the situation?, what do we expect from each other?, how can we achieve it?

We wanted the attempt to answer these questions in an approachable, understandable, and frequently direct manner to bring closer the still frequently incomprehensible and rejected Ukrainian narration. The current narration, which lately seems to be evading even what is qualified as “fashion.”

Paweł Laufer

Formulating questions and ordering the received responses, we, the editors of *A Report*, would like to receive not merely an ordinary collection of texts, informative and analytical to some degree, but also demonstrate their mutual synergy. This would result in creating a view on contemporary Ukraine as a country of a rich, diversified, and prospective culture, with a young and dynamic civil society which cultivates and supports this culture in spite of the general dysfunctionality of the unreformed post-communist state.

Ukraine must deal simultaneously with two extremely difficult legacies: totalitarian and colonial. They reveal themselves in the ineffectiveness of old institutions, the conservatism and corruption of comprador elites, the noticeable influence, or even domination of the colonial and neocolonial discourses, the authoritarian-paternalistic mentality of a significant part of the society, as well as its profound structural deformations. Not only does Ukrainian culture oppose these legacies, but it also comes up with a clear alternative – European, modern, multiethnic, and multilingual, derived from the tradition of national spiritual resistance and inspired by global search for novelty and freedom. The multitude of styles and genres – doesn't it sound like its greatest achievement in the last twenty years?

Mykola Riabchuk

A Report does not include everything as planned. What remains to be expected is that the recognition of unquestionable thematic gaps in this publication will turn into a strong incentive to fill them – though in a different time and by different means.

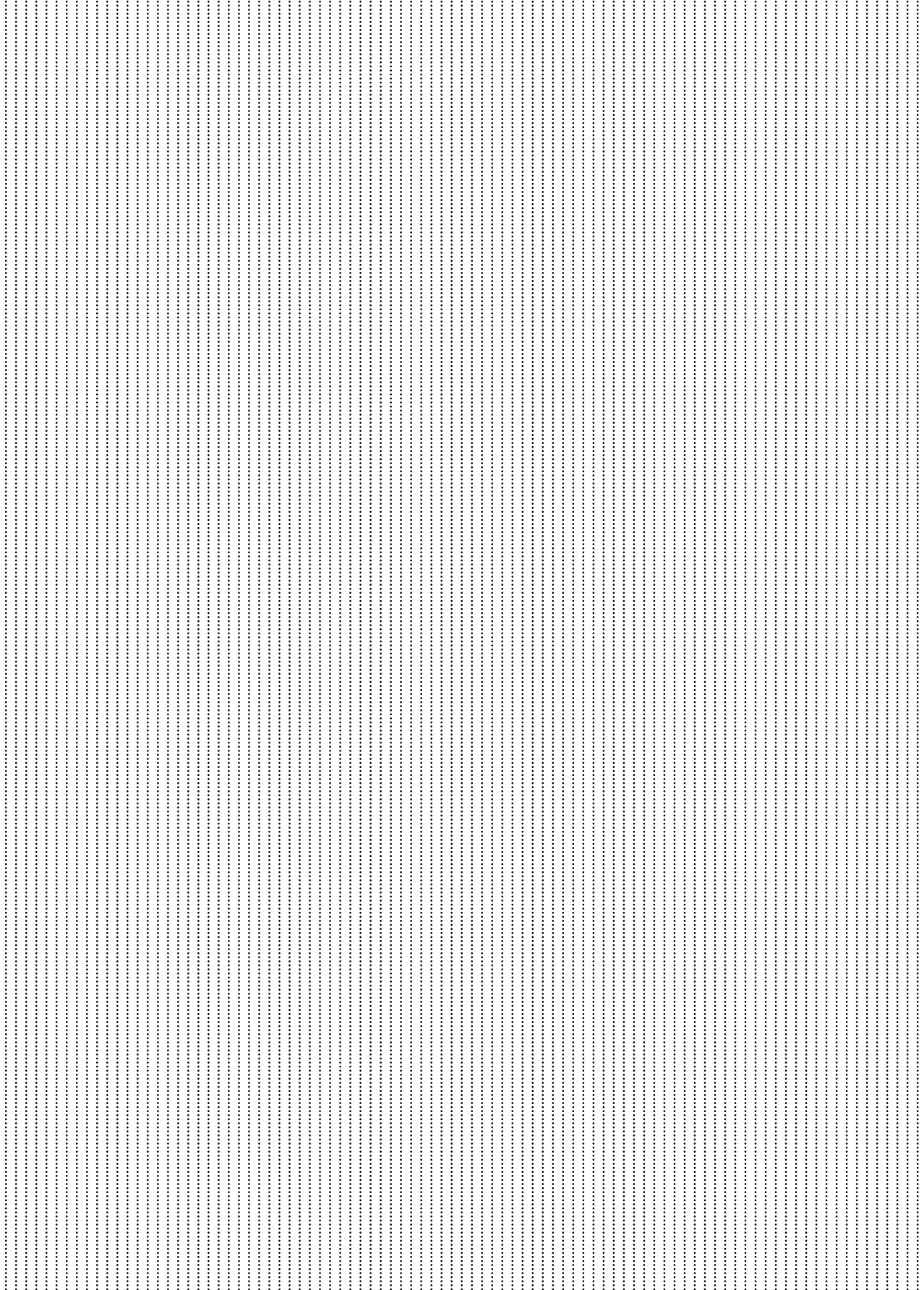
I sincerely believe that this report accomplishes its mission, giving voice to the authors – acute observers of today's Ukrainian reality and, in most cases, also the insiders of cultural circles and NGOs, authors and activists, active participants and, in a way, the architects of the described processes and events. Disregarding its low level of “academism” and high intelligibility, I hope it does not border on populism. It shows an objective, divergent view on the specificity and paradoxes

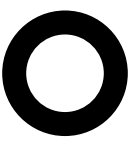
of contemporary Ukraine. It is a portrayal of generations and environments which are and will be creating future Ukraine – undoubtedly unlike the present one, closer to its European neighbors, predictable, yet attractive to the world, governed by law and loyal to its citizens; in a word – better.

Andrij Saweneć

The report is a result of the cooperation of the Open Culture Foundation, *Kultura Enter* magazine, *Krytyka* journal (Kyiv), Workshops of Culture, Managerial Initiatives Foundation.

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HORIZON



MYKOLA RIABCHUK*

UKRAINIAN CULTURE AFTER COMMUNISM: BETWEEN POST- COLONIAL LIBERATION AND NEO- COLONIAL ENSLAVEMENT

Independence provided Ukrainian culture with freedom from ideological restrictions and repressive pressure of the Communist Party and KGB. However, it did not liberate it from the inertial power of the imperial discourse and did not annihilate its ability of self-preservation and self-recreation with the help of neo-colonist practices and institutions. The absence of physical repressions gives Ukrainian culture a certain chance, but does not eliminate the general ambivalence and uncertainty.

25 years ago, one of leading Ukrainian intellectuals Ivan Dziuba published the article *Do we perceive Ukrainian culture as integrity?* which became an important event of the then cultural life and seems not to have lost its topicality until today. Despite all perceptible censorial and autocensorial limitations typical for that

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period (the middle of Gorbachov's *perestroika*), the author not only showed the generally evident lack of integrity in Ukrainian culture, but also let to understand that structural incompleteness and disfunctionality are a reflection of its colonial status, a consequence of a certain repressive policy that combined both institutional and discursive means.

"Firstly, – Dziuba explained, – a whole range of its sections are weakened, and some are missing at all. Secondly, the Ukrainian language does not fulfill its social and cultural functions while the national language is the core of the national culture, and even non-verbal arts are still connected with the language, conceptions formed by the language, and the very sounding of it through a number of mediations... But if today we have the fact of deviation of whole socio-cultural layers from the Ukrainian language, especially technical and scientific intelligentsia, citizens in general, it is not just narrowing the sphere of the usage of the Ukrainian word... It is also tremendous depletion of Ukrainian speech, reduction of its intellectual and spiritual potential, namely, emasculation of Ukrainian national culture in the end. The national culture consists not only of works of professional and folk art, it is already its peak, while its basis first of all lies in day to day life of the word and thought, numerous spiritual acts in the word."¹

Ivan Dziuba further refers to Alexander Potebnia, letting to understand that his own interpretation of the language as "the core of the national culture" is neither new, nor too revolutionary (or, as it might seem at the time of the publication, seditious). Full-scale functioning of culture depends on full-scale functioning of the language – in all spheres of life, all subcultures, both formal and informal. Simple as it may seem, this obvious truth still remains not adopted, which can be seen particularly in wide-spread complains about the absence or, let's say, underdevelopment of Ukrainian cinematograph, all achievements of which are practically restricted to either speechless genres or genres with purely provisional language use (documentaries, multiplication, or films on historical or rural topics). As the most mimetic genre, fully and directly connected to the reality, including language, cinematograph does not cope with authentic voicing of whole layers of city life. The point is that language resources of today are not rich enough – both for translating Shakespeare and dubbing Western films. One thing is while watching a foreign film we assume *a priori* that we embrace the translating

1 I. Dziuba, *Chy usvidomliuyemo natsional'nu kul'turu yak tsilisnist?*, Kultura i zhyttia 1998, no 4.

convention, but when Ukrainian films sound as translations (and this is exactly how practically all films about modern life produced in Ukrainian sound) – this is a different matter.

However, another problem is clear in this case, voiced, though not so vividly, by Ivan Dziuba. The integrity of the national culture on the level of synergistic interaction among various genres and on the level of personal communication, and, respectively, the interaction of artists and artistic environments is meant here. Ukrainian artists, as Dziuba pointed out, are little interested in the creativity of one another and, consequently, are rarely inspired by one another. In fact, they are just as little interested in Ukrainian cultural heritage, they often do not even know national language-cultural codes and are unable either to actively collaborate with other Ukrainian artists or creatively improvise in the field of Ukrainian culture. Their language-cultural codes are defined mostly by Russian culture (or foreign culture mediated by Russian one), and their cultural reference field is, as a rule, outside Ukraine – first of all, in Moscow.

Once again, cinema as the most syncretic genre shows the absence of synergistic interaction among its creators on the individual level and, more widely, the absence of interaction among them and the national culture – on the level of language-cultural codes and ability to improvise in the broadest allusive-associative (for actors – intonational) ranges.

Looking back today at the 25-years-old publication, we have to acknowledge that Ukrainian culture by its social status never became a culture of a sovereign nation in the years of independence – namely, the culture that functions on the whole national territory, more or less embraces the whole population, and bases itself on codes understandable for most citizens and language naturally used by them in everyday life. The popular culture by many definitions functions as a regional, provincial part of the “general-imperial” all-Russian culture – this is how it is perceived not only in the metropolies but, largely, in the very Ukraine as well. Speaking about “high” Ukrainian culture, it is deprived of all diversity of various mutually enriching connections with the mass culture, is limited by the ethnic ghetto, and functions practically as a minority culture in a seemingly own and seemingly sovereign country, fatally marginalized by foreign discursive and dominant imperial-creole institutions.

Without radical political changes and systematic overcoming colonial legacy (that also needs political will), the full-scale functioning of Ukrainian culture in

Ukraine seems to be problematic. The totality of bright cultural phenomena does not transform into functional integrity and does not create a flush cultural process. Popular culture is rather an index than a factor of this integrity (in our case, its absence). Ivan Dziuba seems to have been one of the first Ukrainian intellectuals to clearly realize it: "The completeness of functioning of the natural culture demands the development of mass and entertaining genres and forms (...) of all youthful and urban subcultures. We tend to think that none of these is necessary... We seem to need only masterpieces of high art. But there will not and cannot be any without the understratum of the mass culture, without the possibility of full-scale functioning on all levels and in all sections, without interaction, counteraction, protest rejection, struggle of different trends, tendencies, and even different taste levels, different qualities."

It should be stressed that the tendency to oppose the "entertaining" (popular) and "serious" (high) culture is very old and typical not only for Ukraine. However, here this separation has acquired specific features because of the colonial situation and, consequently, practically full absence of high – educated and wealthy – social strata as main consumers and promoters of the "high" culture. Practically during the whole 20th century, scarce Ukrainian intelligentsia in Naddniprianshchyna satisfied its needs in the high culture from Russian sources and did not consider the opportunity to create its own high culture seriously. In fact, during all this time, it viewed itself and its mission through the eyes of the "Other" – the eyes of the dominating imperial culture that regarded Ukrainian culture as a harmless regionalism at the most, a kind of annex capable of enriching the all-Russian culture with dialect forms and local color.

The essence of the approach is represented in articles by Vissarion Belinsky, particularly in the review of the Ukrainian almanac *Lastivka* and a "little-Russian" opera *Svatannia* by Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko from 1841: "The Little-Russian language really existed in the times of Little-Russia's independence and still exists – in the monuments of folk poetry of the glorious times. But it does not mean that they had their own literature: folk poetry does not form literature yet... Literature is usually written for the public, and by public we mean the class of the society for which reading is a kind of constant occupation, a necessity... A Russian novelist can show people of all social strata and make all of them speak their own language: an educated person speaks educated language, a merchant – the language of merchants, a soldier – the language of soldiers, a peasant – the

language of peasants. The Little-Russian dialect is the same for all strata – the peasant one. Therefore, our Little-Russian writers and poets write short stories about everyday life. The contents of such short stories are always the same, and they are mainly interested in peasant naivety and the naive charm of the peasant dialect. . . Fine literature it is! It breathes only the simplicity of the peasant language and rusticity of the peasant mind!”²

Belinsky, however regrettable it may be for most Ukrainians, was right concerning almost everything, except for one thing, the most important one: the situation profoundly described by him did not appear as a result of some metaphysical “laws of the history,” not as a consequence of the fictional Russian historical determinism, but as a certain social construct, a product of the entirely clear policy of the tsarist administration on the occupied territories. A somewhat different policy of Austrian administration in Ukrainian Galicia created there, as we know, a somewhat different situation (at least, it never hindered the formation of “the other situation”). Moreover, the situation in Lithuania, Latvia, or Czechoslovakia turned out to be entirely different after the national government had decided to take care of its formation. Therefore, Belinsky’s determinist badinage that Little-Russian nobility “accepted the Russian language and Russian-European traditions in their lifestyle due to historical necessity” is a canting demagoguery that turns absolutely specific needs of the empire and its policy into “historical necessity.”

Meanwhile, the very description of the colonial situation done by Belinsky more than 170 years ago still preserves its topicality to some extent. Firstly, “the higher society of Little Russia” (oligarchs and other so-called elites) remain mostly Russian speaking and of Russian culture, and it results in the Ukrainian artist being deprived of if not the most educated, then the most influential and the wealthiest clients and sponsors. Secondly, the Ukrainian writer (all the more, the Ukrainian cinematographer) can hardly show “people of all strata and make them speak their own languages”: with the so-called “educated people” they can still cope, since in the past century the “Little-Russian” dialect became rather intellectualist than «peasant.” But they will have to work hard on the «merchants» and «soldiers,» not even speaking of oligarchs, gangsters, Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk politicians, sports stars, and other similar groups which practically prevent the Ukrainian

2 V. Bielinsky, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*. In 13 vol. Vol. 5. Moscow 1954, p. 176–179.

language from functioning on a large scale – in the spheres of both professional and everyday communication.

In fact, we are dealing with deep social deformations caused by long-term colonial domination. These deformations have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The Russian-speaking population is predominantly concentrated in big cities, which automatically provides better access to education, cultural goods, higher earnings, professional career, and other social advantages. According to the latest census (2001), there were 8 068 992 Russians in Ukraine, of which 1 462 950, namely 18% had higher education. Out of 35 475 295 Ukrainians only 3 942 938 people, which is 11%, had higher education. Since higher education (and urbanization in general) in Ukraine traditionally promote the policy of Russification, the percentage of educated people among Ukrainian speakers is even less (9%) than among ethnic Ukrainians, while among Russian speakers it is even bigger (19%) than among ethnic Russians.

The above shows that even quantitatively the Russian-speaking population has more privileges than the Ukrainian-speaking one. However, qualitative superiority of the Russian-speaking group over the Ukrainian-speaking one is more important. It is provided not only by the above mentioned structural factors (first and foremost – a significantly higher rate of urbanization), but also by a more powerful symbolic capital. Partially, it is based on the mentioned social advantages, namely, social deformations, but even more – on the traditional cultural domination that was created and to some extent supported by the former empire with the help of various discursive means. The Russian-speaking minority (or maybe even majority) in Ukraine perceives itself as a representative of the “big”, “world-wide”, “universal” culture that is *a priori* higher than the provincial and particular culture of Ukrainian-speaking (or any other) natives.

It is obvious that such a directive works only where natives consciously or unconsciously accept and recognize it. Neither imperialness nor putative universality gives Russian-speakers any nominal privileges in Poland, Estonia, or even Ukrainian Galicia. Instead, in Kyiv and most other Ukrainian cities this very advantage enables them to establish and preserve a certain social norm and sanction natives for breaking it. This norm is based on the persuasion of both groups – dominant and subordinate – that the Russian language and culture are “higher,” “more prestigious” and “normal,” and for this reason the whole interactive public discourse should be Russian. Due to this very reason even those few

Ukrainian-speaking officials switch to the Russian language when they speak with their secretaries, drivers, and guards; and even in the situations when, seemingly, it is the client who has to have an absolute priority, including language, over servants (in restaurants, hotels, shops, and so on), Russian-speaking servants, as a rule, just do not switch to the Ukrainian language of the client. The Ukrainian-speaker switching to Russian is an unwritten rule – no matter whether they are a client, a principle, or just an elderly person whom the Russian-speaker should address in Ukrainian at least out of politeness.

Today, sanctions for breaking the “norm” do not have a criminal or any other repressive character for “bourgeois nationalism” (as it was in the Soviet times), do not presume, as a rule, any physical punishment – though among teenagers, military people or, for example, convicts, such things are still not rare. In general, violence has a symbolic character, namely is employed by discursive means in which the general context is not less important than the “text.” In separate cases, the “text” can be articulated directly – by a derogatory face, pretended incomprehension or, as in the famous adventure with the traffic-warden in Odesa, the phrase “the cow’s language.”³

Under the conditions the colonial context absence, such “texts” could be regarded usual expressions of boorishness, mutual impoliteness; such things happen everywhere; however, in most cases they do not lead to symbolic connotations and remain absolutely private conflicts between two people. In the colonial situation, however, the context works as a resonator. The abusive “text” is strengthened by both absolutely real socio-cultural domination of occupants (or colonists in Ukraine) and the whole history of humiliation and ignominy of the colonized. In other words, when a white person calls a black one a “nigger” or expresses their disrespect in any other way, symbolic violence in this case is much more powerful than in the hypothetically opposite situation – when the black person somehow expresses disrespect for the white. In Ukraine, the norm of speaking Russian is supported not by some mass and downright boorishness of Russian-speakers towards Ukrainians but rather by the very possibility – and absolute impunity – of such boorishness. Symbolic violence exists here first of all as a certain potency not fulfilled but always felt by both sides. Besides, the weaker

3 *Odesa Policeman Calls Ukrainian ‘Cow’ Language* // RFERL Newslines. – 2011. – the 26th of January; http://www.rferl.org/content/ukrainian_language_cow/2288383.html

side wants to avoid trouble, even absolutely hypothetical, potential, and does it in the easiest way – by avoiding speaking Ukrainian in public, namely obeying the “norm” of the dominant Russian language.

It is worth saying that symbolic violence is possible from both sides. However, its strength, effect, and, as a result, potential for one side or the other is different – approximately the same as in the above mentioned case with the hypothetical conflict between the white and the black. In our case, symbolic domination on one side is provided not only by cultural-civilizational superiority, but also by absolutely real social privileges of Russian-speakers, which are relicts of the imperial times. Instead, on the other side, there is an absolutely declarative (and decorative) status of the Ukrainian language as a state language that can be unknown and not used, and even, as many officials demonstrate, including the traffic-warden from Odesa, frankly despised at all levels of the state hierarchy. On this side, there is absolutely real history of humiliation and harassment of Ukrainian-speaking “negroes” and, even worse, “bourgeois nationalists” and their social and discursive marginalization.

As a result, is it the discourse that is backed not only by “higher” (allegedly) culture and language (neither Slovaks, nor Estonians or Galicians consider such “arguments” seriously), but absolutely real force and absolutely real money appear to be dominant. Meanwhile, Ukrainian counter-discourse that resists is based mainly on “a handful of Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia” (a derogatory phrase of the current Minister of Education) and, to some extent, on purely declarative “independence” and the similarly fictional Law on Languages that has never been respected, as most laws in the hardly legal Ukrainian state.

Thus, one can confidently claim that the “norm” of the Russian language will remain throughout the whole territory of Ukraine in the nearest future, consequently, the perception of the Ukrainian language as a kind of deviation – like walking down Khreshchatyk in sharovary (it is possible but pointless) – will remain, too. In its return it means that current (traditional since the imperial period) prejudice of Russian-speakers concerning Ukrainian culture will remain. Paradigmatically, this directive models the classical racist attitude of the colonizers towards the colonized, the white towards the black. In extreme forms, it is expressed through frank contempt and even aggression (“I am not going to read these blacks” is what I heard from one “internationalist” when I had suggested to him reading an outstanding Georgian writer Otar Chiladze). In milder, “more

intelligent" forms, this directive is expressed through patient supremacy of the imperial culture beam to not talented natives ("Thanks God, they learned to write!" – it is approximately how Iosif Brodsky explained the situation in brotherly Soviet literatures to American colleagues).

However, in both cases, the described situation of prejudgment results in ignoring indigenous literatures/cultures as little valuable. It is very difficult to overcome such prejudgment since the objective value of a composition does not mean anything here. It is subjectively low value of the very indigenous culture for the recipient that is decisive. They know *a priori* that there cannot be anything outstanding there, and thus it is not worth wasting attempts, time, and money on a dubious, little prestigious, and, most probably, valueless thing. The essence of the position was expressed in the reaction of one lady in a bookshop in Odesa to *History of Odessa* just translated into Ukrainian by the Harvard professor Patricia Herlihy. Having examined the book and sadly sighed, the lady put the book back on the shelf and said: "Such a book has been spoiled!.." I should say that the publication was quite high-quality and the translation was quite professional. But it was not the point. The publication was bad *a priori* – no matter whether the translation, the price, or the printing were acceptable. It was Ukrainian and therefore nothing else mattered.

All this can already lead to the following conclusions. Firstly, the Ukrainian culture in Ukraine will still be functioning as a culture of a quasi-minority (in big cities) or quasi-diaspora. On the other hand, it will still preserve its declarative "state" status as the culture of the title nation that largely legitimizes its separate (from Russia) political existence. It means that the "nominally" Ukrainian state will still support Ukrainian cultural institutions and practices more than any minority or diaspora would expect. However, this support will be still decreasing – due to the general disfunctionality of the state, economic decay, total depredation of resources, and less and less interest of the authorities in political legitimization through the culture which is separate, mostly unknown, and unintelligible to them.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, all market mechanisms – in the absence of properly Ukrainian bourgeoisie and almost omnipresent domination comprador, neo-colonists elites – will support and explore the minority, quasi-diaspora status of Ukrainian culture. Popular culture in Ukraine, despite certain local coloring, remains a purely peripheral, provincial part of the "imperial" one – as it was both

in the Soviet and pre-Soviet times. A certain sentiment to the “native” typical for the Little-Russian consumers never led neither themselves nor the respective cultural product outside the imperial context, its value-normative frames, laws, and criteria. Crossing these boundaries of the context has always meant a radical split with it and clear distancing from it, conscious reorientation towards the alternative, European/Euro-American context, namely practical functioning according to the model of Ukrainian high culture that means the chance of cultural codes and discourses and, as a side but so far inevitable effect, bigger or smaller loss of the mass consumer.

The second conclusion is largely deduced from the first one. The opposition of “high” and “mass” culture typical for modernism is preserved in Ukraine not only and not so much due to the purely aesthetic prejudgment of intellectuals-elitists concerning egalitarian “pop” as due to its prevalingly Little-Russian, neo-colonist character. It is worth stressing once again that what is meant is not the language, but specific cultural codes and discourse. From this point of view, Ukrainian-speaking Mykhailo Poplavsky is not so much different from prevalingly Russian-speaking Verka Serduchka, since they both represent the same “khokhol,” the Little-Russian part of Russian culture. Instead, Russian-speaking popular creativity of Andrey Kurkov or, for example, Miron Petrovsky represent the Russian part of Ukrainian culture. In this sense, the attitude of Ukrainian elitists towards “pop” is more ambivalent. It is really antagonistic where this pop is perceived as a purely Little-Russian, neo-colonist, and, implicitly, anti-Ukrainian phenomenon. Meanwhile, their attitude towards popular culture is much more tolerant where it is perceived as Ukrainian, distanced from the Little-Russian one and really or, more frequently, allegedly integrated into Western context “normal” for Ukraine. However, the problem lies in the fact that it is neo-colonial, Little-Russian pop that constitutes the popular culture in Ukraine, which is caused not by, as a rule, its “higher” quality (it is a quite relative concept in mass genres), but first of all by much more powerful financial, media, and symbolic resources invested in its promotion. Still, one should keep in mind the specific codes and discourses that are closer and more intelligible for Little-Russian audience than purely Ukrainian codes and discourses.⁴

4 Serhy Yekelchuk made a very interesting observation concerning it. He interprets Andriy Danylko’s (“Verka Serduchka”) gradual rejection of Ukrainian songs through the fact that “linguis-

The third conclusion directly concerns promotion and popularization of artistic works, in particular the controversy between two intentions – commercial-entertaining and ideology-mobilizing ones that is inevitable in Ukraine. These intentions, as Oleksandr Hrytsenko wittily claims, are present “in almost any cultural-artistic project” where they, as a rule, coexist peacefully, but in Ukrainian context, they are opposed in most cases. Such oppositions, which are rather strange in the postmodern era, are caused, as it has been said, by the overwhelming colonial legacy that has the features not so much of post- as of neo-colonialism in Ukraine or, in other words, «internal» colonialism. Since Ukraine, as it was said, is a part of imperial, Russian market of cultural goods, Ukrainian artists and their promoters face the dilemma of entering the market and accepting its rules or forming an alternative market for their own audience with absolutely different cultural codes and discourses. Both choices are painful. In one case they will have to renounce Ukrainian cultural identity and accept Little-Russian one (the role of a kind of khokhol Friday for Russian Robinson) and, consequently, orient towards Russian audience⁵. In the other case, there is a rather daring, almost hopeless project that is just impossible to implement into life without “maximal ideological mobilization of the “native” audience – approximately as it was done in the 19th century by Galicians under the nationalist slogan “the native to the native for the native.”

All that was said means that not only Ukrainian elitists, the creators of the “high” culture, have to deal with illuminative-popularizing, ideology mobilizing activity, which is unfamiliar to them, – not so much for the “mass” to which they are indifferent but for the protection and rescue of the very language they speak. It means that Ukrainian egalitarians, the creators of the mass culture, have to fulfill ideology-mobilizing activity in order to provide themselves with full-scale

tic identity projected there did not fit with that of the pop music consumer in east-central Ukraine and Russia, where Danylko was making most of his money.” The problem lies not in the very Ukrainian language, but in the fact that Danylko’s Ukrainian song “presented Ukrainian linguistic identity as the norm and surzhyk as a deviation from it, whereas Danylko’s target audiences would see Russian as the norm and surzhyk as a comic deviation, if not a parody of Ukrainian identity as such.” S. Yekelchuk, *What is Ukrainian about Ukraine’s Pop Culture? The Strange Case of Verka Serdushka*, in: S. Yekelchuk, guest ed., *Ukrainian Culture after Communism* (=Canadian-American Slavic Studies 2010, vol. 44, nos 1–2), pp. 202.

- 5 For more details see: M. Riabchuk, *The Ukrainian ‘Friday’ and the Russian ‘Robinson’: The Uneasy Advent of Postcoloniality*, in: S. Yekelchuk, guest ed., *Ukrainian Culture after Communism* (=Canadian-American Slavic Studies 2010, vol. 44, nos 1–2), pp. 5–20.

commercial-entertaining activity on the normal Ukrainian market, at least as long as they want to be Ukrainians, not Little-Russians.

Today, Ukrainian culture is definitely richer and more versatile than 25 years ago when Ivan Dziuba wrote his perceptive work. However, this totality of bright cultural phenomena still has not transformed into functional integrity and formed a full-fledged cultural process. Independence provided Ukrainian culture with freedom from ideological restrictions and repressive pressure of the Communist Party and KGB. However, it did not liberate it from the inertial power of the imperial discourse and did not annihilate its ability of self-preservation and self-recreation with the help of neo-colonial practices and institutions. The absence of physical repressions definitely gives Ukrainian culture a certain chance it did not have 25 years ago in the USSR, though it did 125 years ago in Habsburg Galicia where it was used successfully. The precedent gives a chance, but does not eliminate the general ambivalence and uncertainty and does not solve the split between the imperative of liberation, namely bias, and the imperative of freedom, in particular from political-ideological bias, which is very problematic for artists.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



ZENOVIIY MAZURYK*

CULTURAL POLICY IN INDEPENDENT UKRAINE: UNFULFILLED HOPES AND LOST OPPORTUNITIES. WHAT IS NEXT?

Culture became a "suitcase without a handle" for the new authorities under the conditions of the transition period from authoritarianism to democracy, when all social problems became more pressing: it is too hard to carry but too precious to be thrown away because there is something valuable in it, but so far it is not sure how to use it.

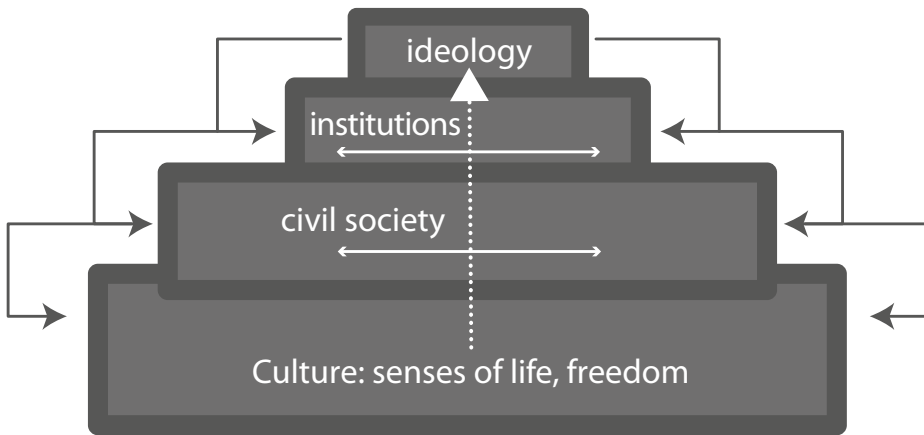
On the deepest layer of the Ukrainian people, on the cultural layer, for centuries of its stateless existence, its biggest value – freedom – was kept and passed from generation to generation. Under the conditions of captivity, the value of freedom gained various forms of cultural expression and distribution among various social groups. It influenced the quality of relations with the external world, the development of other values that reflected the sense of life, the behavioral modus and organizational forms, expressed itself in the glorification of fighters for freedom

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and mythologization of fight as a means of gaining freedom. On the cultural layer, cultural forms and means of identity protection from political, ideological, and religious pressure were formed and broadcast. The famous farmstead-lifestyle is one of such forms.

If a four-layer model of society is applied: culture, civil society, institution, ideology, under the conditions of statelessness, culture as the deepest layer on the basis of which the senses of life, values, consciousnesses, traditions are formed could not influence institution formation, but only under certain circumstances it restrictedly and controllably created the nucleus of civil society and formed an ideology oriented towards the struggle for independence.

Four levels of society development



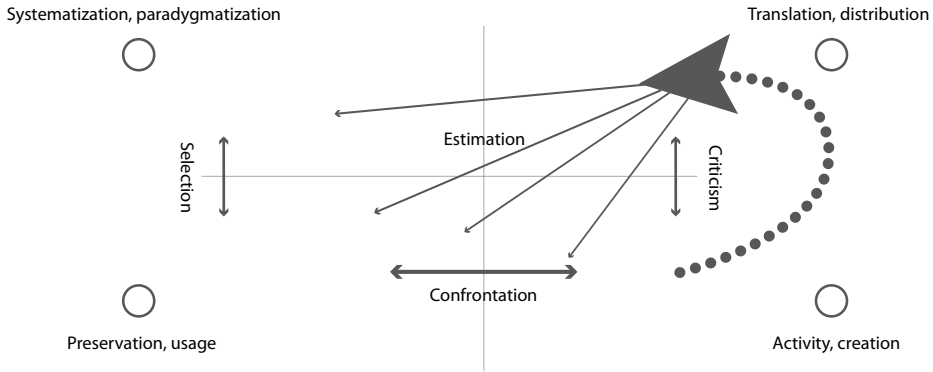
As soon as there was any softening of external captivity, at least the smallest political liberalization, cultural events were activated, civil organizations were formed, cultural establishments were founded, which performed the functions that had been suppressed by dominant regimes, in order to compensate for the absence of state functions. Such weakening of the pressure on the cultural sphere promoted institutional development which affected forming national consciousness, gave birth to political ideas based on independent state. It is worth to mention *Prosvita*, founded in 1868 in the part of Ukraine occupied by Austria-Hungary and later, in the early 20th century, spread to Naddniprianshchyna occupied by Russia.

The modernization processes that started at the beginning of the 20th century continued in Soviet Ukraine. In the 1920s, modernization lasted under the conditions of the so-called "Ukrainization" and was oriented towards European values until it worried the regime as "nationalist anti-Russian" moods and, probably, extending freedom to the private level. As a consequence, there were repressions, "executed renaissance," distorted modernization. Culture became an ideological tool of Stalin's regime. Meanwhile, the national form was preserved and dominated, simplified to ethnography, and artificial socialistic contents were imposed, which caused the attributive character of culture serving the dominant ideology. Ideological commentators harassed and deformed freedom-loving meanings, the spirit of freedom that penetrated into the culture. Such cultural losses and its distortion were expressed in the structure and contents of cultural activity and can still be felt. Cultural space was restricted by tightly controlled institutions and state-created unions of artists. Alternative non-conformist culture which continued to promote the idea and spirit of freedom found its resort in kitchens and workshops of artists, as well as in labor camps where the regime sent the most active ones. The ideological function of culture with smaller or bigger weakening, "thaws," lasted until the middle 1980s.

The liberal changes of Gorbachov's reconstruction stimulated a national cultural revival. Non-governmental organizations started being founded. Culture was freed from ideological functions and party management. In those times, people tried both to compensate for losses and revive the forbidden, give strength to the young, catch up with the missed due to obstacles in the communication with the world, and still participate in the state-building processes. Expectations, hopes, and anticipations were too big, and opportunities were restricted by various factors. Therefore, disappointment was inevitable. Cultural-political processes did not correspond with the actual state of culture and did not provide answers to the challenges of the times.

The Soviet cultural-political heritage remained in the form of new stereotypes like serving the processes of state building, state paternalism, namely the duty of the Ukrainian independent state to maintain culture from the budget, the dependence of culture on the "wise and patriotic" head present at every level of state administration. But first of all – by means of a static understanding of culture.

CULTURE AS A PROCESS



Culture cannot be narrowed to a static structure of ideas and things, objects and the spirit. Taking a look at Ukrainian culture as a dynamic process with such basic elements as creation, distribution, and preservation, it is possible to see that these elements are not perfect, not full, and sometimes even deformed. In the aspect of creation, artists tried to continue the tradition and not confront it, find forms of relations with authorities, protect heritage; in the aspect of distribution, the lack of channels and methods of communication is noteworthy, criticism as a method of forming the criteria of estimating the new was not developed sufficiently; the theoretical basis for paradigmization and systematization of cultural gains and practices did not evolve fully, and, finally, the aspect of behavior was affected by ideological criteria, selectivity, and distorted interpretation of historical memory.

The cultural sphere in Ukraine still remains unstructured. Traditional cultural institutions with budget financing, subordinated to authority bodies of various levels prevail. It is worth pointing out that the level of theoretical comprehension of the cultural process is not sufficient.

Such complicated cultural-political heritage, under the conditions of independent state, caused a number of new and unpredictable problems. The elimination of external impediments of freedom does not automatically create new favorable conditions for the cultural process. This process demands skillful management on the basis of knowledge. Thus, culture became a "suitcase without a handle" for the new authorities under the conditions of the transition period from authoritarianism to democracy, when all social problems became more

pressing: it is too hard to carry but too precious to be thrown away because there is something valuable in it, but so far it is not sure how to use it. The authorities first of all need obedient functionaries, salesmen, and profitable brands; they use cultural factors for its own instrumental goals: thus, regional cultures and regional differences that carry cultural richness and potential are cynically used by politicians in order to stratify the electorate and multiply the number of potential voters. It all hinders impartial comprehension of the meaning of culture. On the other hand, for most workers of the cultural sphere, a low salary still remains the main source of income, which makes them adapt themselves and wait for changes from the above.

Most people identify culture as a means of entertainment which is becoming simpler and more primitive, which is facilitated by the mass media, television, show-business. Recalling the words of G. Deleuze: culturally poor periods are filled with arrogance, pride, and self-importance. And only for few, culture is a means of communication for the search for the meanings of being, comprehending oneself in the chain of generations, the search for ideas of the future, constructing and advocating ones own internal freedom.

If in the times of the USSR culture was an element of the authority system, the new authorities of independent Ukraine did not know and still do not know what to do with culture. No political party has in its program a chapter dedicated to cultural policy. Culture is mentioned only as a necessity to meet cultural and spiritual needs of people. Political rhetoric is restricted to general phrases about the residual principle and downtrodden Ukrainian culture and, of course, language, and, besides, lists of candidates for the posts of the Supreme Council deputies include well-known names of cultural figures. Political discussion on the role of culture in the development of a democratic society and the opportunity of creating cultural-political conditions for the realization of this role is absent. Therefore, legislative acts that deal with culture contain contradictory principles of liberal, conservative, and left-wing character, which makes their practical usage impossible. It is possible to single out two mutually exclusive and dangerous trends in the attitude towards culture that were delineated by Maksym Strikha: 1) excessive paternalism that is narrowed to supporting ideological goals; 2) removal of the state from regulating processes in the cultural sphere that can cause cultural colonization.

It has already been twenty years of culture enduring a crisis that is getting worse. This crisis has its own components that can be delineated with respective typical features.

Worldview crisis – the understanding of culture which does not correspond to modern challenges – neither internal, nor external ones. The conception of culture still remains static and restricted by its own boundaries. Changing culture under such a concept does not bring expected results despite considerable spending. Such a narrow conception of culture excludes crossing the boundaries of field institutions and does not set the goal of bringing up responsible citizens and the development of democracy in coordination with education, science, tourism, and so on. The reason is that such important values as tolerance, ability to be in somebody else's shoes, orientation towards common good can be gained only in an appropriate environment, in the process of cultural communication, through forming feelings, gaining experience under the circumstances of freedom.

Functional crisis of infrastructure is the domination of traditional cultural institutions supported from the budget by old methods of work; it is also an insufficiently developed non-governmental sector and cultural industry. Every cultural establishment should understand its social tasks, its mission in the community where it works in order to justify its existence.

Resource crisis is first of all the crisis of human resources, personnel with the necessary knowledge for carrying out the social mission of their cultural establishments, the absence of conditions for changing generations, and the crisis in modern material resources and equipment for cultural establishments to be able to compete for the leisure time of visitors.

Legal crisis is about a number of laws and bylaws which cannot be implemented since they are adopted on the basis of an outdated conception, without sticking to systematic principles and mostly without any participation of experts and professionals.

Crisis of cultural-artistic environment is caused by paternalist ideas, hierarchic consciousness, dependence on authority bodies, which does not leave a chance for structuring the environment in the form of professional and creative unions able to analyze the situation, make suggestions, become active participants of cultural policy.

Management crisis is a result of using outdated methods of direct management oriented towards distributing resources and personnel, preserving centralized inefficient vertical manner of management excluding decentralization, delegating powers to professional institutions, and using modern methods and tools of management, as well as stimulating the development of the individualist system of culture management.

Financial crisis. With the reduction of budget spending, financial resources are used inefficiently, spending is not distributed according to particular priorities and standards. At the same time, the stimuli for obtaining non-budget sources are insufficient and social responsibility for the economic and private sectors for culture is not encouraged.

Under the conditions of crisis, the tension is growing between the state cultural management bodies and local governments, between representative and executive authority bodies, between the bodies of culture management and subordinate organizations, between public and non-governmental organizations, as well as within the cultural-artistic environment. This tension can acquire the character of confrontation due to the lack of opportunity for discussions in which common interests could be revealed.

Still, despite the crisis state of culture and unfavorable conditions, the non-governmental sector which activates the cultural sphere and fulfills important socio-cultural tasks is developing in Ukraine. The aspiration to freedom and free self-expression is a stronger motivation than numerous obstacles in this way. Thanks to the support from donor organizations, discussions on culture, its meaning and significance in a changing society are held.

Though there is no demand for cultural management, professionals and favorable conditions for promoting domestic and foreign funds are absent, training workshops are held owing to the support of both domestic and international organizations. Thus, for example, in three and a half years the Ukrainian-Netherlands program *MATRA – Ukrainian Museums* held 10 training interactive workshops, two conferences, and a symposium, the aim of which was to increase the efficiency of using huge cultural resources of our museums for society development. During these activities, the considerable potential of Ukrainian museums was revealed. Why then is this potential not used in practice? The tough hierarchic organizational structure of museums, the lack of modern knowledge about museums, red tape, routine, and, for sure, the evident lack of efficient museum

management, and the absence of strategic planning leave no chance of using the potential.

Where cultural resources become evident as competitive advantages, which influences the development of towns, the processes of strategic development planning, taking into consideration rich cultural resources, have begun. In such places, business and politics face huge temptations to turn cultural resources into tools of achieving quick profits and political dividends without making a contribution into preserving the cultural-historical context. Therefore, the cultural environment should react to such things and look for the means of influence on cultural policy.

Thus, for example, in Lviv, the cultural development within the past decades revolved around charismatic leaders. Common interests were expressed from time to time, stimulated by external factors (authority change, budget distribution, festivals, international projects) but not common visions of the future of the city. But when mass tourism started to develop in the city, when culture became only a marketing attraction, when the cultural-historic context was simplified, glamourized, the need for consolidation and cooperation of the cultural-artistic environment grew. Thus, a few centres for strategic planning were created in the city, approved strategic plans became objects of critical analysis, representatives of the city authorities together with the activists of cultural establishments began the process of strategic planning of the city's cultural development, including citizens in the process. Micro-districts and various cultural environments carry out polls concerning the ideas about a town's cultural policy, sometimes even planning to engage exterior experts in the future. Such a process revealed downsides as well – the lack of methodological and theoretical basis for solving such tasks. But new experience provides the opportunity to understand in a different and more profound way the city as a cultural space and to unite different environments in order to plan its development.

An additional occasion for consolidation and collaboration of the Lviv cultural environment was represented by the Euro 2012 championship. The cultural environment tried to present to the guests and inhabitants of the city a rich cultural offer, to represent cultural-artistic festivals which have already become traditional for Lviv. It was a new experience which posed the relevant issue about what tourism we need and whether mass tourism is a remedy to all the developmental problems of the city.

Another chance and challenge for Lviv consists in participating in the ambitious project *European Capital of Culture – 2016*. Long-term cooperation with Lublin, one of the candidates for the title, became the basis for elaborating a common application stressing the understanding of European culture beyond political borders, which would enable a new look on the European cultural environment and its role in the democratization and modernization of societies. Wrocław, the winner-city of the competition, did not reject the idea and experience of cultural collaboration and invites Lviv to further cooperation within the project EQF-2016. Such collaboration creates conditions for activating cultural resources of the city.

Thus, despite the tight and imperfect cultural-political frame conditions in Ukraine, the cultural process continues. But for a full-scale development of culture, it is necessary to understand how it provides opportunities of using independence gained with common efforts of many generations, freedom from external occupants and to extend the internal space of freedom in every citizen and form responsibility for the future under these new conditions.

Further development of democracy and open civil society demands launching a complex socio-cultural process in which management and technological goals would be subdue to humanitarian ones on the national level, while humanitarian tasks would correspond to economic goals. Such a process is represented by a society modernization using cultural factors, as A. Auzan, A. Arhangelsky, and others, the authors of the Russian project *The Cultural Factors of Modernization*, convincingly suggested. In addition, culture is viewed as a network of formal and informal institutions (institutions including both organizations and individual people) that produce and ruin, transform and spread, preserve and renew values, namely provide communication in society. Successful modernization demands avoiding the antagonism between tradition and avant-garde. Tradition lives in renovation, continuation of rendering meanings through form, sign, and ritual. In the cultural-artistic process, meanings are verified, new forms and different sign systems are used, meanings of signs are reconsidered in new contexts. In this way, culture develops and qualitatively renews relations in society, ruining hierarchic structures and developing horizontal networks where everybody takes their place and professionally does their work. In such a society, there is no "intelligentsia" which carries the burden of responsibility for the "wise people," the nation's fate, but there are professional politicians, scientists, poets, artists who influence the

quality of the relations and the reconsideration of values with their works, their worldview. It is because values, according to Ronald Inglehart, are constructed and distributed not by ideologists, not by intelligentsia – they appear in response to a request, to the feeling of shortage of something important in life. It is cultural policy that should create conditions for the search of such values to be modernized when the nonworking, outdated values are rejected. It is when the meaning of external freedom as a precondition for internal freedom of everybody, as the creative participation of citizens in creating better future for everybody is revealed. The famous economist B. Havrylyshyn, while researching the problem why some countries are richer and the others are poorer, reached the conclusion that the most important factors of national welfare include the natural environment, religion, and culture, namely the things that influence human relationships.

Every time before elections, politicians promise a new country. And none of them want to penetrate into the depth of reasons for our present condition, but limit themselves to blaming their predecessors. It is necessary to change the attitude towards our past and critically reconsider it in order to understand why everything that resulted in the present state of affairs happened. Only then will we be able to understand what should be done to change the situation, why we are so different, and that all these cultural and religious divergences are various forms of expressing our values on the basis of which we create our future together. It is because, as Robert Putnam reasonably claims, our destination depends on our point of departure, namely critical reconsideration of our past and our path. And if our point of departure consists in hazy Trypillia culture together with the mythologization, sacralization, and romantization of the past which is defined by various ideological labels and was a convenient instrument for our politicians, where can we arrive? – we can only go in circles or stand still. The development of our society largely depends on a critical analysis of our past.

It is worth listening to European experts who, during the preparation of Ukraine's report on national cultural policy, recommended and warned: the main thing for Ukraine is to totally realize and accept modernizing processes in economy and society, and then elaborate a correspondent cultural policy. Modernization in itself is a cultural phenomenon, and any national cultural policy that could not realize and react to the modernizing trends and processes in society will be doomed to marginalization and acting in restricted and artificially created environment, which can be observed nowadays.

Managing the modernizing process is more complicated than appointing non-professional, illiterate, but “in-house” managers on responsible posts. In such a process, the understanding of culture should be broader, and its role should cross the borders of the field. Culture as a modernizing factor integrates and balances all types of social activity, equilibrates freedom with responsibility, creates cultural limits. Further motion towards a better future will prove impossible without it.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



OLEKSANDR BUTSENKO*

TWO MAIN PROBLEMS OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

In Ukrainian reality, culture is still being used, repeating the definition by F. Matarasso, for decoration (“ornamentation”) or political and economic activity. Certainly, it is no longer an ideological weapon inherited from the Soviet Union, but not yet a means of self-realization of a separate person, community, and nation.

V. Yushchenko first of all signing the Law of Ukraine *On the Conception of the State Policy in the Sphere of Culture for the Years 2005–2007* (2005) and one of the first Yanukovych’s laws *On Culture* (2011) are quite symptomatic. In any European country, for example, in Czech Republic headed by Václav Havel this would imply conscious orientation of the state policy towards cultural and spiritual values, while in Ukraine this has demonstrated invariable social concern about the state of cultural development of the country and the authority’s wish to react to it respectively. But at the same time, it showed permanence of negative trends in the sphere of Ukrainian culture during the past 10–15 years. Just as well as in 2005–2006, public discussions on pressing problems of culture and ways of solving them burst out, civil councils and debating societies were organized, the years 2011–2012 witnessed roundtables, conferences, and public debates on the state of

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culture and separate spheres initiated by civil organizations, international funds, or state institutions. The results included the popular on the Internet verbatim of discussions, prepared publications (for example, *The New Authority: the Challenges of Modernization*, Kyiv, 2011; *Cultural Practices and Cultural Policy*, Kyiv, 2012), and... practically the same open questions and problems as 5–7 years ago.

They were precisely described by Taras Vozniak in the above mentioned *Challenges of Modernization* prepared by the International fund *Vidrodzhennia*: "Despite 20 years of cultural construction under the conditions of independence, Ukraine still has to form long-term and up-to-date policy in the sphere of culture. This task demands answers from the society and political parties at least to these questions:

- what is culture?
- what is culture modernization?
- what is modern Ukrainian culture?
- what is cultural policy?
- which measures does the state have to take for the modernization of Ukrainian culture?

Previous and current failures in this sphere are largely connected with society and political parties not making decisions concerning these concepts."

The Law of Ukraine *On Culture* was the first to introduce the notion of culture into Ukrainian legislation but, unfortunately, narrowed this term in comparison with modern worldwide (UNESCO declarations, UN Resolution on culture and development) and European approaches, restricting the role of culture in the social-economic development to "one of the main identity factors." It partially explains the fact that in Ukrainian reality culture is still being used, repeating the definition by F. Matarasso, for decoration ("ornamentation") or political and economic activity. Certainly, it is no longer an ideological weapon inherited from the Soviet Union, but not yet a means of self-realization of a separate person, community, and nation. It is also connected with the notorious principle of "residual financing" of culture which was always used to explain the problems in the cultural sphere. Generally, spending on culture as a part of GDP has almost not changed in 10 years (0.5% in 2001, 0.6% in 2010, and 0.55% in 2011) and decreased as a part of consolidated budget – from 2% in 2001 to 1.7% in 2010. (However, such percentage may seem quite considerable in comparison with other countries, let's say, Norway has planned to increase the percentage of spending on culture to 1% till 2004. But two facts of Ukrainian reality should be taken into consideration: 1) the

real monetary value of the percentage which much less than in European countries; 2) the efficiency of usage which splits into two even these restricted means).

The Law of Ukraine *On the Conception of State Policy in the Sphere of Culture for 2005–2007*, which was written on the basis of numerous roundtables, conferences, discussions, and expert conclusions during 2004, delineates general negative trends that exist in the sphere of culture. Unfortunately, these trends have not been considerably changed in the last 8 years: “The current state of Ukrainian culture and spirituality development is characterized by gradual blurring and marginalization of cultural and spiritual values in social life, ruination of integral net of institutes, businesses, organizations, and establishments of culture and integral informational-cultural space, inefficient usage of available cultural and creative resources. During the past decade, Ukrainian culture not only lost the respective place among the priorities of state policy, but found itself between the so-called official culture financed from budget and independent cultural reality oriented towards current needs; the problem of inadequate financing of the cultural sphere has become chronic; the economic structure of spending of local budgets on the cultural sphere has significantly disimproved; separate cultural events never developed into a unified program of consistent development.” The mentioned law ceased being in force in 2008, having given legitimacy to such notions as “cultural policy,” “cultural industry,” “multichannel culture financing,” and so on and not having resulted in any real changes. It signified another invariant tend of Ukrainian life – the inefficiency of legislative decisions. Currently, more than 30 legislative documents directly and almost 300 ones indirectly regulate activity in the cultural sphere (for more details see http://www.culturalpolicies.net/down/ukraine_022012.pdf – Compendium: Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe. Country Profile: Ukraine. 5. Main legal provision in the cultural field) but, as it has been mentioned above, visible changes which would promote breaking negative trends never happened. In other words, either legislative tools are not perfect and therefore should be improved or changed, or improper control over these tools results in generally neglecting them. This problem with legislation was stressed by European experts who participated in the preparation of Ukrainian National account on the cultural sphere for the Council of Europe and expert recommendations already in 2007.

In the above mentioned *Cultural Practices and Cultural Policy*, more than 30 Ukrainian expert respondents unanimously pointed out the low efficiency of

Ukrainian cultural policy due to a number of reasons, namely: the absence of constant attention to the cultural sphere from authorities, the absence of strategic planning in the process of national cultural policy forming, the absence of systematic and holistic cultural policy, non-compliance of the cultural-policy with new social and technological realia, detachment of official cultural policy from the needs of culture consumers and the interests of cultural figures, the opaqueness, uncontrollability, and restrictedness of financing of the cultural sphere, and so on.

I am citing only two recent analytical accounts (*The New Authority: the Challenges of Modernization* and *Cultural Practices and Cultural Policy*) which either partially or totally deal with cultural policy not because they are the deepest or the best. The reason evidently is that – it is one of the main problems of successful forming or reforming Ukrainian cultural policy – such analytical or expert accounts are extremely scarce. There are accounts by the Ministry of Culture which are prepared by the Ukrainian Centre for Cultural Studies, there is statistical information, the accounts on the Clearinghouse control, critical articles in press which cover separate issues, results of polls within separate problems... but regular (at least quarterly) analysis and estimation by independent experts, monitoring program fulfillment and law obedience, trends tracing (on the level of “observatories” that exist in numerous countries) that would allow evaluating and contrasting the results of the activity, generalizing positive experience and correcting already made mistakes are missing. This is evidently why every time when the results of similar research are discussed, the conversation as if starts from the beginning – almost all the same problems are voiced and bitter astonishment is expressed that nothing changes. Moreover, experts’ critical comments are becoming more and more acute, and accounts by the administrators in the cultural sphere are getting more pompous. What is the most surprising is that, however paradoxical it may seem, both parties are right: those who criticize and those who report.

I have met many state culture managers on the local and regional levels from Western and Eastern Ukraine lately. They all spoke about organized and held events, plans for future, complained about work load, insufficient financing, and lack of personnel. Indeed, a working day of a culture administrator of the local level usually lasts till the beginning of the next working day. During this time, they have to solve not only creative and organizational problems, but economic, everyday, social ones, take part in practically all public events and numerous holidays the central part of which belongs to the very cultural element, plus activity

of respective cultural establishments, participation in festivals and accounting cultural events, various delegations receptions, unexpected instant tasks... In brief, when you think of all this, watch concerts of ensembles, visit workshops and circles, you understand how much is done in every small town, big city, and region. For sure, there are problems with accommodation, equipment, and financing. But how much work, how much enthusiasm! Honestly, one wants to talk about it with sincere pathos.

Why then are the experts unhappy with the results instead of speaking about the detachment of state cultural policy from the needs of culture consumers, why do we have to hear that “the authorities do not notice us,” “we are building new culture without expecting any support from the authorities” at every meeting with artists and representatives of non-governmental cultural organizations? To my mind, it constitutes the second main problem of the cultural situation in Ukraine on various levels (local, regional, and national) – the gap between the state policy, concentrated on itself in forms of accounting and corporate responsibility, and the civil society. The civil society (at least its major part) remains left to its own devices with its needs and problems. In this way, cultural policy that is realized through numerous measures and programs organized by authorities does not enjoy general approval and support, often being exposed to criticism by the unsatisfied and overlooked by it. And the point is not that the authorities do not support modern art, as organizers of modern art festivals complain, – it would be too simple.

A few years ago, within the European program *Intercultural Cities*, Melitopol, the Zaporizhzhia region, was visited by Hong Mevis, a former major deputy of the Netherland City Tilburg. When he was asked at one of meetings whether Tilburg authorities supported modern art, he answered that his city supported all forms of cultural activity – both traditional and absolutely new ones. Otherwise, in the opinion of the authorities, the city culture would be incomplete, and the city would not be able to compete with other city communities on equal terms.

Such an approach presumes understanding culture as a means of self-expression of a community through national, traditional, classical, mass, or modern art. The richer the range of cultural representations, the more interesting a separate community. It is actually one of the tasks of the local cultural policy. Everything would seem to be so simple.

In fact, there is an impression that the management and departments of culture in most Ukrainian towns and cities perform the function of either festival-concert

agencies or holiday organizers. They are burdened with problems which should be dealt with by other executives – not only state or municipal cultural organizations, but non-governmental and private ones as well. It would first of all allow paying more attention to forming the goals of cultural policy which would correspond to the interests of most groups in a local community, elaborating or planning events that would promote achieving the goals. Meanwhile, even those small budgets on culture can be used more efficiently in order to achieve the set goals, since non-governmental and private organizations can engage additional costs and partners, advocate cultural projects in various donor organizations. The main thing is that collaboration should start on the phase of policy formation and understanding its goals: traditions and cultural legacy preservation, broadening the access to cultural gains, modern artistic searches support, and so on.

I particularly stress the importance of such interaction as a precondition for any further steps towards reforming cultural policy and solving the above mentioned problems because the favorable environment for this has already been created. During the past decade, Ukraine has witnessed the creation of numerous trainings in project management and fund raising both for non-governmental and governmental cultural organizations. The results are as follows: project applications are easily created by library, museum, and club managers, many of whom won and realized numerous grants; departments of culture elaborate criteria for assessment of activity of establishments and events held by them. On the other hand, a new generation of independent culture managers, who work in non-governmental organizations, implement very interesting projects into life together with European partners, speak foreign languages, know modern technologies.

This is the very kind of group of managers that took part in the Project *Ukrainian Cultural Network* by the Centre for Cultural Management (Lviv) supported by the European Cultural Fund. When at one of workshops I was telling them about the cultural policy in Ukraine and wondered how they saw the collaboration with the management of cultural sector in their cities, they just laughed in response. The negative experience that many of them gained trying to find support of the authorities, lack of understanding of their ideas by officials made them treat the opportunity of such collaboration with skepticism. Then, the idea to try combining these two camps in one workshop appeared in order to make them work on project ideas or goals together. Is it possible?

Such a workshop took place in Kyiv at the end of the year 2011. It was called *Local Communities Development: Local Cultural Policy and Cultural Management* and gathered representatives of culture departments and non-governmental organizations from 10 Ukrainian cities. The famous expert in cultural development Phil Wood (Great Britain) who was conducting the workshop used the method "The Search for Future" to stimulate the representatives of various sectors (governmental and non-governmental) to find common points in forming local cultural policy. It was interesting to watch teams of state employees and independent managers generating ideas, elaborating plans of projects realization, presenting and advocating their applications. If it is possible on the level of one workshop, why not use it on a broader scale, make it a common practice?

Of course, successful samples of collaboration between the authorities and the civil sector in the cultural sphere exist in many cities. There are effective schemes of giving grants to support cultural initiatives in Lviv, Vinnytsia, Sumy, Melitopol... It is already not just support for suggested festivals and exhibitions, but an invitation to the course towards the realization of certain tasks or ideas. Namely, the very philosophy of the authorities collaborating with civil society on the level of communities is gradually changing. Legislative tools should accelerate the process. Thus, the year 2010 witnessed the adoption of the Law of Ukraine *On the Principles of Domestic Politics and Foreign Affairs* which, among other political principles in the sphere of forming institutes of civil society, demands intensification of the influence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on state decision-making, introduction of public control, regular consultations with the public, and providing independent activity of NGOs. "However, – as it is claimed in the *Challenges of Modernization*, – new laws on the Ukrainian government and central executive bodies, as well as acts concerning the administrative reform, do not presume specific actions towards implementing the law *On the Principles of Domestic Politics and Foreign Affairs* into life concerning institutions of civil society. Interaction with civil society is still taking place without integrated state policy, under different conditions, and with various results. Meanwhile, the practice of ignoring citizen initiatives is prevailing in the centre and on the periphery." (p. 180)

On the other hand, there were certain changes in the sector of non-governmental organizations in general and in the cultural sphere in particular. According to the report of the National Institute for Strategic Studies *On the State of Civil Society Development in Ukraine* (Kyiv, 2012, p. 6), "the year 2011 is characterized

by the steadiness of positive trends in institutional development of civil society. According to the data of the Unified State Register of Businesses and Organizations of Ukraine published by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine as of the beginning of 2012, 71767 civil organizations (including international, nationwide, and local organizations, their centres, affiliates, and separate structural units; at the beginning of 2011 there were 67696 of them), 27834 trade unions and their associations (26340 in 2011), 13475 charitable organizations (12860 in 2011), 13872 condominiums (11956 in 2011), and 1306 population self-organization entities (1210 in 2011) have been registered.”

The increase in the number of associations of citizens of Ukraine in 2008–2012

Citizens associations	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Civil organizations and their centers	54862	59321	63899	67696	71767
Trade unions and their local associations	20405	22678	24649	26340	27834
Charitable organizations	10988	11660	12267	12860	13475

Source: the National Institute for Strategic Studies, according to the data of the USRBOU State Statistics Service of Ukraine

Meanwhile, it is worth noticing that by the number of NGOs per 10000 of citizens, Ukraine significantly lags behind the EU states and Macedonia. “According to official statistic data, there were 32.1 legalized civil organizations per 10000 of Ukrainian citizens in 2010, of which there were 17.6 civil organizations and charitable funds, while in Macedonia about 50 civil associations and funds per 10000 people were created which is three times more than in Ukraine. In Estonia (it has one of the highest indices of civil society development among new EU state-members), this index is 250 civil sector organizations, in Hungary (with the lowest index of CSO stability among the states of the Visegrad Group) this index constitutes about 65 CSO” (the Report of the National Institute for Strategic Studies *On the State of Civil Society Development in Ukraine*, Kyiv, 2012, p. 9). We should also pay attention to the fact that much less organizations really act in Ukraine than it is registered – many of them ceased their activity long time ago. According to the estimates of the Counterpart Creative Center, the percentage of active and constantly acting civil organizations (namely the ones that have been working for

not less than 2 years, have experience in holding two or more projects, and are known throughout their region) constitutes only 8–9% of their general amount.

At any rate, there are positive changes: in the cultural sector, together with active civil organizations with long history like the Centre for Modern Art and the Centre for Development *Democracy Through Culture* (Kyiv), the Institute for Social-Cultural Management (Kirovograd), the Centre for Cultural Management (Lviv), the Theatre-Workshop *Arabesky* (Kharkiv), the Art Association *Dzyga* (Lviv), the Centre for Youth Initiatives *Totem* (Kherson), and others, there are new active organizations covering whole Ukraine. Amongst others, the Youth Art Centre *EcoArt* (Kyiv), Garage Gang (Kyiv), Art-Geschaft (Ivano-Frankivsk), the Art Centre *Kvartyra* (Dnipropetrovsk), Art-Travel (Odessa), the Theatre Festival *Drabyna* (Lviv), and many others can be named.

So, summing it up, the current complicated situation in Ukraine in the cultural sphere is softened by two positive elements: the gradual change in the authorities' philosophy concerning civil organizations – at least on the level of separate cities and regions – and noticeable activation of non-governmental organizations in the cultural sphere. It can be the favorable factor that will lead to phenomenal changes. Undoubtedly, it is a long process. It is very important to analyze and estimate results for this process, so that it does not prolong for decades with its unsolved problems.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



TERRY SANDELL*

UKRAINE AND THE EU – THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CULTURE PROGRAMME¹

While the EU and its Member States cannot pretend to have answers to the problems of Ukraine and the other countries, a new understanding of culture appropriate to a modernizing society and economy is quite evidently needed in the region. At the same time, on both sides, the EU and the EaP countries, certain taboos have to be broken.

For those unfamiliar with European Union policies, programs, and acronyms it is worth briefly providing some background to the so-called 'Eastern Partnership' (EaP) and its wider context, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

The European Neighbourhood Policy was originally elaborated in 2004 in response to the enlargement of the EU and the need to avoid as far as possible new dividing lines between this enlarged EU and sixteen neighbor countries in the southern Mediterranean, in eastern Europe, and in the south Caucasus.

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1 The views expressed here are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of the EU or of the management of the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme.

The strategy was set out in a policy document which has been supplemented and strengthened subsequently. The ENP, while primarily a bilateral policy between the EU and the individual countries, has also developed regional dimensions through the 'Eastern Partnership' (launched in 2009), the 'Union for the Mediterranean' (re-launched in 2008), and the 'Black Sea Synergy' (2008). The 'Eastern Partnership' (EaP) is a Brussels-defined region, in many ways an artificial construct, which consists of six former Soviet countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Cooperation between the EU and individual neighborhood countries is set out in 'Action Plans' between the EU and individual governments which set an agenda for 3–5 years. These 'Action Plans' are linked to political and economic reform aimed at sustainable development and approximation to EU policies and standards. The 'Action Plans' are backed up by seven-year Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), three-year National Indicative Programmes (NIPs), and detailed annual programs. Progress on the 'Action Plans' is published each year in ENP Progress Reports. The funding for this EU cooperation is provided through a mechanism known as the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which for the period 2007–2013 set a budget of approximately 12 billion euros.²

While inevitably much of the activity and dialogue concerning Eastern Partnership (EaP) cooperation is with the governments, serious attention has been paid to trying to engage with all strands of society.³ One of the mechanisms for this is the Civil Society Forum (CSF), set up in 2009 to facilitate the involvement of civil society organizations to give them some real influence in terms of Eastern Partnership activity. National Platforms of the Civil Society Forum have been established and representatives of the National Platforms take part in five multilateral EU thematic platforms, the fourth of which, 'Contacts Between People,'

2 See Article 29 of Regulation (EC) No. 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and Council of 24 October 2006 at ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/oj_l310_en.pdf. For multi-country programs the budget is 223.5 million euros for the Eastern Partnership Region, a further 260 million euros for the Inter-Regional Programme plus 277 million euros for Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes and 400 million euros for the Governance Facility and Neighbourhood Investment Fund. In addition to these funded programs, a specific country budget for Ukraine was set at 494 million euros. For those interested in the main elements of EU cooperation with Ukraine are summarized in *Eastern Partnership Roadmap 2012–13: the bilateral dimension* which can be found at ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/e_pship_bilateral_en.pdf.

3 See e.g. *Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the Autumn 2013 Summit* at ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/e_pship_roadmap_en.pdf

covers culture and the arts. Although still at an early stage, the Civil Society Forum, through National Platform representatives, is an increasingly influential body and a useful channel for cultural sector advocacy and addressing cultural sector issues.

Against this very formal and structured background, in which culture is rarely if ever mentioned, in 2008 the European Commission decided to look at the feasibility of setting up a culture-focused program for the Eastern Partnership countries. The impetus for this was probably as much as anything to do with there being a culture-based program for the southern Mediterranean countries (Euromed Heritage) which had operated since the 1990s and the anomaly of there not being such a program with the EaP Region, which in many respects culturally was much closer to the EU Member States. A report was produced, accepted, and followed up by specific recommendations for such a program in 2008. In a mutated form, this eventually led to an open call in late 2010 for projects from the region and the setting up of a unit, to be based in the region, to manage and develop the wider Eastern Partnership Culture Programme.

The overall objective of the EaP Culture Programme is to support the role of culture in the context of the region's sustainable development and to promote regional cooperation among public institutions, civil society, cultural and academic organizations within the Eastern Partnership region and with the European Union. Specifically, the Programme aims to:

- support and promote cultural policy reforms at the governmental level;
- build the capacities of cultural organizations and improve the “professionalization” of the culture sector in the region;
- contribute to the exchange of information, experience, and best practices among cultural operators at the regional level and with the European Union;
- support regional initiatives/partnerships which demonstrate positive cultural contributions to economic development, social inclusion, conflict resolution, and intercultural dialogue.

With a budget of 12 million euros, the call for proposals resulted in fifteen regional projects being contracted and financed under the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme. In addition, 3 million euros has been provided for capacity-building activity and the setting up of a small Regional Monitoring and Capacity Building Unit (RMCBU) which is working out of Kyiv, with mainly Ukrainian staff.

Of the fifteen granted projects under the Programme, four are led by Ukrainian organizations, while another six have Ukrainian partner participation and activity. The four Ukraine-led projects cover:

- community cultural development led by the Donetsk-based organization *EkoArt* (with partners from Kherson in Ukraine and from Georgia);
- cultural diversity and equal opportunities for minorities led by the Kyiv-based GURT Resource Centre (with three partners from Ukraine, two from Armenia, and one from Poland);
- promotion of local heritage led by Kherson-based *Totem* (with two partners from Ukraine and one each from Armenia and Georgia);
- cross-border cultural cooperation in Polissya, and its promotion, led by the Kyiv-based *Intelektualna Perspektyva* fund (with two Ukrainian partners and a Belarusian partner).

The other six projects in which there is Ukrainian involvement cover:

- regional cross-border cinema cooperation led by Armenia's Golden Apricot Fund for Cinema Development. Apart from Ukraine, partners are from Georgia, Armenia, and Turkey;
- cultural tolerance through history and heritage led by the Netherlands' EUROCLIO (European Association of History Educators). The Ukrainian partner is *Nova Doba* and there are partners from Azerbaijan, Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia;
- cultural use of public spaces led by the Austrian OIKODROM – Forum Nachhaltige Stadt. The Ukrainian partner is the Foundation Centre for Contemporary Art (FCCA) with partners from Armenia, Moldova, Croatia, and Luxembourg;
- book culture led by the Bulgarian Next Page Foundation. Apart from Ukraine, the other partners are from Georgia and Armenia;
- photography networking led by Minsk-based *Interakcia*. The Ukrainian partner is the National Union of Artist Photographers of Ukraine with other partners from Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova.

All the projects assume a variety of activities with most having some kind of training and capacity-building component, and in some cases a re-granting component.

Inevitably, given the diversity of the region, the projects, and some delays that have happened along the way, in some areas the Programme is still in its infancy.

The stage of progress of the fifteen projects varies from projects which towards the end of 2012 are already completing their first year of activity (the projects can be of up to three years' duration) through to one project, led by a Belarusian organization, which is yet to begin. This project has not so far received the registration required by the Belarus authorities because of several months of local bureaucratic confusion over the project's status.

In October 2012 the EaP Programme held a two-day launching conference in Tbilisi with about a hundred participants in attendance. It included the inaugural meeting of an independent Advisory Panel created to support both the Programme and provide some guidance to the Regional Monitoring and Capacity Building Unit (RMCBU). The core of the Advisory Panel consists of two representatives from the cultural sector of each of the Eastern Partnership countries. The Ukrainian representatives are Vlad Troitsky and Yuliya Vaganova. The conference presented an opportunity to publicize the fifteen projects and to take stock of the activity of the RMCBU which has included the setting up of a potentially very useful website, research visits to the six countries, events related to the granted projects, project management training workshops, and the preparation of both individual country reports and a regional report helping to identify the main directions and priorities for the RMCBU.

The EaP Culture Programme is going to face several challenges. Not the least of which, in the context of the economic crisis facing Europe, will be to try to ensure its continuation once the present envisaged activity is completed. Of more immediate concern at this stage is the extent to which the local environment in Ukraine and the other countries can effectively and fully use the Programme and its funding, bearing in mind some unhelpful local factors. Rather heavy EU reporting and accountability requirements combined with the EU's relative lack of knowledge and experience of the region, especially with regard to the cultural sector and to more general cultural complexities related to the working environment are also potentially inhibiting factors.

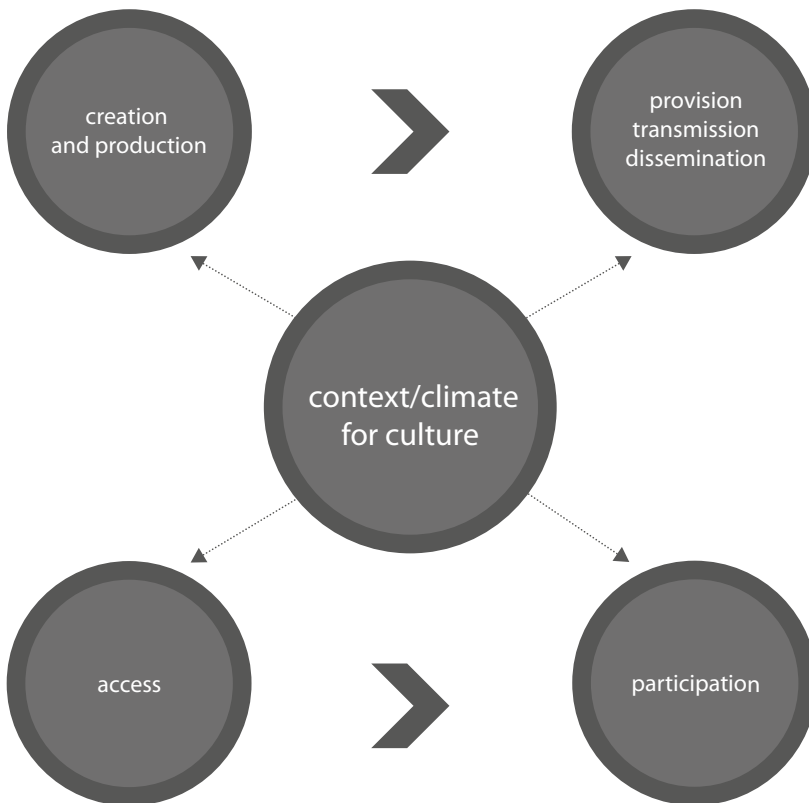
Two of the background challenges for the RMCBU and the Programme are simply:

- How to encourage and develop a strategic approach which meets current EU perceptions of the role of culture and the immediate needs of the EaP countries in the context of their modernization and development processes?

- How, in partnership, with both state bodies and civil society organizations, to root this in the realities, cultural policies, and cultural practices of the countries?

As a result of these two challenges, the Programme intends to focus on the climate and context in which culture – with the arts – suffers, survives, and thrives, with a focus on outcomes, not inputs, related to climate/context, joint working, the development of shared interests, and the creation of mutually beneficial relationships within countries, within the region, and between the region and EU Member States.

Schematically this can be represented as



Yet another challenge is the question of the extent to which the six countries are a 'region' or are willing to see themselves as a region. For example, it has

irked Ukraine to be described as an 'eastern neighbor' when it is quite clear that geographically and historically the country is unambiguously part of Europe. This contrasts with, say, Azerbaijan, where future membership of the EU does not feature at all on the local agenda. In Ukraine, and not only in Ukraine, there are vis-a-vis the EU, sensitivities – real and imagined. There is sometimes limited enthusiasm of the countries for being put together in the same regional 'club' to form partnerships when each of the countries and their cultural sectors aspire more to relationships with Berlin, Paris, London, and so on.

The regional dimension is even more complicated because the countries are individually unique and most are characterized by a very high degree of internal diversity. With honorable exceptions – Poland and Lithuania being the obvious ones – Ukraine and the other countries are relatively little known or understood at any level in the EU Member States not least because of very little professional engagement hitherto.

What links the countries also is ambiguous or not necessarily seen as positive. The Eastern Partnership countries have a common, but not shared history where the point of reference is a Soviet past, but in each country (and within each country) this point of reference is interpreted differently. Also, the six countries generally have a distorted perception of their neighbors based on real and imagined history, sometimes influenced by contemporary conflict, as in the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Officially-sponsored cultural cooperation at an international and multilateral level does not exist in a vacuum, and the relationship between the EaP countries and the EU Member States is occasionally frustrating, unequal, and distorted. In the EaP countries there are sometimes unrealistic popular expectations of EU funding and programs, while the EU relationship with the countries of the region, including of course Ukraine, is controlled by political elites interested in survival and what for them are more important and immediate internal and domestic political agendas. This provides a context in which EU relationship requirements and partnership offers sometimes neither appeal to popular needs or imagination nor radically influence their political leaders' priorities.

There have been considerable, though often unrecognized, achievements and progress in the cultural sector in all the countries since gaining independence, but local cultural environments' and popular expectations were great, probably unrealistic, and therefore there is often a sense of dissatisfaction in Ukraine

and the other countries. Unfortunately, the success stories, positive incremental achievements, and examples of innovative 'good practice' were generally not recognized nor recorded and certainly not actively promoted as 'learning tools' for going forward. Reasons and excuses can be found for this, including unhelpful wider political conditions in which failure to engage in wider reform meant cultural sector change was limited, involving at best 'semi-reforms' and some new legislation, often not implemented in practice.

Most important for the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme is the context in which understandable preservation of the cultural infrastructure and priority for cultural heritage (related to nation-building objectives) by state bodies and ministries of culture were accompanied by failure to create conditions for a serious independent cultural sector and a responsible private/commercial industries sector, resulting in distorted development and disproportionate state domination.

This disproportionate state domination of the cultural sector, common to all the countries and recognizable in Ukraine, sometimes combined with an atavistic management style, has led to a fossilized and static concept of 'culture,' which is very unhelpful to a program such as the EaP Culture Programme.

While the EU and its Member States cannot pretend to have answers to the problems of Ukraine and the other countries, a new understanding of culture appropriate to a modernizing society and economy is quite evidently needed in the region. At the same time, on both sides, the EU and the EaP countries, certain taboos have to be broken. The 'western' NGO model, promoted with good intentions by external donors, has not produced a robust independent sector able to contribute significantly to national cultural development. There are successful cultural NGOs in all countries but in all countries, Ukraine included, sadly, a strong independent sector remains to be built. A similar situation applies to creation of a responsible private/commercial sector, not helped by popular and official prejudice which dismisses it as having nothing to do with 'culture.' A single example from Ukraine shows what the potential contribution of the private/commercial sector can be. Whatever one's views on oligarchs, the fact remains that an initiative like the Pinchuk Art Centre, whatever the motivation, has done more in a couple of years to create standards and promote new audiences and a healthy interest in contemporary art than a traditional Ministry of Culture could achieve in a century.

The real question perhaps is whether EU involvement in culture in Ukraine and the region can produce some neutral territory on which some of the weaknesses

and contradictions related to local cultural development and the promotion of creativity can be pragmatically explored. Can EU engagement in Ukraine's cultural sector and that of the other countries stimulate debate and identify priority needs through facilitating inclusive dialogues with all the 'cultural' stakeholders? If this early stage of the EAP Culture Programme has identified anything clearly it is that the need for the main focus of local cultural policies at national, local/regional, and municipal levels to be on the climate and context for culture in order to release the evident human, cultural, and social 'capital' that so obviously exists in the EaP countries but which is sometimes suffocating and at present cannot be harnessed to modernization and development agendas. Also, vitally important is recognition that the independent civil society organizations sector and the private/commercial sector in all the countries are weak, while the state/public sector (i.e. the Ministries of Culture) cannot contribute meaningfully to modernization and development agendas unless it can develop a national strategic partnership with strengthened independent/NGO and private/commercial sectors.

Unquestionably there is considerable benefit for both the EU Member States and for Ukraine if the volume, level, and degree of sophistication of cultural cooperation can be significantly enhanced. EU Member States' positive experience in areas such as CCIs (cultural and creative industries), cultural leadership development and advocacy to promote culture, and cultural development as a 'cross-cutting issue' may be relevant and helpful to Ukraine if it can be effectively used. EU experience in cultural research is another potentially important area. The need for more targeted policy-oriented research related to the context/climate for cultural creation, promotion, provision, transmission, access, and participation is needed in Ukraine and elsewhere to replace what is often still Soviet-style bureaucratic descriptive, rather than analytical, statistics, and information of limited or dubious strategic planning and management use.

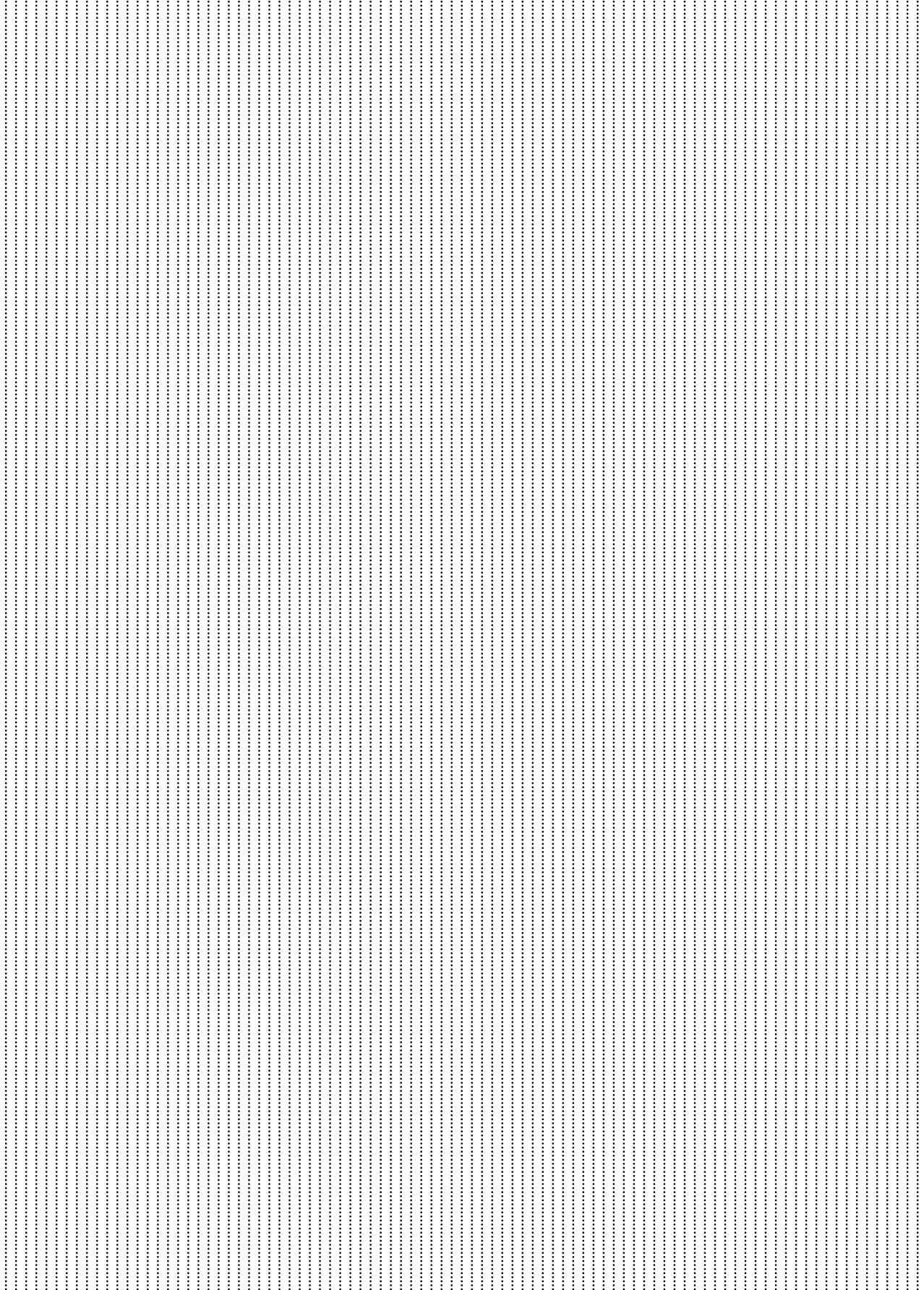
It is too early to begin evaluating the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme and even later it is going to be a question of the extent to which Ukraine and the other countries are able to absorb and make use of its potential. My personal view is that first EU culture program is mainly about 'meeting the neighbors' and hopefully initiating a new, more mature relationship building on the quietly valuable work of the Council of Europe over the past decade or so.⁴ If in addition to

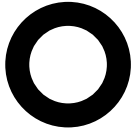
4 Including the Council of Europe's STAGE project and the 'Kyiv Initiative' programs, as well as

this, along the way, it can act as a helpful catalyst for needed local change and reform, then it will have been a good beginning.

In this context the various stakeholders in Ukraine and the other countries should start defining and advocating how they would ideally like the relationship with the EU, the EU Member States, and with EU professional counterparts to develop in its next stage, so that issues related to networking and engagement, capacity building and training, project identification, and development can be cultivated and blossom into a common, mutually-enriching, practical agenda. As the saying goes, 'It takes two to tango.'

the Country Cultural Policy Reviews, such as that for Ukraine. See www.coe.int/t/dg4/culture-heritage/culture/reviews/CDCULT2007-15Ukraine_EN.pdf





UKRAINIAN CULTURE – AN ATTEMPT
AT COMPREHENSIVE DIAGNOSIS



SVITLANA OLESHKO*

What is your diagnosis of the independent cultural scene in Ukraine? What factors hinder or spur its development? In what areas has an independent cultural scene taken hold to a greater or lesser extent?

Amazingly enough, both independent culture and Ukraine still exist, despite everything and not thanks to anything in particular. It's a paradox, but everything that hinders normal development (all-encompassing corruption, flawed legislation, an archaic educational system, breakdowns in communication, etc.) serves, at the same time, as an impetus. Non-conformism and the lack of choice induces the creation of an independent cultural scene on the part of individual artists, as well as on the part of various groups and institutions.

For the most part, independent cultural space exists wherever independent initiative is the decisive factor. By this, I mean specific people and specific projects. It's far worse with institutionalized independent cultural initiatives, performing arts, festivals, and the art industry, where it's almost impossible to withstand pressure from the state. For example, when Ukrainian dubbing was legislatively mandated in film distribution, a number of successful projects came to fruition immediately, resulting in large box-office takes for films featuring brilliant Ukrainian translation and wonderful acting performances. Ukrainian dubbing is now no longer mandatory, which not only made the entire industry unemployed, but also hamstrung its development.

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“Independent Ukrainian culture” or “independent culture in Ukraine”: which of these designations do you find more appropriate? In the current situation, is the national aspect of the independent cultural scene more of an opportunity or a threat?

We’ve seen many examples of artists or groups of artists who are not ethnically Ukrainian and who work or communicate in other languages, yet identify themselves as Ukrainian, from Khvylovy and Shevelov to Kurkov. Ukraine is large and diverse enough to provide freedom of choice. The problem lies elsewhere. Just as it was one hundred or two hundred years ago, young people are forced by the lack of opportunities for professional self-realization in Ukraine to conquer empires. In certain spheres or individual cases, this is even a stimulus, as with, for example, Alexander Archipenko and other “Ukrainian Parisians.” In most cases though, it results in multiple identifications – Gogol, Malevich, and Chekhov. And sometimes it’s lethal, as in the case of Anna Yablonska – a playwright from Odesa, who was killed at Domodedovo Airport having arrived to Moscow to receive an award for one of her dramas. Could she have died in an act of terror in Ukraine? Possibly, yes. But she was killed in Moscow. Could she have written in Ukrainian for the Ukrainian theater? Yes. She wanted to, but the Ukrainian theater had no use for her. Clearly, the national aspect is an opportunity. But we need to find a language in which we can speak about ourselves, in such a way that people want to hear it. For the time being, we’re still looking. We must learn to treat multi-ethnic and multicultural reality of Ukraine, as well as its multilingualism, as advantage, not as a weakness or problem.

What changes need to be made for the independent cultural scene to flourish in Ukraine? How do you see these changes being introduced?

We need radical and systemic change. We have to start from scratch. The first step is to bring down the oppressive, criminal regime and put an end to state interference in art and culture. Artists themselves would also do well to understand what they need to do and for whom. In the twenty years that our little independent theater has existed, without any support, in any form, from any level of government, it has taught us a great deal, but also worn us out. We learned to survive, relying solely on our own efforts, and to work in permanent force majeure conditions, yet remained independent and true to ourselves. We learned

to bring our ideas to life and to find the funding required for specific initiatives. We shaped our audience and created an atmosphere. We are constantly working to improve our skills, usually during field research in our daily work – based on the “how not to do things” principle. We have already trained several generations of actors and artistic directors. However, we understand very well that a single small theater cannot solve all of the problems of the cultural sector of a huge country, simultaneously post-colonial and post-totalitarian, in which 99.9% of the politicians and 30% of the electorate don’t want to see any change. But we don’t have the luxury of another 10–15 years of waiting for change “from above” or “from the outside.” We must change some things right now.

How would you assess the dynamics of the independent cultural scene over the past two decades? How much of the uncompromising nature of the underground is in it, and how much of the pretentiousness of the gallery?

I am convinced that there has been some growth, but it is very difficult to assess. One good example is the emergence of several independent competitions for contemporary drama and short films over the last couple of years. After years of complaints about the lack of young playwrights and filmmakers, we learned that there are actually not so few of them. However, we also learned that the overwhelming majority of them write and make films about their desire to leave Ukraine. It’s a “Goodbye Ukraine” generation. On the other hand, this psychological and physical immigration may bring new grist to the mill and new experiences into Ukraine’s independent cultural scene, similar to how labor migrants send funds to help their relatives make ends meet. I would like to see Ukraine’s independent cultural space undergo a more dynamic growth, encompassing the broadest possible variety of spaces. Instead, we have a state that sees itself as holding a monopoly in the field of culture. Galleries and pretentiousness are the purview of the gaudy charlatans who capture the public and media space. And the allegedly independent “underground” players are not always all that uncompromising. For example, a number of the Ukrainian so-called alternative musicians are quite happy to promote any political party. The biggest problem is that the independent cultural scene is deprived of the full range of opportunities in Ukraine. The state and commerce are already forcing us out of our “underground.”

Translated by Blair Sheridan



VOLODYMYR TYKHYY*

What is your diagnosis of the state of independent culture in Ukraine? What factors hinder or spur its development? In what areas has independent culture taken hold to a greater or lesser extent?

Ukrainian society is a post-colonial and post-totalitarian one. A new public conscience with some “shoots” of ideas about independent culture moulds only now. Certain artistic and cultural events beyond national or commercial context take place periodically. They, however, are not systematic, are inspired for the most part by the performers’ ambitious pursuits only and do not meet any social order. That is, they are sub-cultural level events at best.

Both Ukrainian independent culture and the Ukrainian state have the same big problem – lack of healthy business life. Active, energetic cultural life in a country is the sign of high social standards of its citizens’ life in the first place. As for Ukraine, those economic factors, which stimulate its independent modern culture progress, are mainly beyond its borders.

Graphic arts currently feel most confidently in Ukraine. Ultimate lack of verbal factors, possibility of direct perception without any translators help and now one can quite fairly talk about full-fledged modern Ukrainian artistic process, which

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comes organically from the Soviet Ukraine period and is indissolubly related to it. It is a pity, but in Ukraine neither music nor belles-lettres or the cinema can boast of it.

“Ukrainian independent culture” and “independent culture in Ukraine”: which of these designations do you find more appropriate? In the current situation, is the national aspect of independent culture more of an opportunity or a threat?

It is just now that we witness how “independent culture in Ukraine” – of the pro-Moscow orientation mainly – transforms exactly in “Ukrainian independent culture,” which, in its turn, tries to directly address to local audience. Perhaps it is the national aspect that plays the most important role here. It is probably not so evident from the position of Ukrainian traditionalism, though just now a new artistic language is bringing forth in cosmopolite culture experiments, the language that will be able to carry out creative analysis of modern Ukrainian society and to crystallize exactly its national component in the first place.

What changes need to be made for independent culture to flourish in Ukraine? How do you see these changes being introduced?

Today, Ukrainian independent culture is violently short of adequate – by their spirit – grounds, which would help to carry out socialization of both performers and consumers. However, due to private initiatives of the oligarchs, who reckon they will earn reputation in the eyes of Ukrainian or rather world society in such a way, this process gradually accelerates. Let us not convince them in the opposite.

How would you assess the dynamics of the independent cultural scene over the past two decades? How much of the uncompromising nature of the underground is in it, and how much of the pretentiousness of the gallery?

The evolution of independent culture progress in Ukraine is far from the desirable level; however, it absolutely corresponds to historical and cultural reality of the state on its early development stage. As a result, we have several “lost” generations, who have wasted their energy and their creative potential to great number

of meaningless, long ago forgotten pseudo commercial projects. It is a pity, but this approach is still predominant. Nine of ten modern Ukrainian culture figures try to remain sitting in two chairs simultaneously – to be innovative and, at the same time, commercially attractive. Due to its infancy, Ukrainian independent culture generally is not attracted by garage territory.

Translated by Serhiy Snihur



OLHA KUPRIYAN*

What is your diagnosis of the state of independent culture in Ukraine? What factors hinder or spur its development? In what areas has independent culture taken hold to a greater or lesser extent?

Offering diagnoses is a habit of older people, not one of mine. However, since you asked with which disease I associate the state of the independent cultural scene in Ukraine, I would say the first thing that comes to mind – lupus. Most people are more or less aware of this disease from the popular TV series *House M. D.* Lupus is a disease that causes the body to recognize its own cells are “foreign,” meaning that the immune system destroys healthy cells, believing them to be diseased.

The “symptoms” which culture in Ukraine strives to survive are somewhat similar to those of lupus: many people are trying to create something, but these attempts are often seen as “diseased”... this is especially the case with the younger cultural space, the experimental, which runs counter to tradition. We are inevitably confronted with the fact that culture rejects itself, or at least some of its manifestations – youth, radical, ideological... It is important to learn to think of all of these manifestations as part of Ukrainian culture, but we have not had much success in that so far.

Still, it seems that the culture’s self-rejection also creates, in its own way, favorable conditions for creative expression. It’s like with the French writer’s collective

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OuLiPo, which, by limiting itself to creative work, came up with some very interesting results... I don't know if we can call them masterpieces, but they are definitely something new and interesting.

If we're talking about areas "conquered" by independent culture, then the first thing that comes to mind is the Internet. Nowadays, there's nothing simpler than setting up a blog or a website, or a Facebook page, and dedicating it to somebody's creative work, which will immediately find admirers. For example, that's where the "Gogol Academy" website came to being, where many now independent writers and poets got their start.

My conclusions may be somewhat hasty, but it seems that festivals are losing to a certain extent their status as "cultural refuges." Not because the festivals are getting worse, but because there are fewer and fewer of them. "Sheshory" is gone, the "Tavrian Games" have ceased, "Land of Dreams" has lost something irretrievably... Although... maybe I've just gotten too lazy to find out about them and attend?

"Independent Ukrainian culture" or "independent culture in Ukraine": which of these designations do you find the more appropriate? In the current situation, is the national aspect of independent culture more of an opportunity or a threat?

The latter, of course. This designation allows for more opportunity because, say, the jazz that Oleksiy Kohan plays in Ukraine is also Ukrainian jazz, despite not belonging to traditional Ukrainian culture... As far as I'm concerned, when it comes to culture, the national aspect is neither opportunity nor risk. It either exists or it doesn't. When it's there, you get a kind of "authentic Ukrainian" jazz, like that played by the Lviv group "Chocolate," but there's also the kind of music played by "Dakha-Brakha" which cannot be accused of lacking a national element. If it's not there, it means that you are working in a foreign tongue, in a foreign land, for a foreign reader, listener, or viewer, and, in the best case, the ending of your surname gives your nationality away. That's all there is to it.

What changes need to be made for independent culture to flourish in Ukraine? How do you see these changes being introduced?

If something needs to change, it is, first and foremost, people's attitude to culture. The cultivation of taste and respect for beauty is essential. But above all is to teach understanding. Independent culture, now more than ever, demands understanding, not enchantment. That is, perhaps, why fewer art objects cause delight, as more are intended to shock, to ensure that you are not left indifferent. In order to change our attitude to culture, we need to try to *understand*. Pay attention to the hints that the artist drops – the title of the work, the material, captions and explanations, sometimes his biography and previous works... I'm not saying that I was delighted by the majority of works no less than Anish Kapoor's ones (his exhibition just ended in Pinchuk Art Centre) – some spoke to me immediately, but I honestly tried to understand *why* he did it that way. I am convinced that that is the only way to change things.

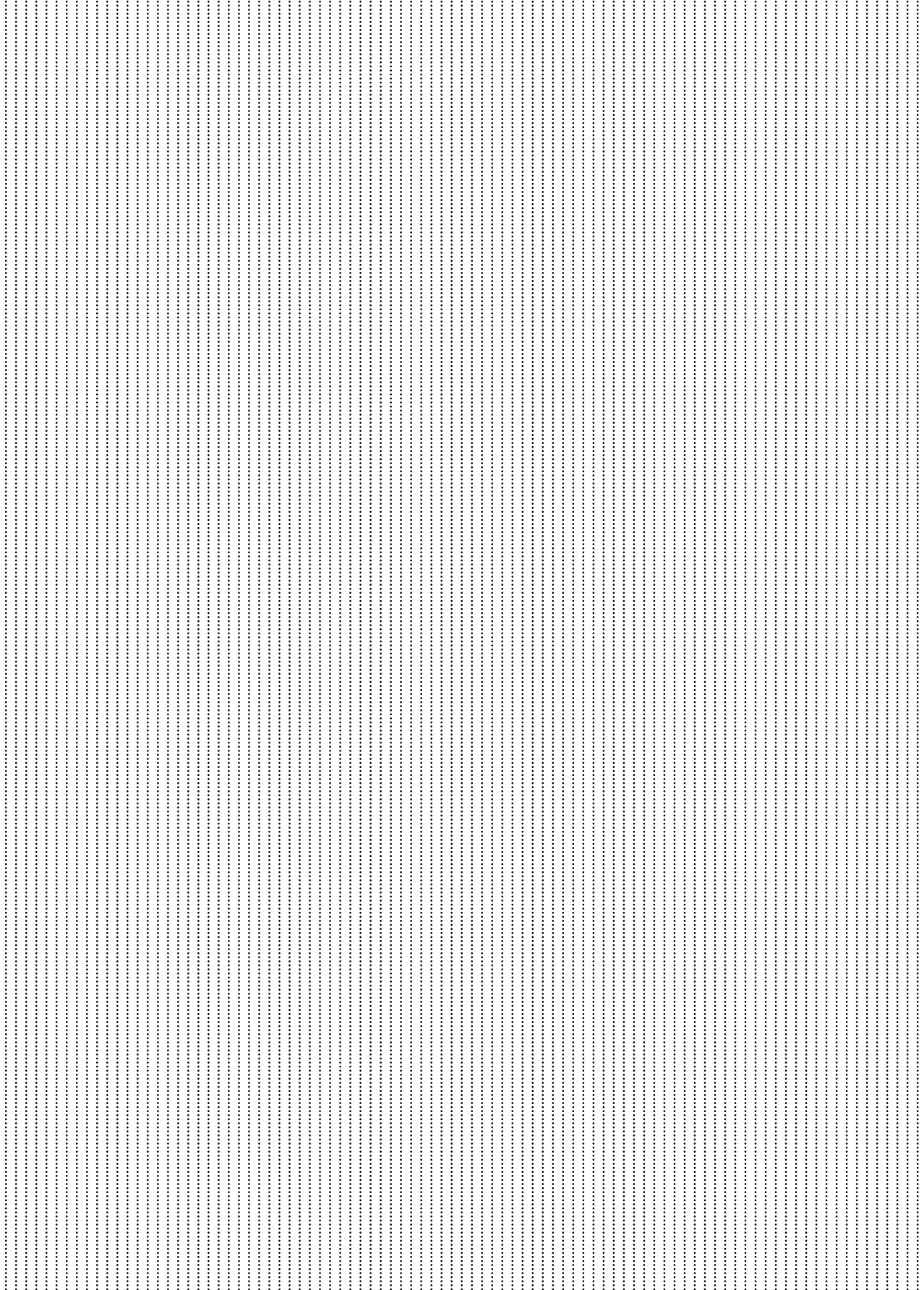
How would you assess the dynamics of the independent cultural scene over the past two decades? How much of the uncompromising nature of the underground is in it, and how much of the pretentiousness of the gallery?

Dmytro Chyzhevsky applied the sinusoid model to culture: according to this theory, everything that was before will be repeated in a new interpretation, after a certain period of time. Maybe a century, maybe a decade. So, if you believe that Ukrainian culture really surged onto the scene in the 1990s, but hit the doldrums in the 2000s, perhaps we'll be seeing a similar surge eight years from now? If, of course, these periods last decades... That's why I refrain from making prognostications. I'd prefer to wait those eight years. It's more interesting that way!

Translated by Blair Sheridan

CULTURE – ARTICLES







JERZY ONUCH*

BECAUSE IT IS DIFFERENT HERE. UKRAINIAN “PROJECT DUBAI”

AN INTERVIEW WITH JERZY ONUCH. PAWEŁ LAUFER IS TALKING TO THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART IN KYIV AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE POLISH INSTITUTE IN KYIV ABOUT THE PRESENT-DAY STATUS OF UKRAINIAN ART.

“Because it is different here.” I always heard people saying this when explaining why they needed to take such and such an action. When I started in Kyiv and wanted to do some things my way, which I believed was the right way, then I was confronted with the inescapable “It is different here.”

Paweł Laufer: How would you tell a person having next to no idea about Ukrainian art about the condition of culture in Ukraine? How to talk about it with people who may not know where Ukraine is?

Jerzy Onuch: Talking about something that cannot be likened to anything or contrasted with the conditions in another country is exceedingly difficult. How can you explain the situation in Poland or Ukraine to an American who has nothing like the Ministry of Culture, let alone the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, in his domestic system?

* Jerzy Onuch – director of the Polish Institute in New York. For many years ran a similar institution in Kyiv. Between 1997 and 2004, head of the George Soros-funded Centre for Contemporary Art in Kyiv.

Every time when I have a similar conversation, and that conversation is about a bit more than just eliciting my quick and witty response on a television program, then it is necessary to provide a broader context. Some abstract talk about the fact that there are artists in Ukraine makes no sense. The information that Ukraine has cultural institutions does not take us anywhere either. Of course, they are artists and there are institutions. But only through a comparison to the functioning of similar institutions in other countries, you can see what it is really like. It seems that comparison is the key word here. It comes easy to us, Poles. Together with Ukrainians, we share a similar historical experience. And you cannot overlook the context of twenty years of Ukrainian independence. However, I would avoid direct comparisons, too. You can say that “in comparison” Ukraine has everything, but on the other hand...

P. L.: It has not...

J. O.: No, it has not... I would put it differently: culture and cultural infrastructure in Ukraine are there as long as democracy is there. It is and it is not. It is – compared to what is happening in Belarus – and it is not – compared to how things are, for example, in Poland.

P. L.: How do you assess the condition of art in contemporary Ukraine from your own perspective and experience as former head of the Polish Institute in Kyiv and associate in the Soros Foundation?

J. O.: In a way, I feel responsible for what has happened in Ukrainian art over the last fifteen years.

P. L.: You were behind a major turning point in Ukrainian art.

J. O.: When I came to Ukraine in 1997 to assume the position of director of the Centre for Contemporary Art in Kyiv¹ (CCA), I thought that it would be feasible to import or transfer the liberal model of art from the West (whatever we mean by “the West”). I found that a kind of benchmark or boundary points should be set

1 Formally, George Soros Center for Contemporary Art.

or transplanted from some well-tested ground. The boundary points in which Ukrainian contemporary art could flourish.

When I left the Soros Foundation and Ukraine, I was wondering if it had really been the best way to go. Indeed, we elaborated patterns, mechanisms, and operations. But in a way, it was a shortcut. With hindsight, I have such an impression when I see how things have evolved over time.

P. L.: Do the mechanisms that were triggered back then still operate?

J. O.: This is a separate question. They do operate and do not operate at the same time. However, this Soros-like thinking has been around until today: some things can be done by taking shortcuts. The activities of the Soros Foundation had a strong educational component. In fact, this is how I approached the Centre for Contemporary Art: as an educational rather than artistic project. Whatever started to emerge later in the artistic field, just to mention the Pinchuk Art Centre, which I called a “Dubai project,” or the first biennial held in Kyiv (nobody knows if another one will ever be held) and known as the *Arsenale 2012*, is just like the “Dubai project”: it comes down to the creation of artistic reality in Ukraine through importing art, artists, and managers while neglecting our own contribution. This is like building the artistic reality based on the money-come-first scheme.

The crucial question here is whether – either inside or outside this scheme – the Ukrainian artistic reality builds up its substance or has just entered a developmental cul-de-sac. It is also a question whether this scheme encourages new initiatives or just promotes those that are set up for effect, and whether they take root in the Ukrainian cultural soil. These are some ways of thinking in Ukraine that can be illustrated by analogy with the Ukrainian football. Ukraine has two very good soccer teams: Dynamo Kyiv and Shakhtar Donetsk. However, their teams could be put together and play anywhere. The clubs do not exist because there are 50 or 100 thousand Ukrainian boys having perfect exercise conditions and the most talented ones are selected for the first line-up. They exist and thrive because of two powerful business communities that decided to create world-class teams. In Shakhtar Donetsk, 90% of players are not Ukrainian. This means something. While Dynamo Kyiv maintains a soccer talent school, Donetsk follows the rule: “the sky is the limit,” money is not an obstacle, every good player can be purchased.

Similar mechanisms have led to the upsurge in the specific dynamics of Ukrainian productions. Earlier, you mentioned the turning point in Ukrainian art. Certainly, that turning point meant that the new generation began to gaze towards and integrate with the world of art outside Ukraine. But still, the temptation to take shortcuts and refrain from own initiatives is strong, especially that something has really clicked in the mechanisms governing art since the late 1990s. The dominating trend is to hire a great curator from abroad and let them do everything for us. Great, but what is the ultimate outcome of that?

P. L.: You advance an opinion that the culture management in Ukraine is import-driven. Curators, artists, footballers are imported rather than sourced and trained in Ukraine; no pressure is put on developing the domestic art base indispensable for an independent and legitimate presence in the European cultural discourse.

J. O.: I am a proponent of such a model of culture or sports development in which people can take advantage of an extensive infrastructure and educational facilities. This should not be analysed in terms of export and import; instead, there should be more focus on the necessity to create a robust internal market.

P. L.: Do you think that such an internal market actually exists in Ukraine?

J. O.: Germans did not build the Mercedes to export it. They just wanted to have a reliable car. And only after the car had proved good indeed, they started to export it.

Ukraine is not the only one making this mistake – I think that Poland is making it too. Look, we are about to have the whole Edinburgh at our feet. Within three weeks of Edinburgh International Festival 2012, 180 events will be held featuring Polish artists! My goodness! This is nine events per day!

P. L.: Who is going to consume so much of Poland?

J. O.: Good question! Another one is: How many people can we attract if we put up nine events every day? Well, forget the figures. When we look at what we

have fit for export, it turns out that there are no more than five names that keep surfacing all the time. This is not what it is all about.

We have the Polish Film Institute (PFI) and make more than fifty Polish films, including co-productions, a year. When the PFI was established, the production was about twelve films a year. The problem is that today we do make fifty films, but these are average films. Romania produces about twenty films a year, having no PFI equivalent, and their cinema is in great demand. I am convinced that if we continue the process with the PFI, there is a high probability that we will wait to see such productions that would go beyond the home cinematography. This is even truer of Ukraine.

There is an urgent need for the best possible culture base that will yield fruit in the long term. Even if it does not produce a competitive export product, there is no guarantee of that, the greatest value of such a situation will be that once you have this base, anything built of it will stay at home and will be our own, which, at the same time, does not imply cultural isolationism in any case.

P. L.: What is the condition of this base and its infrastructure?

J. O.: With the collapse of the Soviet Union, whatever was created under that system and for that system degenerated and decayed. Some things were privatized, some ceased to exist; many institutions simply died out. The larger and more serious institutions were far more entangled in the previous system and, by extension, less prone to change and adaptation. They could not respond to the challenges of the time, they had no tools. Most of them were out-of-date, underfunded and doing bad in terms of infrastructure. And nobody was able to find a motivation to modernize them. No change mechanism was available. When I lived in Ukraine, and it was thirteen years altogether, not a single cultural institution was established. The same was true about concert halls, galleries, museums, etc. Indeed, new sporting arenas were built for Euro 2012, yet as regards the cultural infrastructure, nothing has improved over the twenty years of independence. Kyiv with its multi-million population has a city philharmonic hall that is housed in the old tsarist merchants' club. It can hold the audience of about 800 people. Be serious. Infrastructure is absolutely fundamental. When I managed the Polish Institute in Kyiv, we did suffer from cultural infrastructure issues. We were not able to find partners offering an adequate technical base.

P. L.: How do you assess the cultural cooperation and support that Ukraine has from other countries?

J. O.: The most important cultural institution operating in Ukraine is the classic type: the Goethe Institute, the British Council, the Polish Institute, the French Institute. They have pursued their policies in many ways. By my standards, the most interesting were the initiatives of the Goethe Institute and the British Council, not to mention the Polish Institute, which has had a special position and mission to accomplish. On the other hand, the French have focused on the presentation of their culture and preservation of its integrity. Germany, the UK, and Poland have concentrated on modernization projects. We wanted to help those communities, individuals and institutions in Ukraine that were ready to come to grips with projects and take the risk.

P. L.: Ukraine does not have institutions such as the Polish Institute and does not pursue any active, targeted, and deliberate cultural and promotional agenda abroad. Is the independent Ukrainian culture able to handle this on its own? And how can it do it? What can Ukrainian NGOs do about it?

J. O.: There is no doubt that a soft and well-crafted promotional policy of a country is extremely important. Especially for such countries as Ukraine, which has a great potential but either refuses to manage it or, if it does, it is done more by accident than design.

Just imagine that such an economic power like Germany spends 40% of the budget of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on public and cultural diplomacy. These are staggering sums when given in absolute numerals. I do not know what percentage of the budget of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is expended on public and cultural diplomacy. I imagine that no more than 10%. Therefore, the German presence is overwhelming. Their economic presence, which seems obvious, is followed by the cultural and scientific one.

Speaking of non-governmental organizations in Ukraine, this sector is basically in good health. The question is if and to what extent it is effective. Do not forget that the people who make up this sector and work in it are the same Ukrainian citizens as those who sit in government institutions. They all must seek ways of co-existence and functioning in the same tradition. And since that tradition is

largely the Soviet tradition, a lot of NGOs have not been able to entirely drop it. Even if Ukrainian NGOs often say that they are struggling with it. They do not practice what they officially declare.

A few months ago, the director of the Lviv Art Gallery of Painting, Boris Voznitsky, died in a car crash. A discussion was started on who should succeed him. Shortly after the accident, *Urainska Pravda* published a letter penned by a group of very prominent citizens. In the letter, they put forward a candidate for the vacated office, Taras Vozniak. I will not discuss Vozniak's competence, he might actually be the best candidate for this position, but the letter did annoy me. It did not occur to any of these people, and these are fairly important figures in Ukrainian culture and science, that they should be doing their best to ensure a transparent selection process, or at least, any selection process.² Instead, they concluded arbitrarily that they had a great candidate to lobby for. The same mechanism was applied when appointing former Soviet party secretaries. Of course, this is not only a Ukrainian problem.

P. L.: Transparency?

J. O.: The Ukrainian NGOs largely embody this way of thinking which I have often seen in Ukraine, and which comes down to the buzzword "Because it is different here." I always heard people saying this when explaining why they needed to take such and such an action. When I started in Kyiv and wanted to do some things my way, which I believed was the right way, then I was confronted with the inescapable "It is different here."

I remember that when I gathered the board of my foundation (CCA) and gave them a document to read (it addressed the conflict of interest within the board), it sparked a heated debate. The chairman suggested, "How about writing to Soros and trying to explain that it must be a little different with us." I responded, "You can write it, but I will not send it."

Straight line is the shortest distance between points A and B. Is the definition of straight line different in Ukraine? It seems so. When they seek the shortest distance between point A and B, they follow a different logic, and the best way

² In Ukraine, heads of national cultural institutions are appointed by the Minister of Culture [editors' note].

does not need to be the shortest way. In Ukraine, there is a strong argument of the importance of local context and uniqueness. Consequently, some things cannot be done as they should be done, but they must be done differently. And we do see the effects of “doing things differently” in Ukraine.

P. L.: The effect is that it is different there?

J. O.: Yes, unfortunately. Otherwise, it would be normal, whatever that word means. In Ukraine, there is a constant escape from the standard because standards are inevitably linked to obligation and commitment. If we agree on some rules, then we need to stick to them. And if there are no rules, we can do as we please. And this is how Ukrainians prefer to go on. The case of the Lviv gallery that I mentioned earlier shows that they do not really want to change this system. “We want our way, we want our guy,” they say. Because this is the guy we trust, he will do what we like the most. For this reason, fortunately and most probably, he will not trigger any structural or systemic changes.

The other thing is short memory. Ukrainians refuse to accept certain achievements. They keep building things from scratch over and over again. I am monitoring what is left in terms of legacy after the CCA, which operated for 13 years. Judging by the statements of various cultural figures, that institution actually never existed. There was something, but nobody really knows what. Therefore, we need to start building from scratch again. More than that, some people who I used to work with, or who were with the Soros Foundation, and are now making their own careers behave as if they had just started. As if they were created *ex nihilo*, suddenly appearing out of nowhere, great and brilliant. They are reluctant to admit that they are in fact a product of the Soros Foundation and its standards. Had it not been for that great opening that they experienced thanks to Soros and the ability they received back then to act in Ukraine a little differently than “differently,” they would not be who they are where they are.

For some years, Lviv hosted an event called the Current Art Week. Not so long ago, my friends from Lviv told me that now this would be changed into a biennial. New organizers dismiss the old recognizable brand. They want to start building from nothing.

P. L.: For several years, you have been living in New York running the Polish Institute. Is Ukrainian art present in the Big Apple? Is it traceable in the USA in any way?

J. O.: It is present there, mainly thanks to the relatively well-functioning institutions run by the enlightened Ukrainian diaspora. These are not only folk dance groups supervised by Orthodox churches. The Ukrainians in the United States have institutions of tremendous importance. For example, the Ukrainian Museum in New York; although small, it is capable of putting up a professional exhibition. Columbia University offers Ukrainian studies (at Harriman Institute).

When it comes to Ukrainian contemporary art, it is generally absent, well, Ukraine as such is absent from here. In 2011, The New Museum in New York hosted a large exhibition *Ostalgie*, showcasing the art of the Eastern European countries; two Ukrainians were exhibited: Serhiy Zarva and Boris Mikhailov. The manner of presentation made their work dissolve in the “Russianness,” without any Ukrainian connotations preserved. Mikhailov also exhibited successfully at MoMA in 2011. But none of these events had to do with the promotion of the Ukrainian brand. The only Ukrainian trace in Mikhailov’s presentation was a label with his place of birth: Kharkiv, Ukraine. So Ukraine was mentioned as the place of artist’s birth. Well, there was no other way he could resolve that. Everybody is born somewhere. Here or there. But the question is: Where is all the Ukrainian context gone? The promotion of these events and artists did not receive any backing of the Ukrainian authorities.

We also invited Ukrainians to participate in certain projects of the Polish Institute in New York. For example, we invited the well-known historian Yaroslav Hrycak to a debate at Columbia University. During the Pen World Voices Festival of International Literature, supervised by Salman Rushdie, Mykola Riabchuk took part in three panel discussions. With his speeches, he did more for the promotion of Poland than the Polish authors; in each of his presentations, he stressed that he had been invited by the Polish Institute of the Polish, that Poles are great organizers, and that Ukrainians should learn from their western neighbours how to promote their culture. Sounds a bit Machiavellian. To invite a Ukrainian to promote Poland. But, in a sense, this is inevitable. People like Riabchuk know both these places – Poland and Ukraine – and have something to say about them.

P. L.: Do you know of any solution or a possible scenario for the artistic community and the government that would help solve these problems in the Ukrainian “different conditions”?

J. O.: You have to understand what today's Ukraine is in cultural terms and try to find a consensus. The Ukrainians have to complete the process of building their self-awareness. The truth is that neither side of the official cultural dialogue is ready for any consensus. And without this “any” consensus in Ukraine, there will be no progress at all. And this requires good will. There is a widespread conviction that there is no point in getting together and talking because the prevailing argument is that such discussions serve only one purpose: to find arguments against those who sit on the other side. Everybody seems to know that this will be all in vain. Without a thorough stocktaking, it will be very difficult to make a step forward. Otherwise, if taken, such steps will be short-term and accidental. Something can work or not.

Ukraine will be doomed to such a situation as long as its cultural elite refuse to try to debate. Now, Ukrainians lack a clear, shared, and commonly accepted narrative. They do not have a universal discourse. We must be aware of all the complications, but also Ukrainians themselves should try to forge their reality to the greatest possible extent. Bear in mind that when Ukraine did not exist as an independent state, Ukrainian culture was there anyway. So it is not true that if there is no sustainable and official support for culture, it will not grow; it will, maybe only slightly, but it will develop because it is a living culture of a great nation. This lack of support is also no excuse for denying the obligation to keep building it. On the other hand, state support must also be ensured because there is no point for a state to exist if it is not able to foster its own culture and protect its own identity, even if it is twisted, difficult, and hard to disambiguate.

What divides Ukrainians is not in fact so immense and painful as it may seem. Think about, for example, Italy; the Italian state is an artificial creation, put together from dozens of lands and communities which even today do not form a uniform whole. But they manage to function as a single state because there is a certain agreement, understanding, and consensus proposed and jointly adopted by the elite. However, if we looked at Italy more carefully, we would certainly spot a lot of diversity and multiplicity. They do have many reasons to disintegrate. Despite this, the country is still as one. Ukrainians could learn a lesson from Italians. What

divides them is not that great and painful, but we have to be aware that the process of building, of growing the awareness and consolidating in Ukraine will take time.

You should also be frank about your own condition and not evade the bitter truth about your own weaknesses and shortcomings. There is nothing worse than telling lies, especially when you attempt to promote your own culture. Such lies are very easy to expose. It is much easier in sport: you either win or lose. It is much harder in arts, because you do not win medals. In the short run, media and PR tricks are used to maintain the feeling of success. Many people in Ukraine, especially from official circles, believe in the great success of Ukrainian culture. Hardly anyone wants to verify it.

Recently, *Ukrainska Pravda* published the Shanghai ranking of top 500 universities in 2012. The author bemoans that no single Ukrainian university is listed there. Actually, the Polish ones are also but a few.

P. L.: The Jagiellonian University and Warsaw University are ranked in the fourth hundred.

J. O.: For Ukrainian or Polish universities to be listed in the ranking, they must have recourse to new systemic solutions and standards, comparable to other universities that top the current rating. If such institutions operate in incomparable systems, they automatically drop out as they do not fit into international classifications. It does not mean that they are entirely bad, they just lack the relevant points of reference that may be useful as comparison categories. They operate in a completely different world. For example, if someone has a PhD from Harvard and Oxford, he or she cannot teach classes in Ukraine. Such degrees are not honoured in Ukraine. The purpose of that, I reckon, is to perpetuate the internal and safe status quo. By avoiding confrontation and comparison, we keep a good mood and fail to notice our imperfections. In Ukraine, there are about 350 universities (about 238 state-run and 107 private [editors' note]); in the UK there are more than 80 universities, which is believed to be a lot; in Italy there are no more than 50 (state-run and private, [editors' note]), and in Poland we have nearly 500 universities and colleges (132 state-run and 338 private [editors' note]). As we can see, these figures have little bearing on reality. Lublin has 5 state universities. So what? One first-rate university in Lublin would probably suffice.

One of the huge culture-related problems in Ukraine is very conservative art schools; and by “conservative” I do not mean conservatism in a positive sense of teaching classical skills and art. I mean this peculiar and mythological dimension of “classicality” that is fostered there: “Here, we educate in a “classic” way.” Their “classic” should be understood as the training of artistic practices that are basic, safe, craft-oriented, set, and acceptable. In fact, Ukrainian art schools are completely blind to contemporary art. They leave no room for exploration. One international biennial of contemporary art, organized with hype in Kyiv (*Arsenale 2012* [editors’ note]), will not change this situation.

As I said before speaking of the Ukrainian problem with memory, my colleagues from Lviv notified me about the biennial in Lviv, which had previously been called the Current Art Week. The newsletter says that Lviv is facing a great chance to become a cultural Venice of East-Central Europe.

P. L.: These are the peculiar comparisons to something already known and attempts to enchant the reality with brand-loaded catch-phrases. This is aimed to shore up the value of things. Usually, it has a suicidal and ultimately humiliating effect. You have to identify and explore your own capital. You have to build your own brand by capitalizing on your own resources.

J. O.: All these slogans and comparisons, most often written in English, do the trick only on the internal market. From outside, they look ridiculous and naive. If anyone at all can get through all this semantic confusion, they will try to test it. They will shrug their shoulders and ask, “What are they talking about?” “What is going on?” “Show me your value?” Such attempts reveal a naive desire to prove that you are getting closer and mature enough to near some mythical ideal. This is a desperate call that “Look, we can do it too.” But nobody expects Lviv to be a cultural Venice of Eastern Europe. Be yourself but stay open to the world, to one another. And lastly, be open to yourselves.

Translated by Konrad Szulga



ZOFIA BLUSZCZ*

SOME REMARKS ON CONTEMPORARY ART IN UKRAINE

After the Orange Revolution, a new generation emerged which handled different issues. Born about 1980, they are much more serious, focused, and better and more consciously connected within the global art network.

The position of contemporary art in Ukraine has changed dramatically over the last twenty years. Initially, there were no more than several dozen artists involved in the field and a limited audience. Institutions inherited after the Soviet era were anything but engrossed in the leading art trends of the end of the 20th century; in fact, even until now, the vast majority of the artists have been pursuing a rather traditional approach to art marked by metaphor or mimetism. The largest arts organization, the National Union of Artists of Ukraine, numbers nearly 4.5 thousand members and still manages remarkable property: studios, creative work houses, land and buildings, and, as it proudly admits, goes back to 1917. But this is not where today's curators and critics look for inspiration.

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THE ART OF OLIGARCHS, ARTISTS, AND THE STATE

Anyone interested in Eastern European culture has heard about fabulous Pinchuk Art Centre (PAC) in the heart of Kyiv. Perhaps, it is the hobby of Viktor Pinchuk, the billionaire profiling himself through three major goals: charity, collecting contemporary art, and business (Pinchuk's assets are estimated by the *Korespondent* magazine at nearly \$ 6 billion), which caused such a marginal cultural area to gain ground and kindled a growing interest across the country. Today, it is one of the fastest-growing fields of culture. Compared with the literature or the theatre, the contemporary art generates and attracts many more new artistic initiatives such as new arts places, magazines, websites, events, and audience. Although rich and noble George Soros invests in Ukrainian art no more, he has generous successors among the local tycoons. In a way, the vacuum left by Soros has been filled by the Development of Ukraine Foundation of Rinat Akhmetov. Besides offering small grants for art projects, the foundation also donates to public museums and cultural institutions. (As reported by the *Korespondent* magazine, Rinat Akhmetov's assets are estimated at \$ 25.6 billion).

The first new institution of this type, permanently in the field of Ukrainian contemporary art, was the Soros Center for Contemporary Art (CCA), which no longer exists. Two thriving arts organizations had been building on this legacy until they came to a point where they decided to go their own way. Even today, the Centre for Contemporary Art Foundation recalls on its website its Soros-related origin, but the Centre for Visual Culture does not return to its original desire to take over the library and output of the CCA. It has its own and great library. Since 2012, the CCA Foundation has been publishing an on-line arts magazine, has been supporting artistic projects in public space, and has been engaged in educational projects.

Ukraine can be said to have three types of institutions of contemporary art: private (run by private people or businesses), grassroots (associated with artists and activists), and public (state- or municipality-run). This division seems to reflect only the manner of financing, but in a fact, it tells more about how each of such institutions started. In the first instance, privately run art institutions focus on transferring and depositing previously accumulated assets to a new realm, hoping for some sort of benefit, e.g. creating a positive image (businesses). In the second case, the main goal is to search for a new quality of art and its institutional framework. In the third case, certain public institutions (both of the first

and second type) are characterized by the lack of initiative or a misguided one (for example, the requirement of handing one or more of the exhibited works over to the exhibition organizer as gifts).

The most important and well-endowed organizations are located in Kyiv, Donetsk, and Kharkiv. In Kyiv, the Pinchuk Art Centre prevails. It puts on exhibitions displaying the world's canon of art. The artists exhibiting in Kyiv are: Anish Kapoor, Maurizio Cattelan, Olafur Eliasson, Andreas Gursky, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami, Paul McCartney. With less publicity but also regularly, the centre exhibits the output of domestic artists: Olexandr Hnylytskyj, Oleksandr Roitburd, Iliia Tsitskan, Pavlo Makov, Arsen Savadov, Zhanna Kadyrov, the REP and SOSka groups. A recent novelty is discussions, educational programmes, and a curator school. PAC also funds two prizes – Future Generation Art Prize – for young artists from around the world (\$ 100,000) and for young Ukrainian artists (\$ 12,000).

Kyiv is also home to the small, yet thriving and private, Bottega Gallery and Collection Gallery, which regularly hold exhibitions of Ukrainian living artists. The Bottega has organized a young artist contest aptly named MUChi (Ukr. 'young Ukrainian artists'). The I Gallery seated in Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk is owned by Pavlo Hudymov, formerly with the very popular Okean Elzy music band. The I Gallery runs a programme of cooperation with young Ukrainian artists under the name of Henofond ("a pool of genes"). Another relatively active institution is the Ra Gallery which started in the early 1990s. Particularly noteworthy is the Cultural Project by Natalia Zhevago. This foundation organizes lectures on the history of art and its contemporary manifestations. While the majority of the named institutions are involved in the organization of exhibitions and trade in artist's works, the Cultural Project educates audiences in a conscious and systematic way. In Donetsk, on the initiative of Lyubov Mikhailova, the Insulation Foundation was established in the premises of the insulating material factory. The site is being brought back to life through artistic residencies and "site-specific" realisations. Among the exhibited authors, there are such names as: Cai Guo-Qiang, Daniel Buren and Boris Mikhailov. They also offer a series of open lectures. This is quite a unique experience for Donetsk where there is virtually no artistic community. In Kharkiv, the Yermilov Centre was established in 2012; it was named after a Kharkiv-born representative of Cubo-Futurism and sits near one of the oldest universities in Eastern Europe. It has not yet started its own website, thus it is difficult to liken

it to the mighty Viktor Pinchuk's initiative; still, it is worth noting that the first exhibition in Kharkiv showcased the most renowned living local artists. The Yermilov Centre programme is set up by the long-standing director of the City Gallery in Kharkiv who is notorious for her programming independence.

Large, private foundations involved in contemporary art have mushroomed over the last five years. Some organizations that started earlier are primarily grass-roots initiatives such as the *Art Association Dzyga* in Lviv which is active in almost all areas of culture: from literature, through music to art. It organizes exhibitions, festivals, concerts, workshops and even maintains an oral archive of Ukrainian poets and poetesses. It gathers positive feedback because it originated from the student movements of the 1990s, and its artistic choices are invariably independent. Another well-established and thriving organization is the *Totem Centre* for Youth Organizations in Kherson, known for its video-art festival *Terra Futura*, film workshops for young people, care for the cultural heritage of the region and cooperation with well-known artist Stanislav Volazlovsky, the mastermind and supervisor of the festival programme. The Media Art Lab is yet another initiative of relatively long standing; it has been promoting the media arts since early 1990s.

Organizations set up by artists themselves pursue different goals. While those of the early 1990s were intended to regulate the artistic life independently of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine (for example, the *Soviart*, an alliance of art galleries and a gallery of the same name, though now of somewhat eroded position), in the second decade of the new millennium, a new type of artistic organizations emerged focused on leftist demands and deliberately exposing their intellectual background, as well as demonstrating their readiness to participate in social life and defend the rights of artists as a profession: the *Hudrada*, the *Self-Defence Initiative of Art Workers*, the *Garage Gang*. These organizations are less formal and set up their operation schedules through internal debate. They pursue successive and joint initiatives and take care of the relationships within the teams collaborating on a given project. Besides, these organizations differ from one other to a large extent; the first one is actually a curators' platform. Over the last three years, it has arranged and curated a couple of serious and, I do not hesitate to say, one of the best events in the country. The exhibition *Court Experiment* addressed the problem of numerous lawsuits brought against artists and activists. As part of it, the exhibition organizers participated in the event featuring a court room as the members of the audience. The artists participated

in the mock hearing of Olexandr Volodarsky, who had been sentenced and imprisoned for a performance intended against the activities of the Commission for Public Morality. They also attended the trial of Jevhennia Bielorusiec and the Movtsanov brothers. The three tried artist became the unwitting representatives of a wider group opposing the illegal redevelopment of the historic centre of Kyiv. The exhibition and the concurring discussions led to the artists recovering their subjectivity and their own territory in which they were able to re-settle the whole situation and highlight the injustice.

Well known are the trials and tribulations of the Kyiv Centre of Visual Culture¹ which was expelled from its seat at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, although it was the most thriving and dynamic student centre publishing or supporting at least three cultural magazines, *Krytyka Polityczna*, *Spilne*, *Prostory*, and hosting debates, meetings, lectures and exhibitions. The sticking point was the exhibition the *Ukrainian Body* which offended the university governance by exposing too much of that body. The exhibition divided Ukrainian intellectuals. It turned out that the issue of freedom of expression is no more that important if the problems posed are considered by the Ukrainian academia less conducive to the development of Ukrainian identity. And the problems posed were: physicality, sexuality and the search for a new Ukrainian left. Only the Kyivan *Krytyka*² took the challenge; since the 1990s, it has been publishing the most important debates on identity set against the backdrop of of the history of the USSR and Cossack Ukraine, politics and the economy, and which deplored the conservative position of the university president and Lviv academics supporting his decision in their letters. The Centre of Visual Culture is now fine in the building of the Październik Cinema. The university has lost its opinion of a democratic establishment.

Another initiative lying at the junction of art, passion and medium capital is a private residence for artists operating as the Muzychi Expanded History project of Alevtina Kakhidze and Volodymyr Babiuk. Alevtina Kakhidze's art is about constantly testing the forces influencing the contemporary art and society in

1 The interview from the period of the struggle to remain within the structure of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy: <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/Serwisukrainski/RadynskiNiepozwolimy zamknac CentrumKulturyWizualnejwKijowie/menuid-290.html>

2 Oxana Forostyna's text published in the *Krytyka* on the vicissitudes of the *Ukrainian Body* is available from the *Dwutygodnik* magazine: <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/3614-ukraina-2012-ukrainskie-cialo.html/>

Ukraine. Her each new project provokes new thought concerning artist's impact of reality and the possibility of making the change. As one of the components of her artistic practice, Alevtina Kakhidze stresses the need for the development of art infrastructure and environment: she organizes micro art fairs, exhibitions, debates and her own critical actions. In her unusual project, *I Am Late for a Plane That Cannot Be Missed*, launched for the opening of a grant programme for arts funded by Rinat Akhmetov, the artist deliberately refused to meet the expectations of the mass-media aroused by the promotional machinery set in motion by the oligarch. Two years earlier, Kakhidze wrote to two Ukrainian moguls interested in culture – Rinat Akhmetov and Viktor Pinchuk – asking them to paint the Earth seen from their private jets. She explained that, as an artist, she would never will be able to do that. The letter to Akhmetov triggered further cooperation; a plane was rented and the event was publicized: "An artist to paint the Earth when flying a private jet." The mass-media geared up to get a scoop; cameras and computers were on stand-by. Kakhidze made the flight, but she did not paint anything; instead, she transformed the media bubble into a surprise. She controlled the situation all over. She carefully collected and studied the news released by the mass-media. She created a remarkable archive which proved to be an insightful analysis of the mass-media machinery, its critical potential (or rather the lack of potential) and the ways of dealing with equivocal situations.

The third type of organizations are state and municipal institutions which have opened up to cooperate with the communities involved in contemporary art. The *Mystetskyi Arsenal* National Arts, Culture and Museum Complex should be mentioned in the first place. This institution, directly reporting to the Secretariat of the President of Ukraine, covers the area of 50 thousand square metres. Currently, it has the status of a historical building under restoration, but thanks to its committed director, Natalia Zabolotna, it puts up several large events a year. Now, a few words about the largest contemporary art event in Ukraine that has taken place to date.

It was the spectacular *Arsenale 2012* First International Biennial of Contemporary Art. The decision to hold the event was taken only 9 months prior to the opening; it was a major challenge and investment of public and private funds (approximately U.S.\$ 5 million), which, on the one hand, testifies to immense creativity, but on the other, to a considerable degree of spontaneity and disorderliness. If it had not been for the originators' energy, Euro 2012 football championship, the

magnificent 18th-century edifice of the Kyiv *Arsenale 2012* and, perhaps, the desire to underline that it is not only Viktor Pinchuk who pulls the strings in Ukrainian contemporary art, this great event would have never come to fruition. The biennial curator was David Eliot. He designed a classic, well-built exhibition, made up of works by the world's most famous creators. The local artistic circles were also very much engrossed in the organization; one of the concurrent initiatives was a Polish-Ukrainian project called Double Game, yet the biennial was thought to have hardly been a manifestation of the output of Ukrainian artists. Well, there is nothing strange or wrong in it.

The *Arsenale 2012* was yet another proof of the importance of contemporary art in Ukraine. Probably, a street theatre festival or a series of pseudo-folk music concerts would have been a better magnet for audiences. However, priority was given to a very demanding art for discerning public. The choice of works and artists had certain political overtones. Suffice to say that among the invited artists there were Ai Vai Vei from China, Yael Bertana with her movie *Assassination* which represented Poland at the 54th Venice Biennale, the works by Vyacheslav Akunov from Uzbekistan who arranged a "walk of fame" featuring the perpetrators of the 20th-century crimes, among them Pol Pot, Stalin and Vladimir Putin, or very courageous and socially unconventional artists, the Chapman brothers and Raqib Shaw. *Mystetskyi Arsenal* is located in front of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, the heart of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, now under the Moscow Patriarchate. Surprisingly, it did not cause any censorship issues. This may be the evidence of considerable tolerance, or a clear signal that the Ukrainian ideological front line is elsewhere than, for example, in Poland.

Another institution on the contemporary art map of Ukraine is the National Art Museum of Ukraine. Although suffering from a temporary crisis, it has become one of the major partners for contemporary artists and curators and, besides taking care of enlarging its collection, it is open to original projects, such as a series of performances intended as a dialogue with the "institution" in its physical and ideological dimension: "A hostage at the Museum," curated by Larysa Babij, "Big Surprise" by the REP group, curated by Olesya Ostrovska-Luta or "Culture Baggage" curated by Mykola Skyba; the last of them brought the collection of Polish contemporary art from the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw to be exhibited at the National Art Museum of Ukraine. From the institutions following Soviet organizational patterns, the museum has become

a genuine, sensitive and open platform of dialogue with the artistic fraternity. This was possible thanks to the museum personnel who, despite the unfavourable financial and working conditions, did their utmost to make the institution thrive. When in 2012 the Minister of Culture again tried to replace the director of a cultural institution with a person from outside (at that time his choice was the owner of a commercial gallery, which violates AICA standards), the museum was supported by the artistic community, staging up protests in the museum building together with its employees and revealing to the public all stages of the process, which led to the appointment of Maria Zadorozhna as director – a candidate with knowledge and experience regarding the functioning of a museum.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Ukrainian art of the last twenty years has experienced a generational transition. Artists working in the 1990s rushed into the uncharted territories and subjects sealed off under the Soviet regime: heavy industry, defence industry, the conquest of space, coal mines and of course the body as a theme explored through the new and scandalous perspectives. Some of the noteworthy practices are those of Arsen Savadov, International Masoch Foundation Group, Vlady Ralko, Olexandr Hnylytsky, Serhija Bratkova, Oleg Kulik, Boris Mikhailov. The works of the 1990s, like photos and videos, are mostly simple in their form. The strength is the original idea and unpredictability in viewing the reality. The 1990s also see the parallel activities of a few budding artist who have been active ever since. Extremely different from one another, the group was made up of: Andriy Sahajdakowski, Tiberij Silvashi, Anatoly Kryvolapov, VladKaufman (Vlodko Kaufman).

After the Orange Revolution, a new generation emerged which handled different issues. Born about 1980, they are much more serious, focused, and better and more consciously connected within the global art network. In the youngest generation, which has already entered the art scene, there is an easily discernible leftist strain. These artists are quite suspicious of the free-market and pseudo-democratic paradise. Their work and fields of activity seem to stem from their own reflection, books and studies, and the mutual inspiration; they also detach themselves from the topics explored by their older colleagues. A characteristic

Ukrainian phenomenon is the emergence of artistic groups: the REP Group,³ the Soska Group, the Items Group, the Tanzlaboratorium. The form is fluctuating and serves the message. Individual projects deliberately adopt the form of a dialogue with the most sensitive and painful issues regarding the identity of Ukrainian society. However, what they do as a community does not overshadow the artists' individual endeavours. In Poland, it was seen in the *Transfer* exhibition at the Warsaw Centre for Contemporary Art. The production of the REP Group cannot be mistaken with the output of its individual members: Lada Nakonechna, Zanna Kadyrova, Volodymyr Kuznetsov, Mykyta Kadan, Xenia Hnylytska, Lesya Chomenko.

It does not mean, however, that they do not refer to the tradition. Indeed, Mykyta Kadan enters into a dialogue with the legacy of the avant-garde and constructivism, seeks the traces of utopia in the urban landscape, resorts to the Soviet style to underline the problem of restricted freedom of expression and of the body of contemporary Ukrainians. Lesia Chomenko experiments with socialist realism. Her paintings feature ordinary people undertaking simple works, plump and chubby pensioners and retirees resting by the sea or in the Carpathians. She also created a very good project about her own grandfather, a cartographer for the Red Army and a painter. Her activities display high painting culture and awareness of the processes occurring in the arts of the second half of the 20th century. The artists refuse to abandon the stories of ordinary people, just because socialist realism used to be a dominant doctrine taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kyiv that she and many of her generation graduated from.

What the artist aged 30–40 seem to share is an attempt to combine being an artist with living in a specific place and country. They also ponder upon the position of an artist in the social space, upon how their work is valued, and upon what the pros and cons are of being born in eastern, post-Soviet and increasingly authoritarian Ukraine. This generation and its organizations emanate the most energy, common sense and good art when they refuse to copy the Western patterns and seek inspiration from and refer their activities to their self-defined needs, set in their own time and in their own country.

Translated by Konrad Szulga

3 <http://www.rep.tinka.cc/>



OLEKSANDR MYKHED*

THE SEARCH FOR A FORMULA OF MODERN UKRAINIAN ART

Within several decades and in a revolutionary way, Ukrainian art has made an attempt to bridge the gap that is a result of the single dominating social-realist style, which excluded Ukrainian context from world trends.

PROCESS, ARTIST, GENERATION

The globalization and unification of the world invariably lead to bringing forth local processes and the formation of a clear national profile. For sure, the world market perceives national peculiarities as “shticks” and “exotic rarities” which can be a good commodity on the global market. The wave-like fashion on the culture market directly depends on the political situation, whether there is mass admiration of post-soviet art in the early 1990s or a lost opportunity to convert the general world interest for the local situation into a rooted steady status in the world cultural context for Ukraine in 2004–2005. Or, for example, there is general fashion for India and China in the late 2000s, when the market interest formed a few world stars of modern art and a whole range of secondary popular artists. It is obvious that every country represents its context as something absolutely

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unique, as a totality of historical factors and traditions that form a timely cut. Ukrainian modern art is not an exception in this case.

In Ukrainian modern art process, there are simultaneously a few generations that, but for some exceptions, have no contact points. Following the eternal paradox logic of generation change, it is hard to draw and recreate a line of heredity from the older to the younger if the younger, as usually, deny the achievements of the older. Though there are artists-fathers and artists-children in the art process as well without any metaphoric meaning of the word.

As most people see it, art, which is sometimes ironically, sometimes seriously called "contemporary," is limited to a number of artists' names that can be provisionally called "the older generation." It is "provisionally older" because it should have been called "the middle generation" of 50-year-olds who would occupy an intermediate level between "the oldest" and "the younger." However, roughly speaking, the presence of the real older generation in the media and critical space is mostly limited to the name of Ivan Marchuk (born in 1936). The question of relations among generations should be supplemented by inevitable mention of post-soviet past phantoms that make Ukrainian situation exceptional for a researcher who exists outside the post-soviet experience. Distrust to the forced conformism of the oldest generation and outdated pictorial rhetoric distance the younger and make the gap even bigger.

The question of academic education in the sphere of fine arts and the theory of art remains the subject for constant discussions. The object of criticism includes inadequate programs and reluctance of teachers to adapt to modern demands leaving a big number of modern art techniques (performance, installation, and video-art) out of studying in academic establishments. On the other hand, glorious artists do not become teachers not passing their experience and vision. Education's focus on classical pictorial techniques creates another peculiar feature of Ukrainian current situation: the leading technique is painting which in most cases has deviated from it, having concentrated on experimental search. Thus, the combination of conceptual modern art with skillful technique results in, for example, impressive hyperrealistic canvas by A. Volokitin, paradoxical pictures by A. Halashyn, and bright adventure paintings by M. Shalennyi, close and understandable for the mass viewer. However, it is necessary to bear in mind generally not big percentage of "modern art" comprehension by broader public for whom "contemporary" remains a chimeric and strange phenomena from which one should not expect good.

Provisionally, the older generation consists of representatives of the phenomenon that has a few names – “the New Wave,” “the Southern Wave,” Ukrainian neobaroque, trans avant-garde. Schematically speaking, these are artists born in the late 1950s and early 1960 whose coming into art falls in the middle 1980s and is preserved with general social transformations of the epoch. A fresh vision of images, appeal to the mythological core, reconsidering baroque heritage, the attempt to create a post-modernist network of allusions and citations formed a set of peculiarities of the generation that usually includes O. Hlynysky, O. Holosiy, A. Savadov, H. Senchenko, I. Chichkan, V. Tsaholov. Odesa-based artists A. Roytburd and V. Riabchenko are worth a separate mention.

The middle 1990s are spent by artists in experiments, exploring new areas of contemporary art – video, performance, installation, and photography. Within several decades and in a revolutionary way, Ukrainian art has made an attempt to bridge the gap that is a result of the single dominating social-realist style, which excluded Ukrainian context from world trends. Experience of photo and video experiments leaves a particularly remarkable imprint on the creativity of A. Savadov and V. Tsaholov when they reach a new career stage – retuning to painting. Media vision transforms the pictorial technique of the artists and, let’s say, in the case of V. Tsaholov becomes one of the main themes of his works that are focused on exploring the phenomenon of mass media influencing the consciousness of average citizens and the way media construct reality.

The general tendency of the 2000s was artists of the New Wave returning to painting and forming their recognizable artistic manner. In the 2000s, Ukraine witnesses the beginning of the art-market and a new stage of institutionalization of the art process, and later – modern Ukrainian art leaving underground. The artists of the New Wave find themselves on the peak of exhibition projects and interest of collectors, confirming their status of key art figures. However, confirming the role modern art classics is followed by a reverse, negative process – the artists of the generation ceasing the experimental search and creating prevailingly typical artistic production, as a result of which the artist finds themselves in the shackles of their own brand’s “recognizable artistic manner.”¹

1 See: O. Balashova, *Pokazatelnyye vystupleniya na arene istorii*, <http://korydor.in.ua/reviews/416-Pokazatelnie-vistupleniya-na-arene-istorii>, and T. Zlobina, *Holos pokolinnia 87*, <http://www.korydor.in.ua/reviews/325-Golos-pokolinnya-87>

Two extremely important theses are a counter-argument against the artists of the older generation ceasing the bold artistic search. Firstly, it is possible to say that the evolutionism of artistic decisions is typical for the younger generation. Secondly, financial disability and low interest of institutions in financing new radical and large-scale art projects are evident.

Simultaneously with the process of “older” artists anchoring, artists of a new generation, which can be provisionally called “Those who came in the 2000s,” appear (it is how a collective exhibition, supervised by O. Tytarenko, in the centre of modern M17 was called).² The list of the exhibition participants, for sure, does not fully represent the key players of the 2000s artistic process, but it still is a guide through names.

Mentioning the younger generation of Ukrainian artists inevitably leads to speaking about the REP (Revolutionary Experimental Space) group,³ the framework of which was formed against the background of the Orange Revolution, 2004. In the course of time, the constant membership of the group is established: K. Hnylytska, N. Kadan, Zh. Kadyrova, V. Kuznietsov, and L. Nakonechna. The young artists are united by a common idea of reaction to social problems and projects sent to the social context. Thus, dealing with political and social problems, the group compensated for what had been missing and is still missing in modern Ukrainian culture, particularly Ukrainian literature and cinematograph: reflecting social and pressing problems in art and its connection with modernity. Separate personal projects by the members of the group were close to it, as well as works by the group SOSka, T. Kamenny, and others. Meanwhile, the main part of literature and almost not existing cinematograph start entering this unexplored territory. Certainly, it can be said that literature and cinematograph are not able to react to certain events directly, increasing time of reflection and creating the optics of perception through the time prism. However, the general wish to work on social phenomena remains important. Let’s say, the projects by N. Kadan *The Pedestal. The Practice of Extrusion*⁴ and M. Ridny *The Platforms* and *The Monuments*⁵ are dedicated to the phenomenon known in any post-totalitarian country – the

2 [http:// www.m17.com.ua/ru/projects/archive/2010-08-05-05-39-13](http://www.m17.com.ua/ru/projects/archive/2010-08-05-05-39-13)

3 <http://www.rep.tinka.cc/>

4 [http:// www.pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/artists/16458](http://www.pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/artists/16458)

5 <http://www.artukraine.com.ua/ukr/articles/983.html> (in the context of wider conversation about the participants of *Arsenale 2012*)

monuments of the old regime are deconstructed, but at once the question of rising new heroes able to unite the separated society to the pedestal is set.

It is absolutely understandable that the motley diversity of young art is not limited to a circle of social problems. The example of phenomenal street-art and iconography integration by S. Radkevych or an attempt to work with the classical mythology by means of modern computer graphics and modeling by S. Riabchenko can be drawn.

Last year, about 1100 applications were submitted to one of the most authoritative awards for young Ukrainian artists – the Pinchuk Art Centre Awards. This number of applications is impressive, but many of suggested works did not fall under the seemingly relative category of modern art, representing either landscape-still-life painting or folk crafts and so on. Thus, the gap between the potential target audience and the institution that has a clear vision of the modern art conception is absolutely evident.

THE ARSENAL OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Speaking of institutions, as of anything else in Ukraine, it is worth separating the national and the private.

The former includes two surprisingly important players. Traditionally, the National Art Museum of Ukraine, which carried out a range of extremely interesting projects that became the stages of the New Wave artists “canonization” and testified the museum returning to the orientation towards the viewer and topical art, remains one of the biggest authorities. Let’s say, the project *The New Wave* (2009, supervised by O. Barshynova)⁶ collected the works from private collections and provided a conceptual-exhaustive look on the phenomenon. Last year, the museum held not a retrospective, but rather a reminiscence-exhibition about one of the most important Ukrainian artists of the 1990–2000s – O. Hnylytsky (2011, supervised by L. Zayets and O. Barshynova).⁷ This summer, the Museum carried out an impressive experiment – *The Myth. Ukrainian Baroque* (2012, supervised by H. Skliarenko and O. Barshynova) which, on the one hand, provided a finally

6 <http://namu.kyiv.ua/ua/expositions/archive/view.html&eid=170>

7 <http://namu.kyiv.ua/ua/expositions/archive/view.html&eid=199>

exhaustive artistic understanding of Ukrainian baroque in national consciousness and, on the other hand, broke the usual museum approach to works representation in a linear, chronological narrative. The supervisors unfolded the history of Ukrainian baroque, combining works from different epochs, constructing a wide network of associations among the works separated by centuries. The scrupulously constructed exhibition combined works by the well-known New Wave artists (O. Rojtburd and A. Savadov), the generation of the 30-year-olds (A. Volokitin, R. Minin, Zh. Kadyrova), and the representatives of an even younger generation – S. Riabchenko with works of the classical epoch and the social-realism period. The omnipresent plot line that united a few centuries of artistic development was represented by chimeric baroque images.

The second important institution that functions as an exhibition platform for large-scale curatorial projects is the National Cultural-Art and Museum Complex *The Mystetskyi Arsenal*⁸ situated in the former building of the military factory Arsenal. A few important projects were realized here supported by the executive general manager of the *Mystetskyi Arsenal* N. Zabolotna and one of the most important contemporary Ukrainian art supervisors O. Solovyov. There is also The Little Gallery of the *Mystetskyi Arsenal*⁹ (supervised by V. Burlaka) that is a dynamic platform for smaller projects exhibition.

In a perspective of artistic aspect of the process representation, the powerful project *Nezalezhni* (2011)¹⁰ by O. Solovyov, about the importance of whom there is no need to speak, seems to be important. Though there was enough criticism of the project in various publications and the guestbook of the very exhibition, it is still an attempt to reconsider the history of the newest Ukrainian art, however, without an integral vision. Nevertheless, the very subject of the discussion can be so versatile and elusive that it does not allow a unified conceptual unity. This year, the *Mystetskyi Arsenal* realized its most ambitious project – the First Kyiv Biennial of modern art *Arsenale 2012*¹¹. It was supervised by a famous art historian and writer D. Eliot who suggested the leading integrating topic – the anticipation of Apocalypses that invariably accompanies civilization. The principal project of the Biennial was titled *The Best Times, the Worst Times – the Renaissance and Apocalypses*

8 <http://artarsenal.in.ua/>

9 <http://artarsenal.in.ua/gallery.html>

10 <http://artarsenal.in.ua/event21.html>

11 <http://arsenale2012.com>

in Modern Art and united 100 artists from 30 countries that suggested 250 artistic works in a holistic curatorial narration. The conceptual narrative embraced an enormous number of topics and images connected with the central plot of the Biennial. The common Ukrainian-Polish project *The Double Game* (supervised by O. Solovyov and the head of Warsaw Modern Art Centre *Ujazdowski Castle* F. Cavalucci from the Polish side) covering 13 Polish art-stage representatives and 25 Ukrainian artists was presented together with the main project. *The Double Game* had a very specific exhibition solution and provided the project with necessary stresses. Finally, it is worth noticing that *Arsenale 2012* was accompanied by a rich parallel program – 45 projects realized in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Lviv, and Kharkiv.

EVERYONE TO THEIR TRADE

The most widely known Ukrainian art-institution Pinchuk Art Centre was founded by a Ukrainian businessman and patron V. Pinchuk in 2006 in Kyiv. Pinchuk Art Centre positioned as one of the most powerful institutions in Eastern and Central Ukraine presented exhibitions of the most important world artists of the past 20 years to the Ukrainian audience. In particular, these are the shows by Anish Kapoor (2012, supervised by A. Kapoor, E. Schneider, B. Geldhof)¹², Jeff Wall (2012, supervised by B. Geldhof)¹³, Olafur Eliasson (2011, supervised by O. Eliasson, E. Schneider)¹⁴, Damien Hirst (2009, supervised by D. Hirst, E. Schneider)¹⁵. Simultaneously with large-scale personal projects, in the past years PAC launched the project *The Collection Platform* – an attempt to present the most interesting works from PAC's collection in a specific museum format as modeling the future planned museum of modern art in Kyiv. The versatile activity of PAC is an example of realizing a consistent institutional strategy. Putting education in the basis of its activity, PAC launched a wide Educational Program directed to interaction with the audience on a few levels – excursions, workshops for the youngest visitors, discussions, roundtables, the Literary Program, the two-year

12 <http://pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/past/17157>

13 <http://pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/past/17155>

14 <http://pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/past/15307>

15 <http://pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/past/8826>

educational program *The Curatorial Platform* for training young supervisors in the past years. Another aspect of PAC's activity is presenting Ukrainian art in a broad world context. It is realized both in exhibition activity, where mini-exhibitions are held side by side with projects by Western artists, and institution founding two awards for young artists under 35. Pinchuk Art Centre as a part of wider activity of Viktor Pinchuk Foundation has huge financial abilities and powerful informational support, which makes this institution a central player in the artistic process for a maximally broad audience. It is also a frequent object of criticism in the artistic environment.

The approach to understanding modern art of the Scientific-Research Centre for Visual Culture¹⁶, which was situated in Kyiv-Mohyla Academy until recently, is absolutely different. The CVC has organized more than 100 lectures, workshops, and conferences, about 20 exhibitions and street protest series since its foundation in 2008. After the scandal concerning the prohibition of the exhibition *The Ukrainian Body*¹⁷ (2012, supervised by O. Briukhovetska, S. Klymko, L. Luchytska), which gained wide international coverage, the CVC ceased existing as a scientific department of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Since April, 2012, the CVC has been working in the premises of the cinema *Zhovten* and realizing a number of projects, the most important of which being the Ukrainian version of a Polish periodical *Krytyka Polityczna* (edited by O. Radynsky)¹⁸ that deals with disputable questions such as drugs and pornography legalization. The periodical combines translated articles with ones created specially for Ukrainian numbers. Thus, a versatile vision of this or that problem is created.

In the context of modern art centres in Kyiv, it is also worth mentioning *M17*¹⁹ (founded by R. Tarabukina, supervised by O. Tytarenko). Unfortunately, it is impossible to speak of the centre's full-scale functioning as an institution with its own elaborated strategy and program sometimes creating an impression of eclecticism of exhibition activity. However, it should be pointed out that it is where a few interesting projects were realized: the exhibition *The Snowiness*

16 <http://vcrc.org.ua/>

17 <http://vcrc.org.ua/en/ukrbody/>

18 <http://vcrc.org.ua/pk/>

19 <http://m17.com.ua>

Stipulator by Odessa artist I. Husiev (2012, supervised by O. Tytarenko)²⁰ and the already mentioned young art exhibition *Those who came in 2000s*.

Finishing speaking about the most notable institutions of the capital, it is necessary to say a few words of P. Hudimov's I Gallery²¹ founded in 2007. In December 2010, the art centre I Gallery was founded in Dnipropetrovsk. Its activity is distinguished by a planned strategy of supporting young artists. For this sake, a scholarship program *The Gene Pool*²² that aims at systematic work with young artists was launched. In 2011, within the program, a group of artists supervised by P. Hudimov was presented in Vilnius, in the exhibition centre of Vilnius Art Academy *Titanikas*, and later in Lviv Art Palace. Collaboration with state regional museums is another art centre's important activity direction (2011, the project *The New Old Masters* in Dnipropetrovsk Art Museum, the project *Earth* in Cherkasy Regional Art Museum). At the very end, it is worth mentioning that the art centre is a part of a broad holding *Hudimov Art Project* that includes an architectural workshop, art literature publishing house, the creative group Accent, the famous group Hudimov. Thus, the borders of projects realization are widened in various dimensions.

An important peculiarity of Ukrainian situation is its specific decentralization. It so happened that, for example, in Kharkiv and Odessa there are separate art processes creating their own context independent from Kyiv.

A few years ago, Donetsk joined the process – the year 2010 witnessed the foundation of the non-profit non-government fund *Isolation*²³ situated on the territory of the former plant producing insulators (the author of the project: L. Mykhailova). *Isolation* has an elaborated conception of exhibition activity, educational program, and a program of residences. The project *The Medical Cabinet* (supervised by O. Chervonik) has enjoyed special attention lately. *The Quick Reaction Cabinet*, as it is called by the founders, turned into an ideas laboratory that creates conceptually verified and deep exhibitions, and O. Chervonik is becoming one of the most important curators of the younger generation. The program of residences is one of *Isolation's* central activities. Last year, the project *Partly Cloudy* gathered 8 painters from different countries all around the world who

20 <http://m17.com.ua/en/projects/archive/2012-01-13-04-33-19>

21 <http://www.yagallery.com.ua>

22 www.yagallery.com.ua/genofond

23 <http://www.izolyatsia.org>

researched the room of Donetsk region superintended by B. Mikhailov, one of the most famous Ukrainian photographers abroad. This year, an exhibition project was presented as a result of the residence. The institution also regularly issues a webzine *IZO* (the editor in chief: A. Korabliov).

In Kharkiv, 2012, *Yermilov Centre* named after a famous Ukrainian avant-gardist-painter V. Yermilov (1894–1968) was founded supported by the Association of Graduates, Teachers, and Friends of V. Karasin Kharkiv National University. The Centre has already presented a few exhibition projects and become a platform for artistic events and roundtables, but it is still better to talk about the bright future rather than the rich experience of the Centre.

For sure, such a survey cannot cover the whole perennial activity of Lviv Art Association *Dzyga*²⁴, as well as the initiatives of Kherson *Totem*²⁵, Dnipropetrovsk art centre *The Apartment* that sometimes realizes interesting art projects.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to mention an interesting tendency. In the late 1980s – early 1990s, an interesting phenomenon of modern Ukrainian culture began – the so called *Stanislav Phenomenon* after the old name of the city. Though painters also played an active role in it, it was writers who came to the fore. In the middle 2000s another region appeared on Ukrainian literary map – Zaporizhzhia. Poets and writers were actively positioning themselves as a generational phenomenon – anthologies were compiled, joint performances were held. The peculiarity of the situation lies in the fact that it is impossible to speak of simultaneous appearance of equal phenomena in the sphere of modern art – rather of separate bright names.

AWARDS, GRANTS, SUPPORT

Speaking about the activity of modern art institutions, one already had to mention their influence on the context through support of young artists. It should be dealt with separately since investments in young artists are one of the key strangleholds of the art process.

24 <http://www.dzyga.com>

25 <http://totem.kherson.ua>

The leading position of Pinchuk Art Centre that aims at combining the local and global contexts has already been pointed out. Two awards were founded in order to reach this goal. One, Pinchuk Art Centre Awards (the main award – 100000 UAH) is for Ukrainian artists. The other, Future Generation Art Prize is the first international award for artists from all over the globe (the main prize – \$100000, bigger part of which is spent on financing new projects). The winner of the national award automatically gets onto the short-list of the international competition. The winner of the international contest has a personal exhibition in Pinchuk Art Centre. The next step in FGAP participants' promotion is represented by the project *PinchukArtCentre@Venice* – introducing FGAP participants in the parallel program at Venice Biennial.

Another important competition is MUCHi founded by M. Shcherbenko, the owner and art-director of Bottega Gallery. The title of the competition is an abbreviation from *Molodi Ukrayinski Hudozhnyky* (Young Ukrainian Artists) resulting in the association with another abbreviation – YBA (young British artists) that was a key one in world art in the late 1990s – early 2000s. The holder of the First Prize gets 40000 UAH, however participants seem to be more interested in the exhibition of works by nominees which is a direct opportunity to be noticed by curators and gallerists.

The recent first Kyiv modern art Biennial *ARENNALE* launched its own award – Arsenale Awards that was given in the nominations *For a significant contribution into modern art development* (\$20000), *Arsenale 2012 Discovery*, and *The choice of viewers* (both \$15000).

At the very end of the tell about contests and awards, it is worth saying a few words about traditionally the most important honour separately – the National Taras Shevchenko Prize that was being severely criticized during the past years. Last year, an extremely notable event took place when the state prize was given to an artist that in 2011 set a national record on world auctions – the work *Horse Night* by A. Kryvopal at Phillips de Pury & Co in London was sold for more than \$124000. Thus, the gap between state's vision and the topical situation in the art process became a half step narrower.

One of the most problematic segments of the art process is grant-giving since, as usual, financing new art projects is done exclusively on condition of getting on short-lists of a certain award (as in the case of, let's say, Pinchuk Art Centre

Awards) or a contest (the case of Kyiv Sculpture Park)²⁶, or a large-scale exhibition like *Arsenale 2012* where a part of works was created specially for the project. The grant-giving initiative that embraces a big variety of cultural process spheres launched by The Fund for Development of Ukraine (R. Akhmetov) was embodied in the grant contest *I3* (Idea – Impulse – Innovation)²⁷. A big number of projects and individual applications were realized due to the support of this very contest. It is worth stressing that in the middle 1990s Soros Center for Contemporary Art was a catalyst of Ukrainian art process. According to the painter V. Tsaholov, “If this centre had not existed, I cannot even imagine. . . Probably, there would have been nothing, or there would but 10 years later”²⁸. Luckily, the contemporary situation does not allow speaking of a single dominant institution but of a luxury of versatile approaches to modern art.

CRITICISM, CRITICS, RESOURCES

As in any other modern world critical discourse, “glamorous” articles and attempts to create an adequate/objective optics coexist in Ukrainian art criticism. The former process cannot be avoided since art is being included into the market glossy system, which leads to reportages from fashionable varnishing days, various ratings Top-10 and Top-100 “of the most (expensive, influential, and so on) artists”, constant mention of auction prices of these or those painters, *Forbs* researches and other niceties.

*Korydor*²⁹, an on-line magazine on modern culture founded by the Modern Art Centre³⁰ (the editor in chief: K. Botanova), is a kind of counterweight to it. It seems to be the only professional ground for serious analytical conversations about art processes. Its authors include the most interesting art critics and researchers that most often are curators: O. Balashova, K. Botanova, L. Herman, M. Lanko, L. Ostrovska-Liuta, Ya. Prudenko. It is also necessary to mention the very AC Foundation that started its work in 2008 and is a unique intellectual platform.

26 <http://www.sculptureproject.org.ua/>

27 <http://www.i3grants.org/>

28 <http://www.korydor.in.ua/interview/480>

29 <http://www.korydor.in.ua>

30 <http://www.cca.kyiv.ua>

Except for the *Korydor* magazine, another important project is *The MAC / 15 years / Archive* and the program of discussions *The External Links*, a dialogue with artists and cultural figures from all around the world that aims at broadening Ukrainian cultural context. This year also witnessed realizing the experimental project *The Search: Other Spaces* within which young artists were suggested to cross the borders of usual gallery room and try researching new “rooms” for the sake of realizing artistic ideas.

The magazine *ART Ukraine* (editor in chief: A. Lozhkina) is also an interesting informational resource and its on-line version that is constantly being up-dated and combines materials included in the printed version with deliberately written articles and news from the world of art.

PROBLEMS, PROSPECTS, AND EASY BREATH

The delineated situation results in the picture of absolutely healthy art process that has its originality and a set of peculiarities capable of creating a field for interested professionals. Taking it into consideration, the most important next step lies in promoting Ukrainian art “in brands” – with an elaborated strategy and balanced steps for broad competent representation of artists outside the country. The only way to achieve it is individual initiative that would still preserve the health balance between import/export of art and pay attention to the need of Ukrainian process.

Another important step is further promotion of educational programs for narrowing the gap between the audience and painters who are still very often not understood by viewers. *The Cultural Project* by N. Zhevahov³¹ has remained the leader in the sphere of education.

The last thing falls under the category of dreams – the wish to create multidisciplinary festivals, platforms that would unite modern art, theatre, music, cinema, and literature. *Gogolfest*³² supervised by V. Troitsky is an example of it that, unfortunately, remained almost without any support and has recently decreased in its scale but not its importance.

31 <http://www.culturalproject.org/>

32 <http://www.gogolfest.org.ua>

It is thanks to such combinations of artistic spheres that there is fruitful collaboration of artists that create the alchemy of an unmatched cultural process together. Not looking back at the whims of the globalized market, not looking for a formula of successful works, not asking for permissions, not paying attention to rules and norms but simply continuing their line. Continuing to breathe in the world and breathe out art.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



KATERYNA BOTANOVA*

THE CAUCUS-RACE

Painters and the artistic milieu as a whole persisted in their quiet hatred and contempt for the state – now known under a different name – and gladly forgave the representatives of its pseudo-democratic neo-liberal elites any abuses of power and money, so long as they stayed out of art.

*They were indeed a queer-looking party that assembled on the bank –
the birds with draggled feathers, the animals with their fur clinging close to them,
and all dripping wet, cross, and uncomfortable.*
Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

In my second year of university, when I was a young and naïve provincial girl with my head in various philosophy and cultural anthropology books, an arts curator friend invited me to an exhibition opening. It was a real extensive exhibition of real contemporary art, little-known (and even less-seen) in this part of

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the world at the time. The Soros Center for Contemporary Art – part of the large Soros-funded CCA network in East-Central Europe – had just opened; just like the “Brama” Modern Art Center, and the “Blanc-art” Gallery, all of which were to become landmarks on the cultural map of mid-1990s Kyiv.

However, the exhibition entitled “Kyiv Art Meeting: New Art from Poland, Ukraine, and Russia” opened at a different venue – on the top floor of the Ukrainian House, the late-Socialist white monstrosity, which towered over downtown Kyiv, and was known through 1993 as “the V. I. Lenin Museum” (which in fact it was). The museum was built in the 1970s and 1980s, and part of the slope of the Volodymyrska Hill, one of the oldest parts of the old town, was torn off to accommodate construction. Soon after the proclamation of Ukrainian independence, in 1993, the many meter-high Lenin statue carved from a unique single slab of marble was carted off never to be seen again, and the museum itself was renamed, by decree of the Cabinet of Ministers, the “Ukrainian House” Center for Culture.

The idea of this state-run center for culture, as it turned out at the exhibition opening, meant that taking place alongside the exhibition of works by Oleh Kulyk, the Masoch Foundation (or Katarzyna Kozyra, and Vasyl Tsaholov, whose names still meant little to me then), was a jamboree of the National Guard in parade uniforms. The contemporary art of Ukraine, Poland, and Russia, made such a radical impression on the party-addled brains of the National Guardsmen, that, thirty minutes after the opening, they (still in parade white gloves) took it upon themselves to tear down the works from the walls, essentially closing down the exhibition.

No description or documentation of this project survives, as the history (or histories?) or modern art in Ukraine from the late 1980s and through today is still undescribed, undocumented, and relies mostly on the personal memory of the members of narrow artistic circles – a memory that is predominantly conflicted and contradictory, selective and uncritical (as individual memory should be). As for the very fact of this brutal voluntarist intrusion into the artistic process, it only began to be remembered in critical reflections on the state of Ukraine’s art in recent years, when the same sort of voluntarism suddenly made a comeback.

In 2009, Valentyna Myzghina, Director of the Kharkiv Art Museum, closed down “New History,” a young artists’ exhibition (curated by Mykola Ridnyi) in its second day as indecent and unworthy of the museum. In the winter of 2012, the President of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy – once the most progressive institutions of higher learning in Ukraine – closed the “Ukrainian Body” exhibition, arguing that

“it [wasn’t] art, but shit.” In the summer of 2012, Tetiana Liuta, branch director of the Russian Museum “Chocolate House,” closed down the exhibition “Apocalypse and Rebirth” because it contained pornographic elements.

Arguments of this kind – if they may be considered arguments – an emotional and knee-jerk reaction from the side of the powers-that-be in each of these cases, and the absurdity of the overall picture – demonstrate a certain trend, and move us to conclude that the case of the “Kyiv Art Meeting” in 1995 turned out to be a prototype – if not an archetype – that, after a decade-long break, began repeating itself exponentially.

What, then, happened during the break? It was a time when (as Jerzy Onuch, one of the directors of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art, noted) “you could do anything, and nobody took notice.”

It appears that history – at least the history of contemporary Ukrainian art – has come full circle, and is back to starting point again.

INDEPENDENCE. A HISTORY OF MISTRUST

The separation of independent unofficial Ukrainian culture from the state and its “official” culture was immediate – as soon as the state found “more important things to do” in the early 1990s. In this regard, Ukraine is no different from its colleagues from the recently-decided Soviet Bloc: as soon as independence directed all the efforts of the recently-Communist (Communist Party, *Komsomol*, etc.) elites towards the struggle for power and money, artists, and particularly visual artists, happily broke through to freedom.

Unlike, say, writers, visual artists cannot “create for the drawer” or “publish in *samizdat*” (or abroad). The work of a painter in the Soviet Union (and for a long time in the post-Soviet states) was very physical and very material: the painter needed a studio, materials, exhibitions. And to have all this, the painter had to serve the system by painting countless leaders, Taras Shevchenkos, and happy throngs. Concurrently, in the silence of system-provided studios or in state-funded open airs, the artist could muck about in abstracts, or practice “non-realist” painting.

This practice taught the artistic milieu at least two things: to hate the state passionately, and to accept the double game as a norm in artistic life. So when the state changed its name and (at least in theory) its ideology, for most painters – who,

far from dreaming of independence and “a Ukrainian Ukraine,” had mostly been eyeing Moscow as the locus of the most extensive artistic licence, and the only possible path to the West – this changed little or nothing in the relationship between the artist and the state.

Painters and the artistic milieu as a whole persisted in their quiet hatred and contempt for the state – now known under a different name – and gladly forgave the representatives of its pseudo-democratic neo-liberal elites any abuses of power and money, so long as they stayed out of art. And such was the efficient social contract, tacitly “ratified” by both sides.

The main consequence of this temporary non-aggression pact was the lasting and complete separation of the artistic and political fields, which manifested in the lack of any sort of state policy with regard to culture in general, and visual arts in particular; as well as in the conscious de-politization of even the fairly political art. And so it was that, as mentioned earlier, anything could be done, and no notice was taken, even when it simply had to be.

INVISIBLE ART

The incident of the removal of artworks at the “Ukrainian House” is instructive precisely as an instance of this sort of paradoxical lack of notice, coupled with de-politization. Aggression and denial on the part of the National Guardsmen were caused not by the works’ political content – for “The Last Jewish Pogrom” by the Masoch Foundation (Ihor Diurych, Ihor Podolchak), or “Criminal Weekly” by Vasyl Tsalohov, or “Blood Ties” by Katarzyna Kozyra undoubtedly demonstrated political engagement – but merely by an esthetic rejection of their visual appearance, as well as by the obvious possibility of impunity to “bring order” to something that had supposedly gotten out of hand. If this exhibition had taken place, for instance, at the Artist’s House – still belonging to the Union of Artists of Ukraine (an ultra-Soviet organization) and occasionally hosting a contemporary art exhibition – or in the actually artistic territory of the Soros CCA, nobody (outside the fairly narrow artistic circle) would have even noticed the project, much less removed it from the walls.

After all, in spite of the opinion that the 1990s Ukrainian art was totally hermetic and apolitical (widespread today even among the experts), the overwhelming

majority of projects implemented at the aforementioned venues (as well as at the Soros CCA in Odessa, or at the “Impreza” Biennale in Ivano-Frankivsk), or initiated by artists and curators (with the artist and curator frequently being the same person) somehow connected to these institutions, were not only visually-deviant with regard to the dominant esthetic system, but also overtly political. Artists worked in all available media, compensating in a way for all the things they could not have for many years, but also sinking their teeth with relish into the very juicy social and political reality of the 1990s, where suddenly everything was allowed with no consequences – so long as one remained in the domain of art.

The 1990s have seen perhaps the most radical artistic projects in the history of contemporary Ukrainian art. With the exception of the “Kyiv Arts Meeting,” none of these projects ever met with any significant opposition, counteraction, or prohibition.

The Masoch Foundation exhibited “A Mausoleum for the President” (1994) on the stairs of the National Art Museum in Kyiv: a three-litre glass jar of lard was being heated up on an electric stove, slowly releasing an image of the then-President Leonid Kravchuk. Arsen Zavadov created his now classic cycles: “Donbass-Chocolate” (1997) – a series of photographs of nude and semi-nude miners just off their shifts, dressed in ballet tutus; “Fashion in the Cemetery” (1997) – a quasi-glamour photoshoot, with models being shot against the background of tombstones and burial processions – a marvelous, prescient insight into the very heart of the advertising industry (where the majority of Ukrainian painters would soon find themselves in search of income) 10 years ahead; and “Collective Red” (1998–1999) – a series of staged photographs shot at a slaughterhouse. “Alchemical Capitulation” (1994) was a curating project by Marta Kuzma (the first director of the Soros CCA). The project took place on the *Hetman Sahaidachnyi*, the flagship of the Ukrainian Black Sea Fleet, then at the center of political strife between Ukraine and Russia. It not only introduced an essential “who’s who” of Ukrainian art for the next few decades, but also touched upon all possible hot topics for the early 1990s Ukraine – language and identity, violence and the subversion of human relations and feelings, historical memory, and the sense of being lost in the present.

The high wall that surrounds new art is paralleled by a very real metal fence which divided the territory of the Soros CCA from the rest of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy, thus separating the most thriving arts center from the youngest Ukrainian university, whose baroque building was home to the CCA from 1994 through

2008. In the 14 years of the Center's existence in the immediate grounds of the (formerly) most progressive university in Ukraine, mere dozens of feet from its main buildings, the majority of the university's students never suspected it was there. Nor did they suspect that it exhibited legends of contemporary art – the likes of Jannis Kounellis, Joseph Kosuth, Ilya Kabakov, Andy Warhol, Josef Boys, Bill Viola, Bruce Nauman – literally under their noses. In spite of the sustained and repeated attempts by the CCA leadership to integrate the Center's activities into the curriculum (at least for the cultural anthropology department), the Scholarly Council and administration of the humanities department defended steadfastly.

AS PRIVATE AS PRIVATE CAN BE

In February 2012, Kyiv Mohyla Academy President, Dr. Serhii Kvit made an executive decision to close down "Ukrainian Body," an exhibition organized by the Center for Visual Culture. His initial, and clearly very sincere reaction to the several nude penises and vaginas he saw on the walls of the Old Academy Building itself (which, until 2008, had been home of the CCA), was: "This isn't art, it's shit!" Eventually, he quietly retracted these words, arguing instead that the exhibition contained pornographic elements not to be shown at a university that taught underage students. He also secured the support of the University's Academic Council, which closed the Center for Visual Culture (CVC) itself along with the exhibition. But the doors of the exhibition rooms, which he himself locked, never opened again – either for "Ukrainian Body" (except for a few press tours), or for contemporary art as such. Today the building houses a library.

Kvit's motives were hardly different from the motives of the national guardsmen. Much like the members of the military seventeen years before, the president of a university suddenly, almost by accident, saw a certain visual irritant that clashed with his *private* value system. And, as someone with sufficient *public* authority/power, he used this authority – just like the guardsmen – to remove the irritant.

This voluntarism and substitution of the private for the public (or the emotional for the professional) are the actual principles of cultural policy in Ukraine, and not only in the field of visual culture. The two-decade-long lack of public pressure or participation in the creation of local and national policies, the absence of public control or any potential mechanism that would enable this control behind decision

making and implementation at every level – from public museums or “Culture Houses” to local/regional culture administrations, or the Ministry of Culture – have borne rich fruit. Decisions at all levels are based on private whims or a personal belief in their correctness, which is essentially the same thing. This goes equally for who gets the premises of the capital’s theater rented out for their use, what sculptures are placed in the public space of the city, who can receive funding from the city and/or state budget (and how), and who can be the director of a national museum.

Because of the Soviet past, when “public” meant “collective,” i.e. “nobody’s,” as well as because of the quasi-capitalist present, which leaves no room for “public” in the sense of “common,” the concept of “public” today is a hollow term. The appointment of the director of the National Museum of Ukraine – a key public arts institution in Ukraine – is a case in point of how everything that in a democratic system of coordinates ought to be public, is private and privatized. After the scandalous dismissal of the former director of the National Museum (who was himself an artist) in the spring of 2012, Mykhailo Kulyniak, current Minister for Culture, appointed Tetiana Myronova, the owner of a private gallery and his own adviser and friend, acting director. Subsequent sustained pressure of museum employees and the artistic community (who insisted that, according to ICOM standards, a person with no professional qualifications, no sort of museum experience, and in active pursuit of commercial interests in the artistic sphere, cannot head a museum) brought about what was essentially a revolution. The Ministry agreed (!) to create and hold to a competitive procedure that would present the candidate with a number of professional demands, and require them to have a development plan for the institution.

Admittedly, the competition stalled immediately it was launched, and bearing in mind the mass reappointments of directors of other national museums and heritage parks which began last December, the chances of a professionally held competition seem low.

However, the fact that this time Ukrainian artists did not simply go to the Minister of Culture or President to resolve their own specific, almost private problems – but instead attempted to lobby the procedure, i. e. to initiate not temporary, but systemic change – is deserving of respect. Most previous attempts to push for or lobby any interests of the visual arts field were attempts to “get at” personal money, power, or prestige.

Worth mentioning here is Ukraine's first Venice Biennale. Participation in this important (but hardly unique) world-level event has been a real bone of contention for most post-Soviet countries (Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia all have a history of strife, surrounding the question of their representation in Venice). In 2001, a group of artists, headed by (now late) Valentyn Rayevskiy, and Arsen Savadov expressed strong protest against Ukraine's participation in the (49th) Venice Biennale. In their opinion, the appointment of curator (the then-director of the CCA Jerzy Onuch), and his choice of artists (the Masoch Foundation with their project "Greatest Artists of the Twentieth Century," which pertained to the history of the greatest dictators of the said century) were undemocratic. Their protest took on every form: from putting active pressure on the Ministry of Culture (blissfully ignorant of the very idea of a Biennale, until Onuch told them of Venice and offered to present a pavilion in the next event in the fall of 2000), mostly through the moribund Union of Artists of Ukraine, to throwing cake in Onuch's face at some opening or other.

The artists won the right to exhibit in Venice in an army tent (this last circumstance is due to the fact that, when the smoke had finally cleared over who would represent Ukraine, there was no time left to rent a space and stage a project in Venice). However, nobody even considered fighting for a procedure of inviting curators and artists to represent Ukraine in Venice that would establish a public and transparent mechanism with no room for cake-slinging, rather than for their personal participation in the biennale.

Similarly, the Center for Visual Culture's struggle against the Mohyla Academy to reopen "Ukrainian Body" and win autonomy for the university's departments and centers (one of which the CVC then was) concentrated strictly around fighting for themselves and their exhibition. And, in spite of the noise this incident made internationally, and of the fairly unprecedented levels of support from the intellectual and artistic community, the CVC never managed to broaden their demands and compel support from their colleagues within the university. This resulted in its closing after an almost unanimous (!) vote by the university's Academic Council.

INSTITUTIONAL DISBALANCE

The categorical exclusion of artistic figures from the sphere of public policy, and from the lobbying of basic system-creating mechanisms, coupled with the

unstoppable growth of the market (as the imagined panacea against all the pains of the Soviet past in the European territories of the former USSR) have created a model of privatized and personalized cultural policy. Until the early 2010s, all things public (both in the sense of “common,” and in the sense of “state-owned”) were seen as a nuisance, and any contact with the authorities was anathema (with the exception of private contacts, yielding financial results). The watershed between official and “unofficial,” state and independent culture and arts ran precisely along the lines of state support – not to be confused with state funding, which was welcomed, but only when officials kept their hands away from the final product. At the same time, private money, private initiative, and the market (however underdeveloped) were enthusiastically encouraged.

In the early 2010s, the results of two decades of this model – a disbalanced institutional core, on which artistic and creative initiatives were supposed to somehow develop – suddenly began to manifest. When, back in the early 2000s, after studying in Moscow and working in one of Russia’s most famous and most exciting theatrical projects, the Piotr Fomenko Workshop, the young Ukrainian director Andrii Prykhodko returned to work in Kyiv and had to abide accusatory questions of why he chose to support “official culture” (by working at the Ivan Franko National Theater of Ukrainian Drama), he said: in order to subvert or fight the system, you have first to build it.

The centralized Soviet system of managing the cultural sphere was demolished, and never became truly public. The Union of Artists never functioned as a trade union, instead only attempting to hold on to its financial and property privileges (small-scale state grants, free studios allocated from non-residential municipal real estate, managing larger property – such as a few exhibition premises – through the pockets of the Union’s leadership). Municipal galleries were privatized either *de facto*, or even *de iure*. Museums, which for a long time struggled to pay their bills and salaries, learned, by the 2000s, to receive small project funding from European foundations that financed cultural and museum projects (or the Foundation for Development of Ukraine, the only Ukrainian institution that does the same). However, acquisitions stopped, academic work was minimized (due, in part, to the very hermetic nature of the museum milieu); and as for world innovation trends in museums, one could hardly find somebody to discuss them with. A state-funded contemporary art museum is essentially out of the question at the moment – the only halfway representative collection of post-1990 Ukrainian art remains at the

National Art Museum, but it is highly unsystematic, and consists mostly of gifts from artists. Education in art remains at the level of the mid-1980s at best.

An alternative public system of NGOs that would serve the artistic development of local communities, education and/or support and development of non-commercial art, has not emerged. When in 2003 George Soros put a final stop to the financing of the cultural sphere (which he had actively supported through the International Renaissance Foundation, the Ukrainian branch of his Open Society Foundation network), the entire structure of culture-related NGOs, which had just begun to get up on their feet all over the country (as opposed to only the biggest cities), started to close down at the speed of light. One such institution was the Soros CCA in Odesa; the CCA in Kyiv valiantly fought on until 2008, when it, too, had to close. Soros' arguments appeared logical and correct: you've been given a fishing-rod, and now you have to feed yourselves. True, so far as it goes, but what is the use of fishing in a dead sea? The lack of tradition of private sponsorship (which is at the heart of the American system for NGO support), or a system of an open and flexible support for independent institutions from public (budget) funds (European system) has plunged local independent initiatives into a "dead sea." This is quite possibly beneficial for their health, in moderation, but ultimately inconsistent with survival.

At the same time, the 2000s saw the beginnings of a true "gallery boom" in Ukraine. Today, the country has several hundred galleries, of which several dozen are very active, although the number of those participating in international fairs still remains at only two or three. The gallery-related activity of wealthy art lovers continued with the opening of private not-for-profit institutions – the Pinchuk Art Centre in Kyiv is the biggest of this group, which also includes "Isolation – Cultural Initiatives Platform" in Donetsk, the Eidos Foundation (no longer existent, but very active and influential in its day), and others. Kyiv is home to several large auction houses – among other things, these sell contemporary Ukrainian art. At least two collectors – Viktor Pinchuk and Ihor Voronov – are taking active steps towards establishing private museums of contemporary art.

Private institutions and private interest thus not only dominate in the sphere of art (both quantitatively and in terms of investment). To an extent, it is also true, that, often consciously, they attempt to close down the lacunae of the public sphere. Thus, the Pinchuk Art Centre remains the only permanent international exhibition platform in Ukraine, "Isolation" remains the only permanent international residency

program (along with the private residency of the artist Alevtyna Kakhidze, organized with the help and support of her husband Volodymyr Babiuk in their house near Kyiv), the Bottega Gallery holds the only competition for young artists (MUKHi), and the “Culture Project” is the only (commercial) initiative for an interested audience.

Nevertheless, after the initial (and subsequent) delight at how good the market is at covering for what the corrupt and uninterested state cannot do dies down, we arrive at the understanding that as far as the visual arts in Ukraine are concerned, private preferences (frequently with neither education, nor competence behind them), commercial interest (though all participants of the market will bemoan its weakness and underdevelopment), and political interest reign supreme. These interests effectively bring about a (“soft” and indirect) censorship of the field, when the striking, the popular, the saleable, the trendy is held up, while the experimental, the new, the laboratory, the chamber, the political, the critical, etc., remains without support. Also in low demand on the market are professional educational projects, and/or a reform of the artistic education system in general.

A notable phenomenon here is the *Mystetskyi Arsenal*. This is a state-run institution that administers a territory of 10 hectares in the historical part of Kyiv and the building of the old Arsenal, with the general area of 50,000 square meters. Conceptually, the Arsenal occupies the place between a museum complex and an art center, balancing between insufficient state and non-transparent private funding. Along with the slow reconstruction and renovation processes taking place there, the venue hosts fashion shows, luxury car shows, contemporary art fairs (Kyiv Contemporary), and overview expos similar to “Exhibitions of the Achievements of People’s Economy” (“Space Odissey,” “The Independent,” 2011). In 2012, the *Mystetskyi Arsenal* hosted the first Kyiv Contemporary Art Biennale (*Arsenale 2012*), held on the occasion of Euro 2012. The *Arsenal* has a public status, and public funding, but functions essentially as a private institution.

This late-stage “scoliosis” of the institutional system provokes “overproduction” (a familiar term from a different field), when the number of arts events, even only in the field of visual art, tops any real human capacity. But, in addition to audience exhaustion – the numbers of viewers/listeners/participants of events has dropped substantially over the past year – this inefficient management actually forestalls development.

When the state fails to perform its chief function in the field of arts – supporting what the market cannot or will not support – and surrenders this function

totally either to quixotic types, prepared to dedicate their lives to fighting more or less real windmills, or else to “sponsors” who, in the Ukrainian context, base their decisions upon private sympathies, whims, and fantasies, then, of course, the “sponsors” will win. After all, they have behind them the power of money, which is the power most highly regarded in Ukrainian society today.

The problem can be combatted with extra-financial means – volunteer activism (partially practiced by the Center for Visual Culture) or crowdfunding, which is becoming increasingly popular in Ukraine. Crowdfunding (the financing of art projects through small private donations from those who are interested in these projects) has been used for several years by the Garage Gang Collective through “Huge Idea,” their online platform. The power of the small steps Policy should certainly not be underestimated; however, unfortunately, it definitely loses to the policy of big (and very big) money. Especially when at work here is the same type of policy.

For all the attractiveness and nonconformism offered by this model, the policy of small steps will not resolve the main problem affecting the artistic and, more widely, cultural situation in Ukraine – i. e., it will not create opportunities for sustainable development, for building, rather than crisis management, for consistent movement, rather than endless, relentless running to stay in place. No artistic institution in Ukraine not financed personally by a moneybag can plan its work even a year ahead. Most Ukrainian painters, especially the ones that are younger and not in demand by galleries, do not have the least idea of what they will be doing tomorrow. Most Ukrainian painters have never in their lives taken part in an international residency/project/exhibition.

To this day, the artistic sphere in Ukraine remains reasonably hermetic, closed in upon its own development problems and growing pains, and quite isolated even from European processes. As I am writing this, I am experiencing a throwback to at least a decade ago. This is reminiscent of the caucus-race from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, when the participant is forced to run merely to warm up. However, unlike ten (not to mention fifteen) years ago, today we are in the presence of a critical mass of artists, producers, critics, viewers, gallery owners, managers, sponsors, and Quixotes (the list can be extended) quite tired of this exercise, and well aware of the fact that the caucus-race has no winners.

Translated by Pavlo Hrytsak



BOHDAN SHUMYLOVYCH*

ART FOR EXPORT: DO MARGINAL FORMS AND GENRES OF ART HAVE A CHANCE TO BECOME IMPORTANT IN UKRAINE?

This genre of art marginal for Ukrainian culture exists not “due to,” but rather “against” – against the market rules, lack of interest on the part of the society and state support.

The title of this essay serves as an illustration of the argument that media art in Ukraine cannot become firmly established at paradigmatic and institutional levels and is often created not for the Ukrainian recipient; this argument is confirmed by a brief history of this group of modern art forms and by its present condition.

Media art appeared in Ukraine in the late 1980s – early 1990s, in the situation of a certain art boom of the last years of the USSR. As early as the end of the 1980s, the symbols of bourgeois prosperity started to penetrate into Ukraine; these were, in particular, new video recorders and cameras that allowed to record

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family parties or numerous meetings which often took place in Lviv and in other cities and towns. In fact, no art events of that time could possibly be held without happenings and performances which also were frequently made a part of the political process; these happenings and performances were more and more often recorded with video cameras. For example, the founder of the *Ostannia barykada* (Last Barricade) artistic union and a participant of the 1990 student hunger strike in Kyiv Oles Doniy claims it was difficult to distinguish between artistic and political actions in the early 1990s. Performances had a political constituent since the very going out into public space was perceived as a political action. Recording these events with a video camera was also seen not only as mere documenting; rather, it was a peculiar action in public space, close in its essence to artistic actionism.

It is obvious that the technical innovations of the 1990s were in no way connected with video equipment since it was the time of total computerization; video, to a certain extent, became an important instrument for comprehension of the political transformations that took place in Ukraine at that time. In the terms of public space development, in the 1990s the most active cities were Odesa, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Kyiv. Kyiv, as the capital city, was reconsidering its new role, and the other cities were gripped by the euphoria of permissiveness as poets, writers, artists, and musicians came to believe in a new “bright future” and got involved in the absurd theatre of the Soviet empire’s end. The Ukrainian video art of the 1990s was making the same steps which this kind of art made in the U. S. or in Europe decades earlier. At that time, the genre of artistic documentation appeared when artists started to videotape their exhibitions or actions. 1993 can be considered a successful year when a recognized work under the title *Art in Space* was produced by the Masoch Foundation, a newly created group (formed in April of 1991 by Roman Viktyuk, Ihor Podolchak, and Ihor Dyurych). The group members managed to arrange an exhibition of Ihor Podolchak’s graphic works at the Mir orbital station and the videotaping of this event. The idea of this project consisted in changing artistic contexts and casting doubts on the conceptual definition of contemporary art. This video, which included also the painter Oleh Tistol and the Kopystyansky family from

Lviv, represented Ukrainian art at the Art Biennial in São Paulo, Brazil and was frequently demonstrated abroad at exhibitions of Ukrainian artists' works.¹

The strategy mentioned above, that is to say, fixation or documenting of a happening, performance, or exhibition, became a characteristic feature of the Ukrainian video art of the late 1980s – early 1990s (with the exception of Andriy Boyarov's experiments). In 1993, Vlodko Kaufman, an artist from Lviv, created a performance, installation, and environment under the title *Letters to Terrestrials* that was turned into a video work through video documenting. In the same year, a young couple of Lviv artists Viktor Dovhalyuk and Hanna Kuts (later they became the most successful representatives of Ukrainian media art) created in cooperation with their professor Alfred Maksymenko of Lviv National Academy of Arts a staging video art combining elements of cinema aesthetics, painting, and video. In the premises of the former Clarisses Convent the artists prepared an environment exhibition of pictorial works and carried out a performance in the nude among the works, while Maksymenko videotaped it to the music accompaniment. All cameraman's and editing work was done, in fact, directly on the camera, including the music (a tape recorder was playing there), but the main point of the work consisted in the combination of pictorial and post pictorial media for creating an individual work of art. Later, this work (*The Crosses*) allowed the couple to get a scholarship for studying in Berlin, where they created a duet named *Akuvido* (www.akuvido.de); in the 2000s, the artists mastered programming to create art in computer environment and on the Internet.

The first video-art as a deliberate practice and not documenting or staging video resembling cinema appeared in Lviv in the late 1980s thanks to the emigrant from Lviv to Estonia Andriy Boyarov's example. Educated as an architect, this known in the city party-goer and media activist managed to combine aesthetic experiments made with a video camera and aesthetics of a new visuality due to Polish, Finnish, and Estonian art. Boyarov, however, lived chiefly in Tallinn, so his influence on Ukrainian art was invisible. The starting point of Kyiv media art history can be considered Kyrylo Protsenko's work entitled *Smell* (1991). It demonstrated the author's desire to find his own video art language by means of overcoming

1 The Masoch Foundation still exists as an artistic group in spite of the fact that its members live already in different cities (Podolchak in Kyiv, Dyurych in Prague, and Viktyuk in Moscow). The last projects of the brand were two films (*Las Melinas* in 2008 and *Delirium* in 2012) which show that the members of the group are not indifferent to media art up to now.

tropes of the artistic language characteristic for cinema art. The next work of the author named *Yes* (1992) was an example of Protsenko's evolution as a video artist and, at the same time, an example of the evolution of Ukrainian video art itself, its artistic expressiveness becoming more dynamic, allegoric, which is proper to the very nature of this kind of art.

In the Ukrainian art of the 1990s, Hanna Kuts and Viktor Dovahlyuk (Akuvido) were a radical display since they soon left pictorial art which they had studied for many years and moved to the camp of media artists' entirely. Their cooperation with Dmytro Kotra and Kateryna Zavoloka, who created Ukraine's experimental music scene of those years, can be revealing. The latter initiated their own label, a few electronic music and video art festivals, in particular *Kvitnu Fest* and *Detali Zvuku*, which consolidated listeners and underground musicians from different regions of Ukraine (Ukrainian experimental electronic music is best developed in Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk). Apart from artistic documentation and video staging, Ukrainian artists experimented with media sculptures, using projectors and monitors as individual elements in works of art.

One of the main subjects of the mid-1990s was just the change of the pre-media consciousness to the "screen" or visual one. A project held in the Central House of Artists in March of 1995 and entitled "*Barbaros. A new barbarian vision*" was significant for this trend. The principal part of the exposition consisted of "screen" works; when painting was exhibited, unusual approaches were exploited, like in Tetyana Hershunya's project named "*The New Indian Cinema*," where paint luminous under the influence of ultraviolet radiation was used in pictures so that the image resembled a cinema screen. Arsen Savadov and Heorhiy Senchenko (with the participation of Oleksandr Kharchenko) created an installation under the title "*Bar-bar-ost*" within the framework of the exhibition demonstrating a whole series of shocking works, from videotaping of a crucifixion with a Kyiv citizen to photo documentation of the First Chechen War where the most striking moments were smoothed over by means of some quite unexpected elements – for example, children's rabbit suit with long ears, etc. The work was supplemented with huge decorative spoons from stage designers' store and real cow skins, a smoke machine worked in the hall, and at the opening, the authors of the installation themselves walked around wearing monster masks and playing the role of barmen.

Those Ukrainian artists who experimented in the genre of video art in the 1990s regarded it as a part of their creative work and did not leave pictorial art, since pictures, unlike video art works, could be sold. These artists, for the most part, had higher education and belonged to the so-called new Ukrainian wave. The phenomenon of new Ukrainian art was born in the late 1980s, causing a commotion at several emblematic exhibitions in Moscow and being called "a South Russian wave" in the circles of Moscow curators. A part of these artists do not live in Ukraine now (Bratkov works in Moscow, Mikhailov in Berlin, Kopystiansky and Filatov in New York, etc.), but most of them got together in Kyiv squats (in The Paris Commune, for instance) and later around the Center for Contemporary Art founded by George Soros in Kyiv. In the early 1990s, video works appeared in the arsenal of the "new wave" representatives; among the latter, there were the already mentioned Kyrylo Protsenko, Arsen Savadov, Heorhiy Senchenko ("The Coats of Arms", 1994), Oleksandr Holosiy ("The Sleeping Princess," 1992; "Distorting mirrors – living pictures" and "Carrying a coffin," 1993, in cooperation with Maksym Mamsikov and Natalia Filonenko), Hlib Katchuk ("Apocalipso," 1997; "Enjoy" installation, 1995), Vasyl Tshaholov ("Milk sausages," 1994; "The End," 1994), Myroslav Kulchytsky, Vadym Chykorsky ("Post mortem" installation, 1995; "She's crazy about the theatre"), Ihor Khodzynsky, Eduard Kolodiy ("Local probing," 1995), Oleksandr Roytburd, Anatoliy Hankevych, Oleh Myhas, and others.

In the second half of the 1990s, an important motivating factor became the Center for Contemporary Art in Kyiv, existing on the premises of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and supported by George Soros. For a long time, the director of the Center for Contemporary Art in Kyiv was the curator Marta Kuzma who supported the representatives of the new Ukrainian wave; in the last twenty years, a lot of well-known figures of Ukrainian art started out due to an active support of Kuzma who promoted artists that liked to shock people, ironic, openly provocative, or anti-aesthetic authors. Though Kuzma arrived in Kyiv in 1992, the Center for Contemporary Art was officially opened in 1994; lacking its own premises, the Center experimented with different grounds. In the same year, the "Hetman Sahaydachny" warship hosted a significant project entitled "The Alchemy of Capitulation"; its aim consisted in comprehension of military space problems, capitulation of this space to art, and an alchemic nature of such a capitulation. A number of art works important for Ukrainian media were

created there, namely Savadov and Senchenko's "The Voices of Love" video and The Quick Reaction Group's (Bratkov, Mikhailov, and Solonsky) "The Sacrifice to the God of War" video.

In 1995, Vasyl Tsaholov created another media project named "Mazepa"; its purpose was to project distantly through a TV screen works made in traditional techniques. The author claimed that he put the works into the principal ontological place – into the TV set. This way of artistic works exposure allowed to avoid dichotomy of work, that is, presentation, so the author could reach ontological unity here. Similarly, different aspects of screen aesthetics were at that time comprehended by Myroslav Kulchytsky, Vadym Chy Korsky, Ihor Khodzynsky, Eduard Kolodiy, Alexander Roytburd, Oleh Myhas, Anatoliy Hankevych, Gleb Katchuk, and others, both video projections and TV monitors being used in their artistic installations. The Ukrainian media art explorer Yanina Prudenko believes that it is due to the Center for Contemporary Art that interactive installations appeared in Ukrainian art, as well as works of art in the web – net.art projects that stood out against the background of the video art created by the artists of the 1990s.

The Center for Contemporary Art implemented a few more projects where media works occupied a significant place: "The Greenhouse Effect" (1997), "Inter-media" (1998), "A day from life" (1998), and a number of others. And though there were more and more media works, a Kyiv critic nevertheless wrote at that time: "As for Ukrainian video, it is still imitating. A fixed status quo between the "observer" and the *picture* is not yet broken. Not involved in new artistic environments as yet, Ukrainian video still remains an art (in a genuinely traditional sense of the word) and is described in the categories of Arts more than in the cyber categories. The screen is here still an instrument, something like a part of the palette belonging to an artist who cannot (or will not?) lose touch with his umbilical cord, that is to say, with pictorial art" (Oleksandr Solovyov, "Photo shock without photoshop," 1998). And indeed, Ukrainian artistic environment was dominated by video-related works (Protsenko, Roytburd, and many others) or television culture (Tsaholov, Katchuk, Chichkan, Kazandzhy, Bratkov, and others). Within these groups, different approaches and techniques existed: staging video (Roytburd, Gleb Katchuk and Olha Kashymbekova), video documentation (Starukh, Kaufman, the Masoch Foundation), installation, and video sculpture. Staging video was dominated by various subjects, including cinema quoting

(both silent cinema and modern cinema stereotypes), corporeality problems, persons' with special needs problems, simulacra and illusiveness of the world, surrealist motives, etc. However, there were few non narrative, plotless works intended for exploring the possibilities of the very genre of video and removing the aesthetics of pictorial art from there.

In 1997, a branch of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art was opened in the South Ukrainian city of Odesa facilitating the appearance of important for Ukrainian media art works there. A year earlier, in 1996, Yelena Mikhaylovskaya's curator project entitled "A March weekend" took place there; later Mikhaylovskaya was in charge of another exhibition named "The New File" (1997). It was at "The New File" that considerable attention was paid to new genres of modern Ukrainian art, including video, tactile projects, media sculpture. The following year, Oleksandr Roytburd became the curator of an exhibition under the title "The Academy of the Cold" held by the Center for Contemporary Art in Odesa; his video work "The Psychedelic Invasion of the Potemkin Battleship into Sergey Eisenstein's Tautological Hallucination" was presented there. Soon afterwards, this work was bought by the New York Museum of Modern Art and became a part of the main program at the 2001 Venice Biennale. Among the Odesa group of media artists, Gleb Katchuk is worth of mentioning; together with Olha Kashymbekova he created the most interesting Ukrainian video of the late 1990s and the early 2000s ("Milies-2000," 1999; "Anti-Karaoke," 2000; "To Kill Krishna," 1997; "The Cassette of Happiness," 2002, in cooperation with Ivan Tsyupka, etc.); like Hanna Kuts and Viktor Dovhalyuk, they both "moved" to media art entirely.

As Oleksandr Solovyov claimed in 1998, it was difficult for Ukrainian artists to overstep the limits of traditional artistic programs which became apparent in their video works or installations, so many saw the way out of this situation in appealing to other technologies. In the second half of the 1990s, Ukrainian media artists began to experiment with the unlimited possibilities of computer technologies. In 1997, a new educational program of the InfoMediaBank was launched under the charge of Hermann Noering, the EMAF (Electronic Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, Germany) director; the InfoMediaBank was created within the framework of the Center for Contemporary Art to study and apply up-to-date technologies in art. Lectures and master classes held by foreign artists, curators and museum directors, who worked with new media and came to Kyiv on the Center's for Contemporary Art invitation, helped Ukrainian artists to realize all

the artistic possibilities of programming, 3-D, the Internet. Apart from lectures, the program envisaged also works financing and art residences so, in the lapse of three years, a lot of works were created in the genres of interactive installation, digital video art, kinetic sculpture, Internet art, etc. The practical result of this program functioning was the Dreamcatcher festival which existed from 1998 to 2000 under the charge of O. Zhuk and N. Pryhodych. Later, the initiative was taken up by the KIMAF (Kyiv International Media Art Festival), where Ukrainian media artists could present their works created at the InfoMediaBank workshops and compare them to media works of their foreign colleagues. Under the curatorship of Natalya Manzhaliy and Kateryna Stukalova, the KIMAF existed until 2002 and withdrew from the race because of the lack of financing. However, it was due to this festival and a movement associated with it that a number of "specialized" artists appeared in Ukraine, for instance, Olha Kashymbekova, Marharyta Zinets, Illya Yusupov, Natalia Halibroda, Gleb Katchuk, Lesya Zayets, the Akuvido tandem, and others.

The impossibility to continue the media festival was just another manifestation of an old Ukrainian problem that consisted in the lack of institutional support and state financing of modern art. Ukrainian artists, who have created a lot of projects and works, are practically not represented in Ukrainian museums which either do not see any value in new forms of art or, quite trivially, just have no funds. Since the early 1990s, when Marta Kuzma tried to persuade officials to support the Center for Contemporary Art, it has been talked about the need to create in Ukraine a modern art museum or, at least, an institution that would undertake to perform respective functions. Representatives of the relevant ministry, however, took no interest in this problem, showing just again that their work consisted in preservation of the works of art created by the past generations and in the administration of the so-called cultural institutions. Besides, no forms of partnership between private, government, and municipal structures have been developed in Ukraine patterned, for example, after those that have helped Poland to gather rich collections of modern Polish art. In the early 2000s, modern Ukrainian art was supported by the Soros Center for Contemporary Art and by the private initiatives of Ukrainian oligarchs who started to buy works of art that had been considered alternative not long before. When the then president Kuchma's son-in-law Viktor Pinchuk made a suggestion that the authorities establish a sort of modern art museum on the old premises of

the Arsenal plant, the discussions on the creation of such a center were rather significant. However, the 2004 Orange Revolution events put an end to this initiative, and the newly elected president of Ukraine announced the creation of a kind of Ukrainian Louvre. Certainly, it did not turn out well with the Louvre,² and Pinchuk created, on his own, a Center of the same name, that is, for Contemporary Art which became immediately a magnet for the artistic circles of Kyiv and Ukraine.

The 2000s were notable for the appearance of some major modern art centers or even private museums of modern art that exerted influence on the artistic process of Ukraine. Among state museums, only Kyiv National Museum paid attention to media art, having organized a German video art exhibition or shown a Ukrainian media project by Oleh Chorny and Henadiy Khmaruk entitled "Shout." Sometimes private centers or museums give some attention to media art (the Fluxus exhibition at the Modern Art Museum in Podil in Kyiv), but it is not enough for the rather active field of media art in Ukraine. As it was talked about the need to create a museum of modern art in Ukraine in the early 2000s, so it was talked about the need to create a specialized media art center at the end of the decade. The experience of the InfoMediaBank, the Center for Contemporary Art, and Ukrainian media festivals showed that media art as an individual art form, independent of pictorial art aesthetics and rules, is quite promising, but needs support.

After George Soros stopped to finance the Center for Contemporary Art in Ukraine in the second half of the 2000s, it was succeeded by the Center for Contemporary Art Foundation which, however, had to sell off a collection of pictorial art works gathered in the 1990s in order to secure its activities. The media works created on the Center's for Contemporary Art demand were in complete disorder, and the foundation managers asked the Kyiv media theoretician Yanina Prudenko to arrange the archives of Ukrainian media art. Consequently, a series of lectures and video shows on the history of Ukrainian media art have been created and an edition is being prepared that could popularize this rather marginal genre of Ukrainian art. A similar function was expected of The Reality Check exhibition held in 2005 under the charge of Oleksandr Solovyov, one of the advocates of

2 The present director of the *Mystetskyi Arsenal* Natalia Zabolotna, who has turned the Ukrainian House (the former Lenin museum) into a modern art center and has an ambition to transform the *Arsenal* into an European center of arts, is a serious rival to Viktor Pinchuk who is usually suspected of being insincere.

media art in Ukraine. Unfortunately, a considerable number of Ukrainian media artists participating in the exhibition had influence neither on Ukrainian state culture officials nor on Ukrainian oligarchs interested in art. The Digital Feelings. Technologies becoming art exhibition that attracted record visitor numbers in Kyiv in 2008 did not change the situation to a sufficient extent either.

In the second half of the 2000s, young Ukrainian artists' desire to create media art objects was supported not so much by all-Ukrainian festivals as by regional ones involving a program dedicated to media art. These are *Detali zvuku* (Details of Sound), *Hohol Fest* in Kyiv, *MediaNonStop* in Kharkiv, *Terra Futura* in Kherson, *Tyzhden Aktualnoho Mystetstva* (Actual Art Week), *MediaDepo*, *Transformator* or *Futurolohichnyj Konhres* (Futurological Congress) in Lviv. In view of the lack of a relevant institution, these festivals offer a unique opportunity to show one's worth in this art or to compare one's works with those of Western colleagues. As regards the creation of a center which would further the development of media art in Ukraine, it is still not going beyond the talking stage. The professional young media artists' community in Ukraine is rather small; apart from video art (*Totem* or *UBIK* groups, Dmytro Shyyan, Anna Naronina, Alina Kleytman, Andriy Terentyev, Olha Selischeva, Roman Havrylov), this trend of modern art is represented by the following genres: net art (Yuriy Kruchak & Yulia Kostereva, Masha Shubina, Andriy Linik), excel art (Oleksiy Say), sms art (Roman Minin), pixel art (Yuliana Alymova), interactive installation (Tamara Hridyayeva, Andriy Linik, Oleksiy Khoroshko, Yuriy Kruchak & Yulia Kostereva), video installation (Serhiy Petlyuk), digital street art (*UBIK*, Anna Naduda), kinetic sculpture (Anna Naduda, Anatoliy Sloyko), sound installation (Ivan Svitlychny).³

Born more than twenty years ago, Ukrainian media art still does not have proper support of the society, state, or business. Initiated as an experiment and developed on the initiative of foreign foundations, it remains art for export, focusing on foreign experts or connoisseurs and often being created for foreign money or bought by foreigners. This genre of art marginal for Ukrainian culture exists not "due to," but rather "against" – against the market rules, lack of interest on the part of the society and state support. And though it is not likely that a specialized

3 For the most part, I rely here on the facts provided by Yanina Prudenko since, looking from a provincial town in Ukraine, I always have a chance to omit some members of the metropolitan and regional artistic circles.

center to support media art in Ukraine will be created in the foreseeable future, there is an illusory hope that this art creators will nevertheless attract attention with some outstanding works, and this will allow to consolidate efforts for organizing an international festival or an institution that will support both young and experienced Ukrainian artists of the unstable media.

Translated by Andriy Masliukh



OKSANA ZABUZHKO*

UKRAINE: EUROPE'S UNDERGROUND

In a certain sense, Ukraine has not yet come out of the underground, not only for the outside world but also for herself, what is much more important; the process has, for some valid reasons, taken longer than expected. It is certainly not possible to correct such a situation in 20 years of independence. Especially when the independence is still rather relative.

If you know that the Lufthansa logo was created by the Ukrainian graphic artist Robert Lisovsky who emigrated to the West together with the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic, worked within the traditions of the Kyiv avant-garde of the 1910s-1920s, and died in Genève in 1982, then you are a Ukrainian. There is no other explanation for your knowledge. The cultural presence of Ukraine in the European space still, in the 22st year since our country appeared on the political map, remains almost invisible – and usually is not recognized by non-Ukrainians. Even such widely known things as borsch and varenyky are not an exception: most of my acquaintances born to the west of the Oder had been convinced,

* **Oksana Zabuzhko** – born in 1960, one of Ukraine's major contemporary writers, the author of nineteen books of different genres (poetry, fiction, essays, criticism). She graduated from the department of philosophy of Kyiv Shevchenko University, obtained her PhD in philosophy of arts, and has worked as a research associate for the Institute of Philosophy of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Zabuzhko's books have been translated into Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, English, German, Hungarian, Italian, Persian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Swedish, Turkish. Among her numerous acknowledgements are Global Commitment Foundation Poetry Prize (1997), MacArthur Grant (2002), Antonovych International Foundation Prize (2008), Ukrainian National Award "The Order of Princess Olha" (2009), and many other national awards.

before they came to Ukraine, that borsch was a Russian dish and varenyky were of Polish origin.

An attendant at the Leipzig Museum der bildenden Künste, having answered my question regarding the whereabouts of the Alexander Archipenko's work (*The Portrait of the Wife* with an ornamented socle, a wonderful pattern of Ukrainian Art Nouveau), hastens to boast that they have "other Russian artists" (!) as well. In Vienna, you will be gladly shown the monument of Yuriy Kulchytsky who familiarized Europe with coffee after the 1683 battle with the Turks, but he will be called either an Armenian merchant (?) or a Polish nobleman (there is a kind of logic here, at least to the extent that Ukrainian Cossacks really fought under the standards of the Polish crown in the environs of Vienna at that time), and you have to go as far as Lviv, to the coffee-house with the historical (from the very Kulchytsky) name *Under the Blue Bottle*, to hear an exciting story about the Zaporozhian Cossack Yuriy Franz Kulchytsky-Shelestovych, who after having been held captive by the Turks appeared to be at that time perhaps the only one in Vienna who was able to realize that lots of sacks filled with some black grain that had been found in the Turkish camp were not camel forage at all...

It goes without saying that Ukrainian song folklore was "taken to pieces" a long time ago: Semen Klymovsky's *Yikhav kozak za Dunay* (18th century) as the result of Beethoven's initiative was turned into the *Russian minka*; Marusia Churai's *Oyne khody, Hrytsiu* (17th century) was turned into the American *Yes, my darling daughter* (Helmut Lotti sings it in Ukrainian now, it's true, as *Lutshje bulo*, but in a Russian album!); and only professional musicologists know that Gershwin's *Summertime* is in reality a jazz version of a Ukrainian lullaby in the arrangement by Alexander Koshetz. Among all Ukrainian composers, only Mykola Leontovych, killed by the Bolsheviks in the same 1920, was lucky after death: at least his *Schedryk*, though under the name of the *Carol of the Bells*, has not lost its Ukrainian "passport."

In fact, there is much more "Ukrainian dust" in the cultural air of Europe than one can imagine, but it is in no way associated with the image of Ukraine. Theoretically, this is certainly the fate of all nations that have been for centuries deprived of their own "political roof": the winds of history scatter away everything that is not secured – and another, more careful master for such things is always at call. Strictly speaking, whole Ukraine, from a geopolitical point of view, lies not secured, "on the beaten track," according to a baroque song: on the route "from the Varangians to the Greeks," at the eternal crossroads of differently directed

civilizational influences and transit roads, “sewing” them up with her very self and melting them together. If there is a will, one can find here everything as if at a flea market (it is not in vain that “a fair” became, following Gogol’s example, a metaphor of Ukrainian national culture!): the Scythia of Herodotus, late antique settlements, Byzantine churches, medieval towns, traces of many ruined empires and originally transformed styles, from Cossack baroque wooden churches to constructivist experiments of the same avant-garde of the 1920s (the multifacetedness which the USSR never managed to level!); as for today, a huge, “wild” fair of riches that are registered and preserved by nobody, a house without the master and with the inhabitants that were in the course of the whole last century weaned from the very idea that they can be masters here, as if it were the most terrible political sedition, weaned by means of the strictest selection (now by Stalin, now by Hitler, now by the Gulag, now by an artificial famine, and, always and invariably, by the colonial schooling).

It is certainly not possible to correct such a situation in 20 years of independence. Especially when the independence is still rather relative since, in the informational and cultural respect, Ukraine remains, so far, a Klondike for the markets of neighboring Russia, and the struggle of Ukrainian musicians, filmmakers, editors, and many others against the dominance of Russian “guest performers” for “their territory” – namely for radio and TV broadcasts, stage and distribution areas, shelves in bookshops – is a real long-lasting epic saga that will be recalled by our ancestors some time due to news reports in the media as the chronicles of a long guerrilla warfare (when even art festivals are named if not “The Last Barricade,” then directly after the national liberation struggle heroes, “Makhno-Fest” or “Mazepa-Fest,” though, one would think, what have Makhno and Mazepa to do with that?). In a certain sense, Ukraine has not yet come out of the underground, not only for the outside world but also for herself, what is much more important; the process has, for some valid reasons, taken longer than expected.

On the one hand, due to the colonial experience of the last two centuries, Ukrainians have learnt to live “bypassing” the state. In case of need, that is to say, when the state starts to “bother” them, Ukrainians can organize themselves rather well, in an entirely guerrilla way, but, as a rule, for one-time actions and not for systematic ones; the Orange Revolution is a classic example, but the same pattern is one of the main driving forces of social life, though certainly on a smaller scale. Accordingly, when a popular writer comes into conflict with the

absolutely unpopular education minister and loses in so doing the state prize for a newly published historical novel, the “all-national movement” starts on the Internet on the same day in order to make up to the writer for their loss, and the necessary amount (equivalent to 30,000 euros) is gathered on a purposely opened account in just a few days, and the novel, after being severely criticized by the minister, becomes one of the bestsellers of the year – all this is a typical algorithm of a culture accustomed to exist in the mode of chronic resistance. All the most interesting and most creative things in the cultural life of Ukraine in the last 20 years – modern art, new literature, the theatre of “small forms” – have been developed within the limits of a “self-created” infrastructure, of small and middle business, so to say, that is, in a guerrilla way too. It is quite impossible, however, to protect the national product and to take care of the national heritage in a guerrilla way, bypassing the state, and if the state does not perform these functions, then sooner or later there will arise the question of how much the state is representative in respect to its country.

And it is just here that our main problem comes to the foreground – the problem of the Ukrainian ruling class that more resembles a closed oligarchic club; both Ukraine and the average European citizen, who is guilty of nothing, has to watch two business clans – that of Donetsk and that of Dnipropetrovsk – making war within this club.

The class mentioned above was formed as a result of the fusion of the Ukrainian Soviet bureaucratic establishment and the criminal capital of the 1990s, and is consequently marked with the “genetic defects” of both. In the last 20 years, it has created in Ukraine its own subculture patterned on that of neighboring Russia, an aggressively consumerist one (the very first thing that astonishes visitors from abroad in the streets of Kyiv is an incredible number of costly cars which cannot be even compared with that in any other European capital!), with two rather powerful industries, that of sport and that of show business, the latter including the subculture of “political simulacra,” from talk shows (ironically, given the name of “The Liberty of Speech”) on the three most influential national TV channels, where the speakers of the two belligerent clans wage “ultimate fights” live to staged political rallies with crowd scenes that are paid-up (a constant source of income for the poorest population groups, i.e. for students, pensioners, and the homeless). The country is seen by this class primarily as a business that has to be profitable; consequently, the representatives of this class promote above all

their own interests in all fields of state management: what we have here is not even corruption in the classic sense, but the mere fact that yesterday's boys and girls from Soviet proletarian quarters are quite unfamiliar – and this is a matter of principle – with any other values except the power of money (as the same unpopular education minister said touchingly, “our national idea is welfare” – and was immediately answered by the student movement: “Speak for yourself!”). The most obvious evidence of the extent to which these persons (it is just them who are identified, in the eyes of the West, with Ukraine not only politically, but also culturally and symbolically, in view of the lack of other recognizable images!) are, in fact, “foreigners in their own country,” is provided by new architecture in old towns. In Odesa, the shabby façades of old buildings loom black wall to wall with tall business centres gleaming with glass and chrome; in Lviv, a new bank building is shamelessly stuffed into the ancient ensemble in the course of restoration; even in the historical heart of Kyiv, the thousand-year-old St. Sophia Cathedral, a miraculously saved from Stalin's “architectural devastation of the city” gem of Byzantine architecture and Mazepa's baroque, now is reflected, at full height, in the mirror walls of a Hyatt hotel: welcome, dear guests!

“We'll survive it,” – an elderly teacher told me reassuringly not long ago; as far back as the times of Brezhnev, he did his seven years of camps and five years of exile and now lives out his days receiving a pension of 200 euros a month.” – All these things are passing, and Ukraine is eternal.”

I love my country too and I am never tired of wondering at her invincible vital force. Through the smoky fumes given off by the feast of the nouveaux riches, she gives me dozens of evidences of this force every day, as well as dozens of reasons to be proud of her. How, in spite of the lack of even basic conditions, can such a beautiful performance appear? Where have those excellent young poets sprung from, the poets who speak to halls for 500 people packed with listeners, and those young activists of protest movements that bring me another petition to sign against raider seizure of a historical building, and those inspired crowds at rock concerts, and, in general, all this warm, lively, meaningful life that pulses largely beyond the focus of TV cameras, stubbornly ignoring the total dysfunctionality of the Ukrainian state with all its simulacra?

I just feel sorry for Oleh Kirashchuk, the pysankar (Easter eggs master) whose ornaments were “in a piratical way” used by Gucci in the 2008–2009 collection: there was nobody who could defend his work. And while Kirashchuk himself

is genuinely glad that his pysanky, even though anonymously, “went into the world” (went out of the “Ukrainian underground,” well...), I’m sure he would be glad much less if he knew that traditional Ukrainian *painting* was this time announced – no, not Russian or Polish as before – but Persian-Gypsy (!). Indeed, Ukraine is inexhaustible.

Translated by Andriy Masliukh



ANDRIY LYUBKA*

“SUCHUKRLIT”¹: LITERATURE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN ITS COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE

Only the Ukrainian state itself is more confusing than Ukrainian literature. Even a doctor will not help you understand Ukraine, but I will try to tell you briefly, in an outline, about its literature.

Ukrainians do love their literature. This conclusion is based on the following fact: a few years ago, at a grand television show the audience had to determine ten most prominent Ukrainians of all times. A half of places on the list were given to classical writers. So, Ukrainians love Ukrainian literature very much, but do not read it; this conclusion is based on paltry numbers of published books copies that by no means suit a 46-million nation. The president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, loves Ukrainian literature so much that he even happened to call Anton Chekhov

* **Andriy Lyubka** (b. 1987, Riga) is a Ukrainian writer and translator. Author of *Eight Months of Schizophrenia* (2007), *Terrorism* (2008), *Killer* (2012), *Forty Bucks Plus Tips* (2012), *Notaufname* (in German, 2012, Austria). Lyubka translated into Ukrainian selected poems from the four newest poetry collections of Bogdan Zadura that were published under the title *Night Life* (Lviv, 2012). He is a laureate of the *Debut* (2007) and *Kyivski Lavry* (2011) literary prizes. Selected poems by Lyubka are translated into more than ten languages, his poems and translations were published in many periodicals. He is a scholarship holder of a few European programs for writers and a participant of many Ukrainian and European literary actions and festivals. Lyubka graduated from Mukachevo military school and the Ukrainian language faculty of Uzhgorod University.

1 “SuchUkrLit” – abbreviation of “Suchasna Ukrainska Literatura” (modern Ukrainian literature).

a Ukrainian poet (I have to remind here that the Russian writer Chekhov did not write poetry). So, the president of Ukraine does love literature as well but does not read it. Nevertheless, it is he who is the most successful Ukrainian writer: under the disguise of royalties for literary activities (speeches, articles, memoirs that are to be written in the future) he managed to receive 16 million hryvnias (2 million US dollars), that is, an amount that has not been earned by all Ukrainian writers together for the 20 years of independence. Just imagine what a high place literature has to hold in the social hierarchy if it is through it that the highest official of the state launders questionable money.

All right, let's go further: a half of Ukraine is Russian-speaking, but there is no Russian-speaking Ukrainian literature since all Russian-speaking writers in Ukraine consider themselves to be a part of the Russian literary process. Or, in addition: there are not many music groups in Ukraine that can gather such numbers of young people as the modern Ukrainian writers Yuri Andrukhovych or Serhiy Zhadan can do. A bit confused? Only the Ukrainian state itself is more confusing than Ukrainian literature. Even a doctor will not help you understand Ukraine, but I will try to tell you briefly, in an outline, about its literature.

TWO LITERATURES

Let me begin by telling you that here, in Ukraine, there are two realities, two kinds of consciousness – namely, a modern, contemporary one and a post-Soviet one. The former would not reign for all it is worth; the latter would not vanish, despite all forecasts made years and years ago. This division has to do with literature as well.

The Soviet Union has disappeared from the world maps, but its rudiments still exist in different forms. For example, the National Writers' Union of Ukraine that has changed only its name and, in its essence, still remains the Writers' Union of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In a short time of the national upheaval and renaissance, in the late 1980s, this organization became the centre of national struggle for independence. It is from here that the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Union, *Prosvita*, and Peoples' Movement of Ukraine sprang up; these were the anti-Soviet impulses that made incredible efforts and raised hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians to struggle against the USSR. The establishment of the Writers' Union, the "stars" of Ukrainian Soviet literature Ivan Drach, Dmytro

Pavlychko, Volodymyr Yavorivsky, the academician Mykola Zhulynsky, and others were elected deputies of the first democratic convocations of the Parliament, were appointed ambassadors to foreign countries, and ministers in the government. In their posts, they did not manage to make any revolutionary changes or, at least, to achieve any success; perhaps, it was so just because they were themselves bearers of a strongly pronounced Soviet mentality. The problem is open for a psychological investigation, but the following fact remains incontrovertible: those who managed the Writers' Union in the Soviet times "grew stiff," so to say, in the 1980s; for them, the "struggle" for Ukraine still continued, linked inseparably with attention and care on the part of the state and, therefore, with politics.

I have to remind that the Writers' Union was created in the times of the USSR not to take care of masters of the word; it did not resemble a trade union, it was organized in a centralized manner to control the literary process and to implement the only right and correct communist and social realistic method in literature. The Union members took advantage of many good things of life; in particular, they were given apartments free of charge and used a whole system of creative work homes, health resorts, and even a "writers' clinic," but, above all, they enjoyed extremely high royalties and an open gate to publications in newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses. It was almost impossible to publish one's writings in literary periodicals without the identity card of the Union member (such a possibility was just sometimes given to quite young authors who were mechanically supposed ever since to be "candidates" to the Writers' Union membership). In a word, only members of the Writers' Union were considered writers.

Renamed National after the proclamation of independence, the Writers' Union retained its old essence in a new guise: even today, this is an organization maintained at the expense of the state budget; what is significant, its central office is situated in the same Bankova Street where the Presidential Administration is located. The Union members (they amount to more than two thousand) chiefly do not play any part neither in social life nor in the media nor in – sic! – literature. Today, the National Writers' Union of Ukraine has turned into a closed organization that "lives its own life": it has its own *Literaturna Ukraina* newspaper (of very limited circulation) occupied to a large degree by political materials and cries over "the destruction of everything that is Ukrainian"; in every other issue one can see criticism of "post-modernism" that "has seized literature and demolishes traditional high Christian morality of the Ukrainian people." Books written by the

Union members usually cannot be found in bookshops, since they are published at the authors' own cost by some small but "patriotic" private publishing houses that give all printed copies directly to the author. In the press, the Union is mentioned, as a rule, in the context of plundering its property and non-transparent privatization of creative work houses or due to political statements, declarations, and appeals to the Ukrainian people.

As I have already mentioned, the Writers' Union members are especially fond of criticizing "post-modernism," that is to say, modern Ukrainian literature that is developing without state support and is becoming more and more popular. It is "SuchUkrLit" (as it was neatly called by a critic) that is represented by the most popular Ukrainian writers: Yuri Andrukhovych, Taras Prokhasko, Serhiy Zhadan, Yuriy Vynnychuk, Tania Malyarchuk, Yurko Izdryk, Oksana Zabuzhko, Andriy Bondar. These authors can enjoy recognition both in Ukraine and abroad. It is with the "SuchUkrLit" that the renaissance of Ukrainian literature is associated as well as the first best sellers and books that were read by young people again.

For justice's sake, it's worth mentioning that the writers who are for convenience defined as the "SuchUkrLit," that is, the representatives of modern Ukrainian literature also tried, to counterbalance the Writers' Union, to organize themselves into a creative union, the "Ukrainian Writers' Association," which, however, has not proved to be efficient, so today it exists, in fact, only on paper. The functions of the writers' trade union and a discussion area are gradually passed on to the Ukrainian branch of the International PEN club that has an unblemished reputation.

The confrontation between these two realities, between these two literatures, namely the National Writers' Union of Ukraine and "SuchUkrLit," is taking place on formal levels as well. While "SuchUkrLit" has won the sympathy of readers, popularity, and the right to represent Ukrainian literature abroad, the Writers' Union, though being a marginal and uninfluential organization, has "privatized" the right to use another post-Soviet rudiment – state awards in the field of literature. Thus, only the Writers' Union members, that is, the "real writers" can be given most of state literary awards (which are rather numerous though having almost no influence on the literary process). The highest literary award – the National Taras Shevchenko Prize – is often handed over to the representatives of the so-called "Ukrainian populist," classical, traditional style. Behind the back, it is called "the queue," since it is given not for a bright, valuable literary work but for "a contribution to the development of literature and spirituality," that is to say,

generally to “distinguished” elderly writers. As a token of protest against the anti-artistic, bureaucratic, and official character of this prize, the most famous Ukrainian writer Yuri Andrukhovych publicly refused to accept it in the late 1990s. Truth to tell, nobody was going to award the Shevchenko prize to him, it was an artistic gesture, a peculiar performance, another challenge sent by “SuchUkrLit” to the backward and moth-eaten Soviet value system. There are also other prizes in Ukraine distinguishing in a real way the best books and outstanding phenomena in literature. These are, namely, “The Book of the Year,” “The BBC Book of the Year,” “The Best Book of the Publishers’ Forum,” “The Joseph Conrad Literary Prize” (an award for Ukrainian writers founded by the Polish Institute in Kyiv), *Koronatsiya Slova* (The Coronation of the Word), *Kyivski Lavry* (Kyiv Laurels), etc. All these prizes, apart from awards for authors, do influence the book market and inspire readers.

More and more often the representatives of “SuchUkrLit,” and Ukrainian literature with them, appear on the international scene receiving grants and residences abroad, taking part in the largest European and world literary festivals, their books being translated into many languages and winning considerable success. Among them, the author of the world’s best sellers, the Russian-speaking Ukrainian writer Andriy Kurkov can be distinguished, as well as Yuri Andrukhovych, Taras Prokhasko, Serhiy Zhadan, Tania Malyarchuk, Irena Karpa, Oksana Zabuzhko, Lyubko Deresh.

Young literature is developing very vividly, searching new ways to popularize itself. Video-poetry, slams, performances, and joined concerts of poets and musicians have become an everyday occurrence. It certainly could not do without the Internet, since it is difficult for a young, known to nobody author to find a possibility for publication in the country where literary reviews and periodicals can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Various literary websites and even social networks have become an area that allows young and charismatic prose writers and poets to find their audience. There are several contests for young authors where winners receive an award in the form of their debut book (Bohdan Ihor Antonych *Pryvitannya zhyttya* Prize, Smoloskyp Publishing House Contest). Similarly, the practice of literary miscellanies and young authors collections publication is widespread (*Dvi tonny*, *Kharkivska barykada*, “The Young Republic of Poets” miscellany).

THE FESTIVAL MOVEMENT AND THE "INFRASTRUCTURE" OF LITERATURE

One of the ways in which literature and literary environment can exist is festival movement. Dozens of festivals appeared and faded away in Ukraine in the last two decades; only some of them have managed to become firmly established and regular. Recently, it has become fashionable to add to differently oriented festivals (especially music ones) the so-called "literary scenes," where a literary program parallel to the main one takes place, including readings, author evenings, and discussions. This phenomenon has assumed a mass character to such an extent that every more or less big festival invites writers, publishers, and critics to take part too. For example, big music festivals like *Zakhid*, *Artpole* and *Pidkamin* that are held in summer time in open air fill their daytime program with master classes in pottery, people's dances, archery, and... literary readings. I have to admit that this format has never appeared to be advantageous for literature or for writers, since it usually arouses little interest and is not given enough publicity. Quite naturally, nobody comes to a music festival to listen to poets; rather, this practice is an imitation of the style intrinsic to the cult artistic union of "OstaNNia barykada" (The Last Barricade); for several years running, this union organized loud festivals like "The Independence Day with Makhno," "Kyiv Barricade," "The Barricade on Tuzla," "Kharkiv Barricade." It was literature that was the highlight of the program at these festivals, and evening music concerts seemed to be rather an addition to poetry and prose readings. It is noteworthy that even the underground, counterculture festivals organized by "OstaNNia barykada" which by definition had nothing to do with the state or state institutions, nevertheless disappeared after the change of authority in Ukraine that occurred in 2010. The reasons are different, but equally important: sponsors and supporters are so much encumbered with tax burden and merely racket actions on the part of high officials that they can afford to support cultural events no more; local self-governing structures do not give permission for holding mass actions because they are beware of confluence of people having critical attitude toward the authorities; purposeful and secret struggle which the authorities wage against the Ukrainian quality cultural product as a whole considering it alien to themselves because of two reasons, to be precise, because it's Ukrainian and because it's contemporary.

There are, however, a few rather big literary festivals that are held regularly and really influence the cultural process. I will briefly dwell on the largest of them.

Lviv International Literary Festival makes part of the Publishers' Forum in Lviv that is held every year in mid-September. It is the largest-scale literary event of the year that was planned nearly twenty years ago as a book fair for Ukrainian publishers. As a matter of fact, at first it were only publishers that gathered there, having no other place where to sell their books since the system of book distribution was absent; then, buyers of books got accustomed to arrive there from every corner of Ukraine too – again, because they had no other place where to buy freshly published books; then, writers began to come to the fair with the publishers to present their books and to improve sales; and quite soon afterwards, foreign writers began to receive invitations to come to Lviv as well, so the festival organically acquired an international status. In 2012, over 400 writers from 20 countries took part in the Publishers' Forum and in the Literary Festival, over 1,000 various actions (readings, presentations, discussions, author's meetings) were held while visited by over 50,000 visitors. It is for the Forum's time that leading publishing houses issue new books; among writers, an idea circulates that it is from this event that a new year begins for literary circles, since it gives start to counting. It is noteworthy that the Publishers Forum has its own awards for the best books of the year in different nominations.

Kyivski Lavry (Kyiv Laurels) International Poetry Festival takes place every year in May in Kyiv, as it is obvious from the name. The festival is organized by "SHO" ("What to listen to?," "What to watch?," "What to read?"), a popular magazine on culture. About 100 poets from various countries take part in it every year. Founded as a festival of the post-Soviet space with chiefly Russian-speaking poets participating, *Kyivski Lavry* have gradually become a scene where leading Ukrainian poets meet and engage into dialogue with their fellow colleagues from the countries of the CIS. The geography of the festival expands from year to year remaining, however, Slavocentric. In the last three years, modern Polish poets were regular participants of the festival, and an outstanding Polish poet and translator Bohdan Zadura was awarded with the main prize of the festival in 2010.

Meridian Czernowitz is an international poetry festival of a new type and quality for Ukraine. It is held in early September in the town of Chernivtsi where, among other known persons, Paul Zelan and Rosa Auslander were born. By the way, it was this fact that determined the essence of the festival which is focused mainly

on modern German-language poetry. The principal message is not casual as well: "To bring Chernivtsi back to the cultural map of Europe." It was considered that the pre-war Chernivtsi was one of the biggest cultural centres in the continent because of the number of writers, musicians, artists, and scientists who lived and worked there. As a matter of fact, the town where outstanding writers had been born, where they had worked and created, found itself on the margins of cultural and artistic life in the second half of the 20th century. In just three years, *Meridian Czernowitz* has been able to improve the situation and to deserve the glory of the best organized and thought-out festival in Ukraine. It is not in vain that Ukrainian writers call it "German" between themselves: not because almost a half of the participants are German-speaking poets, but because of punctuality and attention to detail. After all, this is the only festival in Ukraine with a detailed program that can be seen on the website six months before the event starts. There are also some publishing projects associated with the festival and focused on publication of books by the most popular Ukrainian writers.

I pay so much attention to the festival movement because it is just this movement that forms a response to the society's request for quality and modern literature. The thing is that what can be called an "infrastructure" of literary life is absolutely – I do stress "absolutely" – absent in Ukraine. Libraries available in every town and village have not been turned into cultural or educational centres; they remain a kind of storehouses for old books (the state fails to buy new ones for them). Literary centers lacking, it is festivals that perform a very important function since it is just through them that readers in different corners of Ukraine can see and communicate with "living" writers. In Ukraine, the very notion of a fee paid to the writer for author's readings or meetings with admirers is lacking; no funds for these expenses have ever been envisaged in the budgets of the state culture administrations or in the budget of the library system, as well as for such small but highly necessary things as travel costs, hotels, meals, etc. In other words, but for the festivals and presentation tours introducing new books, many people could never come to know that besides classical authors, there are also really living writers who create contemporary literature. I am joking, of course.

PUBLISHING HOUSES AND THE SYSTEM OF BOOK DISTRIBUTION

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine inherited the old system of book distribution and publishing houses having no experience of work on the free market and oriented solely to the government's order. In the conditions of uncontrolled economy and free competition, big publishing houses found themselves on the margins very soon, if not in a flash, since the state could no more pay for printing books to the necessary extent, and social realistic writers who had enjoyed huge numbers of printed copies – one hundred thousand and still more – appeared to be not interesting for contemporary readers. At a certain moment, there was neither the system of book distribution nor publishing houses nor really required books in the country. This pause was rapidly used by Russian publishers who literally flooded the whole Ukrainian book market with their cheap products. It was possible because of the following two reasons: first, all Ukrainians, long “treated” by the Soviet system, know Russian and can read it; second, Russian publishing houses, quite naturally, had considerably larger readers' audience and consequently printed much more copies, so their books were cheaper and, in addition, were brought to Ukraine without any taxation.

Due to the factors listed above, the Ukrainian book publication was gripped by a long crisis: even most literary reviews and periodicals were suspended, and those remaining were dragging out a miserable existence, being printed in the number of 1,000–2,000 copies. In the second half of the 1990s, the situation, however, began to change: little private publishing houses were founded, enthusiasts and interested persons throughout the country (though mainly in Western Ukraine) started to publish local literary periodicals to print contemporary literature there. One cannot help mentioning here the cult periodicals of *Suchasnist* (earlier an important diaspora periodical that “moved” to Kyiv in the beginning of 1992, soon after Ukraine got independence), *Potiah 76*, and *Chetver*, every their issue being an explosion in the deadly silence of the then Ukrainian culture. Recovering from the confusion caused by new circumstances, writers also began to come to the social scene at the same time with the mentioned above processes. Again, enthusiasts – often the writers themselves – organized literary evenings, readings, and little festivals that enjoyed tremendous success and were visited by hundreds of people. There was certain euphoria when every quality cultural event was like a gulp of fresh air serving an argument that in spite

of everything, Ukraine can give something interesting and really valuable both to itself and to the world. In the early 1990s, the names of Yuri Andrukhovych, Oleksandr Irvanets, Viktor Neborak (all three formed the legendary *Bu-Ba-Bu* group), Yuriy Vynnychuk, Taras Prokhasko, Oksana Zabuzhko, Serhiy Zhadan, and a lot of others started to resound on the literary scene. On the threshold of the 2000s, Ukrainian writers for the first time in the years of the independence became finally media and popular persons, cult counterculture heroes (“counter” – because they estranged themselves in every way from official culture supported and financed by the state, being a total objection to it), and leaders of public thought. We can assert with confidence that forming a new generation of cultural elite was finished roughly at that time when the old Soviet idols of literature passed into the past definitively.

At the same time, it has appeared impossible to overcome the predominance of Russian book products in Ukraine (after all, nobody resorted to any special drastic measures to solve the problem once and forever), so it is as present today as it used to be. It is the field of translation that suffers most, since Russian translations of the world classics, new books, and best sellers are published, as a rule, sooner and their prices in bookshops are considerably lower. It is worth mentioning that the Russian book in the same way as the Russian film serves in Ukraine the means of propaganda and especially pressing “attention” on the part of the Kremlin. It is here that one has to look for the reasons of the fact that in the last twenty years no Ukrainian authorities have dared to take any decisive steps and to impose, for example, a proper import duty on Russian book products. However, unlike film industry that needs enormous financial expenses to be made, literature is in its essence a personal art consisting in a specific writer’s work that can be done, as the history of the world literature shows, even in the most difficult conditions. That is why modern Ukrainian literature, unlike the film branch (needing big budget, contemporary technical equipment, good actors, cinema network) and even music (the same story: contemporary sound recording studios, CD sales network, concert halls, rotations at FM radio stations and on TV), has been able to reach a much higher level of development and is at the moment a well developed and branched system, the main point, however, consisting in its being needed.

In 2012, government-owned publishing houses no longer play a significant part in the book market focusing on publication of dictionaries, maps, and educational

literature. Nevertheless, private publishing houses (KSD, Folio, Fakt, Piramida, Kalvaria, Litopys, Pulsary, Tempora, Knyhy-XXI, Lileya-NV, Yaroslaviv Val, Nora-druk, etc.) feel more or less confident in their field, issuing many books of contemporary literature and being competently engaged in their distribution and advertising. However, the situation with the so-called “depth” of the book market remains deplorable: even among regional centres there are towns where one cannot find a bookshop able to offer a quality and contemporary choice of books, and in little towns there is, as a rule, no bookshop at all – just a stall with schoolbooks and collections of cookery recipes, at best. The predominance of Russian books mentioned above and the lack of bookshops influences the number of printed books disastrously: thus, a prose book by a rather known author would range up to 2,000 copies and a poetry collection only up to 500 copies. These figures, of course, are not so small and, on the average, reflect the circumstances of the most book markets of Central and Eastern Europe; however, as soon as they are compared with the figures of the population of Ukraine (46,000,000) one realizes instantly that the situation could be much and much better.

After all, the numbers of printed copies mirror writers’ royalties; so no wonder that most authors, even popular ones, have to work and to earn their living outside literature. The writers who earn exclusively in the field of literature can be counted on the fingers; they are, specifically, Yuri Andrukhovych, Serhiy Zhadan, Yuriy Vynnychuk, Oksana Zabuzhko, Yurko Izdryk (it is worth stressing that they manage to do it above all due to foreign royalties and scholarships and participation in festivals abroad) and the female novels authors Iren Rozdobudko, Luko Dashvar, Mila Ivantsova.

At present, publishing houses are in search of new forms of book sales. KSD, for example, quite successfully sells their books by means of the “book by mail” system, offering readers from the most remote places a possibility to receive new books straight at their homes. Tempora Publishers have created their own “Ye” bookshops network that is the largest in Ukraine and has turned into not only a profitable business, but also cultural and educational centers. E-books sales are also starting, as the main players in the book market gradually launch the practice of simultaneous issuing both paper and electronic versions of new books, this segment of the market being, however, quite underdeveloped, partly because of widespread piracy; having bought a book once in an internet shop, pirates make it available free at popular torrent trackers and file sharing websites. There are two

popular internet portals focused on Ukrainian literature, namely "Bukvoid" (<http://bukvoid.com.ua>) and "LitAktcent" (<http://litakcent.com>) functioning successfully.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

In my opinion, modern Ukrainian literature is one of those few Ukrainian projects that not only survived but, moreover, turned out to be a success. While our sportsmen, for example, are still winning awards at international competitions due to the remains of the Soviet sport infrastructure (professionally trained coaches, stadiums, local schools specializing in certain sports), it is the other way with literature, since it is developing due to the distinct opposition to the Soviet past and to the contemporary state institutions. It is again living through its romantic stage as a literature of a young nation that is finally able to breathe freely and to write as it wants to. This is an ambitious, living, really modern literature which accentuates at the same time its connection with the previous stage of the national renaissance, that is, with the modernism of the 1920s-1930s. This is a literature that is more successful than the state and even more successful than the people which it has the honor to represent; a literature that not only mirrors a new, modern mentality of Ukrainians, but leaves it behind and, what is more, goes beyond it. As it is known, philosophy and literature are the first to feel outward and inward changes. Perhaps, it is worth an effort to look at modern Ukrainian literature today in order to understand what the Ukrainian people will be like tomorrow? It would be nice to believe in such a thing.

Translated by Andriy Masliukh



ANDREY KURKOV*

UKRAINIAN CULTURE CAN BE SUCCESSFUL

A national culture is a complete mosaic. We do not have it, what we have is only material for such a mosaic. Even so, it is most likely that we just don't have enough material to complete it. It is still unknown what Ukrainian culture has to consist in.

Iryna Slavinska**: What is Ukrainian culture?

Andrey Kurkov: For me, it is the aggregate cultural product made in the territory of Ukraine.

I. S.: You mean just a territorial characteristic?

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- * **Andrey Kurkov** born April 23, 1961 in Leningrad, Russia is a Ukrainian novelist who writes in Russian. He is the author of 18 novels and 7 books for children. His works have been translated into 35 languages. He has also written assorted articles for New York Times, The Guardian, New Statesman, La Libération, Le Monde, Die Welt, Die Zeit. Apart from literature, Andrey Kurkov is regularly involved in script-writing. His own film adaptation of *The Matter of Death and Life* got him shortlisted for Best European Script-writer of the Year Award in Berlin 1997. In the same year he was invited to join the European Film Academy (EFA). He has also been awarded numerous international literary prizes.
- ** **Iryna Slavinska** – journalist, translator, literary critic. Literary observer for *Ukrainska Pravda* (<http://life.pravda.com.ua>), anchorwoman at TVi channel.

A. K.: Rather, a territorial and state one. That is to say, if an artist is a citizen of Ukraine and works in Ukraine, he makes Ukrainian cultural product.

I. S.: **One cannot help mentioning here the argument on whether a Russian-speaking writer from Ukraine can be considered a Ukrainian writer. So, is Andrey Kurkov a Ukrainian writer?**

A. K.: I consider myself a Ukrainian writer but a lot of my colleagues do not consider me such.

I. S.: **Why?**

A. K.: Many share the illusion that Ukrainian means only ethnically Ukrainian. That is, Ukrainian literature is literature solely in the Ukrainian language. They don't think that Ukrainian culture could integrate different cultures. For example, it was just in this way that the Dyachenko couple tried to assimilate into Ukrainian literature: they started to write in Ukrainian. Afterwards, however, they turned back to Russian and moved to Moscow, I don't know why.

Not to mention that Crimean Tatar literature is quite alien to Ukraine. Not because it does not want to assimilate into Ukrainian culture; it's so because it is ignored in Ukraine as alien. The representatives of cultural ethnocentrism often do not realize that Ukrainian culture consists, in fact, of artistic creativity of all ethnic minorities and nations living in Ukraine.

I. S.: **You have written in *The Guardian* that you feel “the pressure to write in Ukrainian.” What kind of pressure is this?**

A. K.: The pressure has always been present.

I. S.: **So, who pressed and who was under pressure?**

A. K.: I did not press anyone. It's me who was pressed on – and, moreover, from both sides.

On the one hand, the pro-Kuchma circles and the pro-Kremlin 2000 newspaper called me “the fifth column.” Since I wrote in Russian, they thought me to be

favorably disposed toward Russia. That was the way I was pressed by passionate Russian patriots like Oles' Buzyna.

And on the other hand, I was pressed by my fellow writers. Some used to say straight from the rostrum or from the scene and right to my face that the time would come when Kurkov began to write in Ukrainian. I don't want to name the persons, but they all sincerely believed that all that is not in Ukrainian is alien.

As far as I remember, it happened just once that the hetman Skoropadsky's granddaughter, Olena Ott-Skoropadska, who was present at a meeting where the topic of my "non-ukrainity" was brought up again, rose and defended me publicly, saying that Russian-language literature had always been and would always be present in Ukraine.

I. S.: Is the publication of your novels in Ukrainian translation a compromise?

A. K.: The first attempt was made in 2001 when a foundation that had to do with President Kuchma suggested publishing my novel *Penguin lost* in Ukrainian. The then deputies [of the Parliament] were all given a copy of the book as a gift. The next attempts were made later.

Practice has shown that my books in Ukrainian sell equally well. This means that translation into Ukrainian can have both political and exclusively commercial advantages.

I. S.: When speaking of Russian-language literature in Ukraine, one of the arguments against it is the assertion that Russian-speaking Ukrainian authors cannot compete with Russian authors.

A. K.: And why to compete? Why do they have to compete? If we look at the real history of Ukrainian literature, which came into actual existence as a phenomenon only in the late 1990s, we'll see that it was just Russian literature that filled up a ten-year-long lacuna after 1991. The Ukrainian market was occupied by the Russian book since there was vacuum in that market. Russian-speaking Ukrainian writers are not to blame.

I. S.: And why is it just the late 1990s that you date the beginnings of modern Ukrainian literature back to? Didn't we have the Stanislav Phenomenon as

early as the late 1980s? And Yuri Andrukhovych and Oksana Zabuzhko, the gurus of today, were already known at that time...

A. K.: It was a one-shot cultural product. There was no phenomenon as such, there were individual personalities. Then, in the late 1990s and in the early 2000s, a new generation of young women and Lyubko Deresh adjoining them came into existence.

That is to say, for a decade Ukraine lived without Ukrainian literature as an integral phenomenon.

I. S.: What other tendencies do you see?

A. K.: In culture or in literature?

I. S.: In both – in general and in particular.

A. K.: Experts can speak of some tendencies in Ukrainian pictorial art or in Ukrainian animation, but it is impossible to speak of some tendencies in Ukrainian culture in general since there is no feeling of Ukrainian culture being present in Ukraine as an integral phenomenon.

I. S.: What do you mean?

A. K.: A national culture is a complete mosaic. We do not have it, what we have is only material for such a mosaic. Even so, it is most likely that we just don't have enough material to complete it.

It is still unknown what Ukrainian culture has to consist in. Separately, there is very interesting pictorial art created by artists of really different nationalities. Modern music exists on its own in the same way, and we know next to nothing about it since there is no platform from where one can get knowledge about modern Ukrainian music.

I. S.: Let's speak about literature, then.

A. K.: During one decade of its existence, Ukrainian literature filled up the niche of the literature on sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll, non-existent since the 1960s. Now, when the niche has been filled up, a sort of sagging feeling has become evident.

As though literature doesn't know where to go next. A compass is lacking.

Just as Andrukhovych, Zabuzhko, Rymaruk rejected Ukrainian classics earlier, the younger generation has now rejected Andrukhovych, Zabuzhko, and Rymaruk... and they don't know where to go next.

I have a feeling that experiments are over. It's a flag stop – demanded, however, not by the reader, but by the author who doesn't know where to go.

Besides, the situation on the book market does not fill writers with enthusiasm. They are embarrassed.

I. S.: What situation do you mean?

A. K.: Publishing houses and bookshops are closed. You know this better than me.

When reading Ukrainian literature reviews, one also realizes that only texts in the Ukrainian language are considered Ukrainian literature by the critics. No one needs a different literature.

That is, it's something like a blank space, lack of information on Russian-language literature in Ukraine.

Russian-language writers don't take part in the literary process. For example, there are many science-fiction writers in Ukraine. Some of them live in the Crimea, and they assimilate into Russian literature there because it is where they are easily accepted.

Russian-language poets from Eastern Ukraine are assimilated [into Ukrainian culture] a little better; it is particularly Serhiy Zhadan who works with them a lot. And there is also a circle of the *Raduga* periodical authors.

I. S.: What other else problems do you see?

A. K.: The main problem for me is Crimean Tatar literature. Nobody knows it! Only a few public poets are somewhat known – those who frequently speak at literary festivals. However, there are as many as about 80 members of the Writers' Union among the Crimean Tatars. Just imagine how many more writers are there who are not registered as writers. I don't believe there are no talented authors among

them. We merely don't know that literature. In the meantime, it can count only on being published under the label of "the literature in ethnic minorities' languages" within the framework of the "Ukrainian book" government financing program.

I. S.: How can it be changed?

A. K.: There must be a signal that will help to arouse interest in literatures of this kind. Scholars are probably writing articles on Crimean Tatar literature even today. Nevertheless, these articles remain in the hermetic scholar circle, they don't go beyond the *Slovo i chas* periodical published in a microscopic number of copies.

I. S.: Who has to give this signal? Scholars or, perhaps, let Yanukovych announce it from the rostrum?

A. K.: Do we really have to mention the writer Yanukovych in vain? The thing is to be done without unnecessary affectedness. There is natural selection in culture. A personality has to appear in literature that will make culture flourish.

I. S.: You have mentioned the times of the USSR more than once so far, and now I can't help asking the following question: what has changed in the 20 years of Ukrainian independence?

A. K.: The semi-official culture that could be packed into two planes – one for Verioivka choir, another for Virsky ensemble – has disappeared. The sphere of Soviet literature has disappeared, as well as obligatory ties between literature and politics.

I. S.: I don't agree. Ukrainian writers feel very comfortable within political topics.

A. K.: Yes, they write articles and columns, keep blogs. But they don't write novels on social matters. Ukrainian literature, in general, lacks socially oriented writings.

I. S.: There are some very political novels like Lina Kostenko's *The Notes by the Ukrainian Lunatic* or Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*...

A. K.: These are individual texts. However, Ukraine's real life is not represented in literature. Moreover, modern Ukrainian literature does not perform political orders of the state. Today, Ukrainian writers decide on their own if they are willing to assume this responsibility.

I. S.: **A considerable number of artists have gone into politics as parliamentary candidates. Is this also a manifestation of their disposition to assume responsibility?**

A. K.: We can give the example of Vasyl Shkliar. After he wrote *The Black Raven* novel, he saw that he was being listened to in a different way. All presentations that he had all over Ukraine were, in fact, political rallies. So nothing has changed really. One merely has to be aware that politics will hamper creative work considerably. As for the Kapranov brothers, this is either a performance and a happening or they have really decided to go into politics... at least, they will surely defend Ukraine. Lina Kostenko is a nice example as well. Although never running in the elections, she embodies the real conscience of the nation.

I. S.: **What does this massive going into politics mean? It has begun already in the early 1990s.**

A. K.: In my opinion, this is despair. Just think of the debts of the "Zeleny pes" publishing house, of low author's fees and royalties. The Ukrainian reality doesn't give Ukrainian writers and publishers a chance to live in a normal way. It's not a rush for earnings, though, it's first and foremost ambitiousness.

I. S.: **The Ukrainian book is really in a disastrous condition. Is it the fault of the state?**

A. K.: The thing is that the same disaster is experienced in every field of cultural activity.

I. S.: **But does the Ukrainian book need state support at all? I have an impression that our culture has learnt how to manage without money: publishing**

e-books instead of more expensive paper ones, creating projects with combined efforts of enthusiasts...

A. K.: State support is necessary, but it must be institutional. Like the CNL in France, for example. The state appropriates some funds and then experts decide on their own how to spend them, on what kinds of book promotion. The examples of what enthusiasts do reveal the creation of Ukrainian microculture. A microculture does not become state culture. It may be interesting, it may be read, but it cannot turn into an integral phenomenon – it can be but a little part of it. It is enough only on the level of ordinary readers and connoisseurs, and it's just the number of 1,500–2,000 printed copies that we usually have.

I. S.: What is necessary for a microculture to become state culture? Is this a movement from below or from above?

A. K.: This is a two-way movement. However, to achieve this, culture must be self-sufficient, it has to learn how to export itself. There is a need for a consumer, the middle class. Because now Ukrainians don't have money to spend on culture.

I. S.: What part in the process is assigned to the Ministry of Culture?

A. K.: The Ministry of Culture could be replaced by a few accounting departments. This structure is as yet engaged only in the distribution of budgetary funds, wage payments, etc.

I. S.: And what about cultural exchange between Ukraine and other countries?

A. K.: There is some progress. For example, the literary festival in Cognac, France, for the first time welcomed Ukraine as the chief guest in November, 2012. In 2013 there will be the first literary festival dedicated to Ukraine in Austria. There are some things that are planned. That is, there is a potential demand.

The initiative goes both from abroad and from our country. The festival in Austria will be held, for example, at my suggestion; the Cognac festival embodies the efforts of Iryna Dmytryshyn, Anetta Antonenko, Mykola Kravchenko, my efforts. If there were no efforts on our part, Ukraine would not be invited. We were

invited to Frankfurt just once, and there is a three-year-long fraternal program for Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus in Leipzig.

I. S.: By the way, we usually claim to have quite good cultural relations with Poles...

A. K.: In a political sense, there are two countries that are our advocates, namely Poland and Lithuania. Besides, Germany is also ready to become a gate for Ukrainian culture.

I. S.: What exactly can cultural exchange bring?

A. K.: The cultural face of Ukraine will appear, as at the moment it has a very unattractive political face.

Russia, for example, has been working a lot on the creation of its cultural face for a long time – they are improving their image in this way... And there is an impression as if their political problems have been pushed to the background. Political issues will be forgotten, and culture will remain.

I. S.: Perhaps Ukrainian culture is taken abroad for a part of Russian culture?

A. K.: It's difficult to say. Poland by no means identifies these cultures, though Russian culture is certainly more recognizable.

I. S.: In one of the interviews held for the Belarusian report on the condition of culture and NGOs an idea occurred that Ukraine is lucky to have a powerful diaspora helping to develop culture. Do you agree?

A. K.: I wouldn't say that. There might have occurred some traces of influence in the 1990s, when the diaspora invited Ukrainian writers to speak and musicians to play, when real tours for writers were organized. There is no such influence today.

I. S.: What is going to happen with Ukrainian culture next? What is your forecast?

Unfortunately, it depends on what is going to happen with Ukrainian politics. That is, if a political respect for Ukraine arises abroad, foreign countries will pay triple attention to Ukrainian culture as well, and this means that both culture and its activists will be offered a strong incentive for creative work; then there will be what to be proud of both for them and for the whole country.

Should there be no political respect for Ukraine, individual young creators will have grant support as before, but there will be no great international projects and, consequently, they will have a false impression abroad that Ukraine is a little and unimportant country which simply has neither cultural nor financial potential to have its own cultural face.

Translated by Andriy Masliukh



MYKHAILO BRYNYKH*

THE ONE WHOSE PIPES OF GLORY KEEP SILENCE¹. UKRAINIAN CINEMA IN THE PAST TWENTY YEARS: RUNNING AWAY FROM POETRY

Twenty years ago, three words were quite enough to write an
exhaustive and infinitely analytic article on Ukrainian cinema.
Journalists often overused this killing simplicity, and papers
and magazines trumpeted regularly – It doesn't exist!

SIGN OF ABSENCE

Twenty years ago, three words were quite enough to write an exhaustive and infinitely analytic article on Ukrainian cinema. Journalists often overused this killing simplicity, and papers and magazines trumpeted regularly – It doesn't

* **Mykhailo Brynykh** – Ukrainian journalist, novelist, essayist, radio and TV presenter, editor. Born on November 21, 1974 in Kyiv, Ukraine. He graduated from the Faculty of Journalism, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Author of numerous publications on arts and culture. His published novels include: *Elektronnyj plastylin* (Kyiv 2007), *Shakhmaty dlia dybiliv* (Kyiv 2008), *Keytnot doktora Padliutshcha* (Kyiv 2009), *Chlib iz khryyashamy* (Kyiv 2012), *Khrustalna svynofrema* (Kyiv 2012).

Serhijovich is the winner of several best-publication awards for his contribution to such magazines as *Ukraina* (1994, 1995) or *Kurier Kryvbasu* (2001); further prizes include: Smoloslryp Publishing House award (1996), Cultural Leader of the Year (2007), Crowning of the Word award (2008), and Book of the Year 2008.

1 allusion to: 1) the idiom *To go through fire, water, and pipes of glory*; 2) the Ukrainian title of Mykhailo Illienko's *Firecrosser – The One Who Went Through Fire*.

exist! Certainly, rhetorical figures about patriotic blindness, loss of ideological sense, criminal neglect of Ukrainian culture needs, and others used to be an invariable pendant to these words. The democratized party nomenklatura, which had already perceived the joy of plundering the public property, sustained this bombardment with peas easy and painlessly since the “great standing” of local studios had given certain dividends as well – film theatres were rapidly converted into some sort of “shopping centres,” and even in the Ukrainian Association of Cinematographers one could mostly buy Belarusian knitted wear rather than get information about the feeble pulse of (according to Lenin) “the most important of all arts” (probably, this touching tradition – to sell something in the Association lobby – is still in force).

The age of video salons and blossom of piracy substantially softened the tragedy of this loss for the public – this exchange of exhausted film theatres repertoire for forbidden fruits of the topical world cinema, even in awful technical quality and with home-made translation, did not cause any complaints from the audience. Because *Emmanuelle* came in place of *The Mechanic Gavrilov's Beloved Woman*, and Soviet super heroes like Nikolai Yeriomenko in the film *Pirates of the 20th Century* appeared to be colourless imitations of Bruce Lee or Chuck Norris and always beaten, though unconquerable embodiments of Sylvester Stallone.

VAVYLONIAN YOUTH

The epicentre and at the same time the best metaphor for Ukrainian cinema of the 90s was the coffee house “Vavylon” (“Babylon”) in the Ukrainian Association of Cinematographers (and the restaurant of the same name on a lower floor). While wind and mournful Mykhailo Bielikov (the then head of this organization) strolled along the building's corridors, quite a few of the cinematographic folk came to “Vavylon” early in the morning – there were no other “film sets” for most of these immensely gifted cameramen, directors, screenwriters, and actors.

I liked to eavesdrop their conversations.

There used to be a party of silvered and bald masters round the table, cemented with that simple feast, which one could bring with himself. And which at certain stage awoke memories and hopes. Having drunk another shot, one of them related to his colleagues: – ...so I'm telling Tarkovsky: “Are you a blind man,

Andriusha?! You have to move to close-up now! Damn it, what panorama are you talking about!” He meditated on it a little, and then just beamed: “Exactly so, right you are! This’ll be much better!”

The tragic comism of such conversations was always ornamented by the excess of creative plans and ambitious projects, which now and again took off in studios of the Dovzhenko Film Studios, though for the most part they ended in the same place – in “Vavylon.” For instance, as many as twenty-two Ukrainian movies made from 1991 to 1995 were presented on the first Stozhary festival (1995) programme. Though only two of them (*Josephine the Singer, and the Mice People* [*Spivachka Zhozefina...*] by Serhiy Masloboisychkov and *Fuchzhou* by Mykhailo Illienko) became known, most of the other works and their audience just missed each other.

Festivals were probably the only living space accessible for Ukrainian movies then. Though not only for the Ukrainian – local spectator somehow unnoticeably and desperately jumped from Soviet isolation into the fundamentally different, though equally confined, force field of Hollywood blockbusters. As for Stozhary, this festival in particular, for the first time introduced Balkan cinema stars, contemporary Polish films, etc to metropolitan audience. The international Molodist film festival is still the indisputable festival leader in Ukraine. It was Molodist that during the second half of the 90s turned the punishment cell of the Association of Cinematographers into environment of exceptional liberty, where Leos Carax (director of *The Lovers on the Bridge and Pola X*) and Depardieu Jr. readily and energetically ruined the myths about living classics.

Cheerful festivity and blissful non-existence of national, accustomed to government funding film industry, characterized the 90s at their best. However, this typical “ruin” had positive consequences as well: quite a few talented directors, cameramen, and other professionals came on TV. Would there in Ukraine be such a TV phenomenon as Studio 1+1 with director and producer Olexander Rodnianskyi on its head without total decay of film industry? Founded in 1995, this channel gathered an excellent team that built innovatory, experimental, and model TV-product of quality and style. If national TV ever had its “golden age” once, than it lasted exactly during the deepest crisis of Ukrainian cinema.

On the other hand though, any talk about reaching the bottom of abyss is always an exaggeration. In the course of the 90s, Kira Muratova shot four films – one of her best works (*Three Stories* [*Try Istoriyi*] 1997) among them. Roman Balayan

presented the films: ...*First love (...Persha Liubov)* (1995) and *Two Moons, Three Suns (Dva Misiatsia, Try Sontsia)* (1998). Viacheslav Kryshtofovych, after the very successful *Adam's Rib (Rebro Adama)* (1991), drew attention to his wonderful screen version of Andriy Kurkov's *A Friend of the Deceased (Pryyatel Pokiynyka)*. A different matter is that most of the films were made in collaboration with Russian, French, German film companies, sometimes even without any substantial "Ukrainian trace" at all. Therefore, quite a few critics prefer to review the works of the mentioned masters beyond the Ukrainian cinema context of the 90s.

FROM ILLIENKO TO ILLIENKO

Looking for symbolical and noteworthy phenomena that could convey all range of precipices, improvements, hopes, and prospects of Ukrainian cinema within the last twenty years, I have to resort not to exaggeration but to simplification.

As for me, the "way from Illienko to Illienko" is the best metaphor one could find. These are well-known Ukrainian film directors Yuriy and Mykhailo Illienko, who have not just created films-continents, but framed the last twenty years in them.

The slowness and rarity of events in the mid 90s better than anything facilitated the appearance of films-phenomena, films-pointers, which carried at least a suggestion if not an answer to the question – What had new Ukrainian cinema to become to bring the mass audience's attention back to itself? Quite recently, expectations of a national best-seller in Ukrainian literature lasted with approximately the same tension.

Mykhailo Illienko's *Fuchzhou* (its full title – *Waiting for a Cargo on the Run by the Pagoda*), released in 1994, became the film which finally allowed moving of abstract and theoretical discussions on "possibility of a national blockbuster" to a more or less realistic level. First of all, Illienko managed to combine national poetic cinema traditions with adventure plot, modern motifs, surrealism, and absurdity. Unlike those film directors who desperately tried to create something "blockbustish" by definition (say, for instance, Hryhoriy Kokhan's "action film" *Dead-End [Tupyk]* (1998), which made a rather comical impression on the audience and reviewers), *Fuchzhou's* director decided to stay on author's cinema territory, where the lack of modern technologies did not strike the eye too much, as in any genre project. Mykhailo Illienko's movie was not the philosophers' stone, but it showed

all sceptics that a “film for spectators” should not necessarily be an imitation of a production for a video salon. So, it seems that till the end of the 90s in Ukraine no analytical article on problems and future of national cinema was published without mentioning *Fuchzhou*.

The next film was a film-scandal made by Yuriy Illienko, which is still the most ambitious and expensive project in Ukrainian cinema. The budget of *A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa (Molytva za Hetmana Mazepu)* reached 3,750 million USD – unthinkable sum of money for the year 2002.

However, the author’s whimsical conception shattered expectations of the first perfect national blockbuster. Reviewers agreed that it was a genuine artistic piece, therefore there was no sense to talk about the success or disaster of Yuriy Illienko. As for the next misunderstanding with the society rejecting the “cultural shock” – it is better to forget about it as soon as possible.

Despite the great actors involved, extraordinary attention from the mass-media and contradictory reviews of professionals, Ukrainian audience has never seen *A Prayer...* – the film has never been shown neither in cinemas nor on television. The ban on showing it in Russia is probably its greatest achievement.

For some reasons the director deliberately chose obsolete (both ideologically and artistically) aesthetics – as for its style, *A Prayer...* strongly reminds bloody and sexual thrash films of the Italian masters of the 60–70s. That is the way Mario Bava, Lucio Fulci, Joe D’Amato, Dario Argento, and other adherents of excessive naturalism, theatrical phoneys, and lyrical violence interpreted historical material. Certainly, even such an approach could be miraculously galvanized, as it was done by Quentin Tarantino in *Inglourious Basterds*, though Yuriy Illienko never planned to make fun of history.

A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa is a part of the national cinema recent history not only as a film-phantom – this film allowed to substantially reinterpret the classification of current problems in Ukrainian cinema space.

It has to be admitted, in the first place, that public financing of art cinema is a lottery without winnings – it is true even for present-day classics’ projects allegedly destined to be a success. Therefore, to be efficient, the government support has to be directed to infrastructure development in the first place – otherwise the desert will be watered infinitely.

It is also important that discussions on the peculiar curse of national poetic cinema tradition revived after *A Prayer...* – all attempts to extrapolate it to the

modern conception of “cinema for spectators” collapsed, as it happened, for instance, to Oles Sanin’s *Mamay* (2003).

But the rules of the game finally changed in the new century. At last, a full generation of directors who came to cinema by roundabout ways – via advertising, making video clips, TV series, and other TV production – made themselves known. Interesting and inexpressibly educative races started since then – every new national production tried the *overcoat* of this or that “championship” on itself, though this *overcoat* largely resembled Gogol’s red peasant’s coat. The following films: *The Company of Heroes (Zalizna Sotnia)*, *Stop Revolution! (Provemos!)*, *OrAngelove*, *Shtolnya*, etc illustrate this situation. All desperate attempts to fill up genre gaps – from war action film to narrow-gauge horror film – never complied with proper quality requirements, though not due to lack of funds, but both as a result of lack of proper cinema technologies and already mentioned problems of insufficiently developed infrastructure.

It would seem that in the last years the hopes that national cinema could burst through to Ukrainian audience flew away to hot countries again due to the economic crisis, political nightmare, and “Russkiy Mir” on the horizon.

However, this dam of spectators’ pessimism suffered deadly wreck last year in consequence of a cataclysm named *Firecrosser (Toi Khto Proishov Kriz’ Vohon’)*. Hundreds of reviews and comments have been written about this Mykhailo Illienko’s movie, and all this range of impressions have a common denominator: people went out of cinemas without the smallest feeling of shame or any other inferiority convulsions, and that was the first national film in distribution that produced such effect. Adventurous shooting process with a year long time out, chronic lack of funds, and therefore more than modest post-production and inadequate advertising campaign, low number of copies and as another sad consequence, limited distribution, are rather unusual, to put it mildly, features of the first (this time – without any corrections and rectifications) Ukrainian blockbuster, whose box office numbers for the year exceeded a million hryvnias. Naturally, it has nothing to do with commercial success. There is something much more important here – a possibility of commercial success at home market for those who will come after Mykhailo Illienko. *Firecrosser* is the film-test, which allowed to make clear both the measure of spectator’s feelings and market prospects of Ukrainian cinema, and – which is the most important thing – the status of distribution.

UKRAINIAN CINEMA DISTRIBUTION AND ECONOMIC COMPONENT OF THE LANGUAGE SCANDAL

Let us start with the parameters of the playing ground. Today, three hundred and a half screens work in Ukraine, every year this number grows substantially, and, at the same time, box office numbers has shown a growth of 25 per cent in comparison with the last year. At the time this article is being written, the leaders' box offices have reached about a million dollars weekly. Several expressive facts: *Ice Age 4: Continental Drift* has already collected 4.5 million dollars, the action film *The Expendables 2* has got over a million mark, and *Resident Evil: Retribution* has earned more than 700,000 dollars during the first four days only.

Even from these figures, it is clear that a large-scale national project still has no chances to cover the working expenses by its box office revenues only; otherwise, it has to compete with the *Ice* record for this. On the other hand, a national film with a budget lower than two million dollars spent on Illienko's film, has nowadays already rather good prospects, even with limited distribution. In particular, the producer's project of the Kyiv director Volodymyr Tykhyi *Assholes. Arabesques (Mudaky. Arabesky)* (2010) has to be mentioned – the theatre version of this collection of short films stirred up exceptional interest of the audience. Though nowadays only one distributor (Art-house Traffic, founded in 2003) consistently promotes national cinema on the market – explicitly non-profit, particularly good for film festivals – the situation will be changing rapidly in the following years. One of the important steps in this direction is creating in January 2012 the Ukrainian Cinema Association, designated for the protection of Ukrainian cinema business interests. Twelve national filmmaking companies have already joined the Association, and increase of the number of screens in the country, which will allow national filmmakers to switch from searching of subsidies to attraction of investments, is its top priority task.

One of the most whimsical features of present-day cinema distribution in Ukraine is its enslavement in mythical and political areas, which exceptionally promotes the circulation of a twisted impression about the real situation among the people.

For most of Ukrainians the main problem of national film market, which all the mass-media readily yell about at every occasion and without it, is constant infringement on local spectator's right to watch world cinema dubbed in

Ukrainian. The problem, in fact, arose the same time the Cabinet took a decision on obligatory dubbing and subtitling of foreign films into the Ukrainian language. That is, in 2006. Before, Ukrainian distribution was something like an appendix of Russian cinema market, and as for its repertoire depended solely upon humour, good will, and other reasons of Russian cinema distributors. While introducing “compulsory dubbing,” all politicians who use the language problem in Ukraine to carve out career for themselves unanimously paid attention to the word “compulsory” – and all populist hell broke loose since then – the rights of the Russian language speaking population, as they say, are restricted, etc.

Declarations about cancellation of obligatory dubbing sounded repeatedly in the course of last five years, a proper bill was even brought in the Supreme Council in 2010. Civil society organizations regularly collected signatures, organized rallies and other events for the protection of Ukrainian dubbing; pro-Russian politicians also regularly reminded their electorate about their heroic fight with the hydra of “forced Ukrainization.”

Great blame for the fact that society still perceives all this dubbing passions exceptionally in the plane of political (“the Ukrainian – Russian languages”) confrontation lies on the national media which have not even made an attempt to explain the practical economic essence of this decision to the public; instead, they all with great excitement and in unison reported that the Ukrainian language version of the feature animated film *Cars* (one of the first foreign films dubbed in the Ukrainian language for distribution) had better box office than its Russian-speaking version, and that generally its quality is considerably higher.

If “Ukrainian dubbing” was one of ethnic and economic fantasies of the “Orange government,” the present authorities would have done everything to make everybody completely forget about it. However, due to the arithmetic of this equation, a ban on dubbing foreign films in Ukraine would be simple wastefulness.

The pie – economically – may not be that big yet, but still it is something to divide. Last year, for instance, there were about two hundred foreign films in national distribution. The dubbing of one film costs, on the average, 25–35 thousand dollars. Taking into consideration that most of language adaptation expenses are not on the distributor, but directly on the filmmaker (with European cinema, though, the situation is a little more complicated), it looks like there is nothing to complain about here. That is, if the distributor buys the property rights himself. Since of those 15 distributors who in the course of last years were active

on Ukrainian film market, two thirds are just Russian companies' dealers or their subsidiary structures, there is a certain conflict of interest just in this point. Therefore, obligatory dubbing requirements for them mean additional and completely undesirable expenses. On the other hand, more than 70% of films reach national film houses owing to two companies: Ukrainian Film Distribution (the former Gemini Film Ukraine), whose share on the market last year made 22.12%, and B&H Film Distribution (50.96%). By the way, Bohdan Batrukh, owner of B&H, also owns Film Palace – one of the largest cinema chains in Ukraine, and the most powerful national dubbing studio Le Doyen Studio, which "Ukrainizes" about 60% of foreign movies. Several more powerful studios for dubbing foreign movies (Neva-Film Ukraine, AdiozProduction, Postmodern Postproduction, Tretyakoff Production, Lemma) work in this sphere as well; plus – small studios (such as Kyiv Postproduction, AAASOUND, etc). Studios for multi-voiced off-screen translation (such as TakTrebaProduction, Dubbing Studio of Channel 1+1) are also worth mentioning.

Even when considering dubbing of foreign films merely from a business perspective – it means thousands of jobs and paid taxes; also, it is a rather ridiculous job to explain foreign sharks of filmmaking business that they have to spend money on dubbing their films into Russian for Russian theatres, and separately – on another Russian dubbing, but for Ukrainian theatres.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AND WHERE TO GO FURTHER?

The state, undoubtedly, has to be interested in having all filmmaking cycle, dubbing of films, and printing sufficient number of film copies organized in Ukraine. If in the sphere of dubbing there is only one weak link – final sound mix, which takes place mainly in London or Moscow studios, the problem with making film copies is more serious. First of all, the technical base in Ukraine is too weak to provide sufficient volume of production (it is about five-six thousand film copies annually). Secondly, production costs of a copy made in Ukraine are 15–20% higher than the propositions of foreign producers. Experts claim that approximate cost of the copies imported into Ukraine in 2011 makes 7.5 million dollars, and this money was mainly paid to Italian, British, and Russian companies.

It is said that several years ago the Ministry of Culture allocated needed funds to purchase necessary equipment, and even more, the mass-media informed that

equipment of the French company CTM-Debie was installed on the territory of a film copying factory in Kyiv (it is the state company “Olexander Dovzhenko National Centre” now). The fact remains that later the Centre was “suspended” without clear reasons.

Disregarding populist manipulation with the dubbing “language problem,” it looks like that last years’ initiations of bills only promote strengthening the national film industry. Public financing of the branch has quintupled – this year 111 million hryvnias were assigned from the budget, and several loud releases are being anticipated next year, which will give a chance to check the efficiency of this assistance. “Exemption from VAT taxation on operations on supplying services of showing national films and foreign films, dubbed, voiced and/or subtitled in the official language by the demonstrator of films till 1 January 2016” – this is the sweet pill for Ukrainian cinema in the tax code of Ukraine, which the representatives of middle and small business protested against so violently and hopelessly. A new law “On Cinema and Concept of the State Programme of National Film Industry Development for 2012–2017” is being elaborated.

This, however, is the front side of the house. As for average audience, they will still be learning about the successes of Ukrainian cinema mainly from the news, and names of such directors, as Serhiy Loznytsia (the author of the feature film *My Joy* [*Shchastia moye*] honoured at the Cannes Film Festival-2010), Ihor Strembytskyi (awarded Palme d’Or in 2005 for his movie *Wayfarers* [*Podorozhni*], or Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi (a local director, perhaps the most active in self-promotion, whose films are constantly presented in competitions at leading European festivals), – these are just names which one never sees on posters or on TV.

Translated by Serhiy Snihur



OLEKSANDR YEVTUSHENKO*

THE MUSICAL “ATLANTIS” OF UKRAINE

Ukraine was surprised to discover a range of high-quality and sometimes even outstanding rock-bands. It is when our underground changed its course exposing its quaint and unmatched achievements to the light of spotlights. At the same time, the musical independence from the Western “fathers” and the stylistic one from the Russian “brothers” were demonstrated.

INDEPENDENT ROCK AND MENTAL MATRIX

When you come to think of it, today most of significant and iconic Ukrainian formations are much more than 20 years old. In other words, our independent rockers are coevals of our independent state. And it is absolutely logical. In the late 1980s, after the epochal transnational festivals Chervona Ruta, Oberih, and Taras Bulba, Ukraine was surprised to discover a range of high-quality and sometimes even outstanding rock-bands. It is when our underground exposed its quaint and unmatched achievements to the light of spotlights (they were given the green light on the national television). At the same time, the musical independence

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from Western “fathers” and the stylistic one from Russian “brothers” were demonstrated. In fact, there were not so many teams that managed to overcome the cursed “inferiority complex” hanging over the country for centuries. They not only got rid of the burden, but very quickly became popular, eagerly sought in their country. These are, for sure, Braty Hadiukiny, Vika Vradiy, Vopli Vidopliasova, Komu Vnyz, Plach Yeremiyyi, Mertvyi Piven, Viktor Morozov & Chetvertyi Kut, Alexander Tyshchenko, and *Zymovyi Sad*. There still is a big company of bards including Maria Burmaka, Eduard Drach, Olexandr Smyk, and Serhiy Shyshkin. But the main thing was that Ukrainian national egrecore had become the core of their creativity. It not only became a symbol and mental matrix, but was also successfully combined with impressive rhythmic patterns of rock’n’roll, the topical world music language of rebellion youth. Evidently, all these teams were extremely patchy from the very beginning, this is why they chose various images for staging and impersonated certain bright types of buffoons and sages, warriors and witchers.

Living in the era of total mix of all possible trends and orienting in the situation is not an easy task. Two things came in handy – experience and taste. Like foreign colleagues, our singers are not afraid of experiments and exploring new territories... What is the difference between the bands which play folk-rock and ethno-fusion? The point is that the former straightforwardly synthesize national melodies and rock, while the latter try to combine the elements of such fashionable trends as ska, reggae, psychedelics, electronics, and jazz with melodies of various world ethno-cultures. Today, separate elements of folk are used by everybody: the metal Merva, the pop-rock Skaj, and the gothic Komu Vnyz.

OCCUPIED MEDIA-SPACE IS THE MAIN PROBLEM OF MODERN UKRAINE

No matter how surprising it may seem to a modern person, the main enemy of modern and independent musician in modern Ukraine is television – dozens and hundreds of channels represent a powerful generator of spiritual vacuum and kitsch. But the main issue is that television itself is the broadcaster of the foreign language, policy, tastes, and values. It is just not Ukrainian in its nature, it is rather typically postcolonial and disadvantaged. 99% of it are represented by media-products of the Putin empire. On this front, there are only two (!) actually

independent channels – TVi and 5 Channel. The only place where independent music can live is *Music for Adults with Maria Burmaka*, a weekly program on TVi. Thus, our conscious musicians are saved only by festivals, which are, thank God, sufficient in Ukraine, and the network of independent clubs, which occasionally offer our musicians at least some job. Is the so-called Ukrainian show-business a virtual reality created by the media or a real socio-cultural phenomenon? For sure, the concert activity of Ukrainian distribution companies is oriented exclusively towards the import of Western pop and rock stars and the continuous conveyor of impudent Russian pop – the last is in abundance. Here is the first question: is the development of national show-business possible under such conditions? I have to agree: this development is going on despite such conditions, and its apologists are the very musicians, but not the state. I can not but mention the rapid breakthrough of legendary Haydamaky (nowadays, there are Kozak-System), art-house formation Dakha Brakha, steadily progressing Perkalaba, folk-rock Drymba da Dzyga, Lviv Burdon, and many others. One of obvious paradoxes of the process consists in the fact that independent musicians have meager chances of working in Ukraine and getting adequate salary. As a rule, it happens abroad, outside the country. So, the modern musician, independent from any majors, day by day still lives tangled in absurd controversies and problems of identity inside outside themselves. It is absolutely like a pre-revolution situation. You may laugh at it, but musicians remember the orange all-nation euphoria very well and are speaking more and more often of creating independent music trade unions in order for the musician to feel more protected from the despotism of officials. A problem not less serious is the absolute absence of at least more or less clearly articulated strategic cultural policy in the state.

THE SIGNIFICANT ALBUMS THAT HAVE CHANGED THE FACE OF UKRAINIAN INDEPENDENT ROCK-STAGE

In fact, in Ukrainian discography there are albums that have dramatically influenced the development of the independent stage and become something like a standard with the help of which one can clearly estimate the self-sufficiency and identity of one of the most controversial music genres. When it comes to the global inspirations of Ukrainian independent stage, the decisive role was played

by the albums of famous epochal bands-phenomena, namely *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (The Beatles) and *The Dark Side of the Moon* (Pink Floyd). These and many other albums were conceptually significant, as they had the heaviest message load addressed to the whole world.

For the first time Ukrainian rock-stage gained popularity in the 1980s, especially after the triumphant walk of laureate concerts of Chervona Ruta throughout the country. At that time, the best ones were enjoying the Olympus of audiences' admiration: Braty Hadiukiny, VV, Komu Vnyz, Vika Vradiy, and many others. The critical time of social changes in the forefront of national renaissance could not but give new heroes and revolutionary albums-symbols of changes that later became a classic of the genre.

TOTAL MOCKERY, OR THE AESTHETICS OF ANTIHEROES

I remember the state of euphoria caused by a tape with the first album *Vsio Chotko* by the unmatched Braty Hadiukiny. Whoever listened to it wanted to have a copy. It was 1989 and the country was going through "hadiukomania." Probably, the album spread throughout the country in hundreds of thousands of pirate copies because it represented a portrait of the epoch of changes through the prism of unique humor and sarcasm. At that very time, in 1989, *Tanzi* – the first tape album by the super star VV saw the world. Certainly, the records spread throughout the country in an uncontrolled way, and at concerts Oleh Skrypka had to put autographs on counterfeit tapes for a long time...

It is when Braty Hadiukiny started being perceived as Lviv's response to the punk expansion of the Kyiv VV. But if Skrypka took advantage of the slang of Kyiv suburbs and looked like a typical lumpen-robber, Kuzmivsky emanated the image of a moderate West-Ukrainian redneck-marginal. They both represented antiheroes on the stage that in fact were typical simple guys that are neither bad nor good but are themselves. Both turned slang and brutality into the aesthetics of total literary and musical mockery – and it was a distinctive feature of the then underground.

Another authentic punk-queen Vika Vradij received the Grad Prix of the international festival Miss Rock in 1988 and released a fine album *Po tsymbalam*.

CULTURAL SHOCK OR REFINED NON-CONFORMISTS

Kolezkiy Asesor was another hero of rock-underground in the uneasy 1980 that left a cumulative chimeric-fantastic image. Everything was unusual about the band – from fancy sound constructions and lyrics hooliganism to odd clothes borrowed from different epochs. Kolezkiy Asesor was constantly causing a storm of controversial emotions: the frontman Vasyl Hajdenko managed to touch the mysterious strings of soul that other musicians could not reach. Hajdenko's group always experimented within the frames of surrealist art-rock to post-punk psychedelics. Obviously, a big number of homemade albums were passed from hands to hands, but the most concentrated mix of the best songs was collected on a CD in 2001.

Biocord, which played guitar art-rock with elements of psychedelic left a notable imprint among the bands of the experimental wing. Mykola Bykov was the initiator of the group – a certified architect with a non-standard composer way of thinking. The album *Vysoki Nebesa* released in 1995 contains the best works by the group. It is interesting that numerous radio stations are still actively using the group's music as background for various programs.

Foa-Khoka, a Kyiv-Chernihiv project that used rhythmic, noise, and melodious loops in combination with live instruments and melodeclamation, were the ones to distinguish themselves in the sphere of electronic experiments. Three albums are famous: *Muzyka bez haziayina*, *Nevidomist*, and *Indposhyv*. They constitute a nihilistic requiem for consumer society, and Foa-Khoka is a bright example of such kind of aesthetics.

LITERARY BIASED ROCK

The most literary biased Lviv formation Mertvyi Piven grew from funny students' skits. They have a big discography, but the biggest concentration of pearls is recorded in the album *Shabadabada*, 1998 that represents expressive ironic aesthetics. Like no other, they popularized the works of the poetic group Bu-Ba-Bu – Yuri Andrukhovych, Viktor Neborak, and Olexandr Irvanets. The group's

collaboration with Yuri Andrukhovych (the albums *Pisni Mertvoho Pivnia*, *Kryminalni sonety*) and Viktor Morozov (the album *Afrodyziaky*) gained considerable popularity.

Taras Chubai and the band Plach Yemeyi were always friends with the poetic word. A significant part of the group's songs was inspired with the poetic legacy of Taras' father, one of the best poets of the 1970 Hryhoriy Chubai, and poems by Kost Moskalets. The collection *Dobre* personifies the best achievements of melodious Ukrainian rock mainstream. This treasury can be also replenished with Taras Chubai's solo albums *Nashe Rizdvo*, *Nash Ivasiuk*, *Nashi partyzany*.

The literary biased wing also includes Korolivski Zaitsi from the very Lviv. The album *Kazky korolivstva A-Masoch* contains poetry by Lesia Ukrainka, Lina Kostenko, Pavlo Tychyna, and de Béranger performed in the genre the group's soloist defined as "alternative romance."

Another unquestionable standard of quality to be mentioned is the creativity of The Telnyuk Sisters from Kyiv. Their album *Zhovta kulbaba* recorded on the crossroad of new age and traditional romance was based on the poetry by their father Stanislav Telnyuk, as well as Ivan Kozachenko and Vasyl Stus. They also create their own poetic masterpieces which have a small but dedicated circle of listeners. The last album *Doroha zi skla* was created with a cello trio and on the basis of verses by Oksana Zabuzhko.

Finally, the real egregore of traditions on the stage is impersonated by Viktor Morozov, friend and partner of numerous musicians from different generations, a Lviv singer, litterateur, translator, once the Arnika group and the Ne Zhurys cabaret group. In the 1990s he created the Chetvertyi Kut band, both albums of which are based on poetry of the bard and poet Kost Moskalets. This creative alliance was continued with the album *Armija svitla*.

WHO ARE YOU, ROCK POETS?

Among the bands oriented towards their own authorial poetry, Rutenia, Vasia Club, Mandry, Viy, Komu Vnyz, and Nebesna Kopalyna were the most notable.

Urban folklore by the talented poet-actor-singer Vasyl Hontarsky was included in three albums of his band Vasia Club.

Serhij Fomenko, leader of the band Mandry fully opens as a romantic poet and national melody stylist in the debut album *Romansero pro nizhnu korolevu*. Today, all songs of the band are perceived as absolutely classic for their genre.

Anatoliy Sukhyi, the leader of Rutenia, reveals his talent as a nontrivial poet of Kyiv student underground of the 1980s. His works contain unique poetic elements of the student resistance of the 1990s.

The leader of the Vij band is distinguished by a deeply mystical worldview and peculiar charisma. The album *Chorna rillia*, which has been successfully republished for many years, remains perfect from the point of view of the accumulation of images and ideas.

The nonconformist poet of a different type, Kuzmenko of the Skryabin band (Kuzma), enriched the modern stage with a whole range of poetic findings that are present in the albums *Mova ryb*, *Kazky*, *Ptakhy*, *Khrobak*. The amusing adept of the West Ukrainian vernacular, Kuzma has enriched the treasury of rock-poetry with hundreds of colorful jokes. Two dozen of albums in twenty years of the band's existence are the result of the fruitful work of Kuzma and his band.

However, the gothic-folk-industrial band Komu Vnyz towers as a separate and real mountain in the history of Ukrainian rock. The famous hit based on Shevchenko's poem *Subotiv* was written by Andriy Sereda and presented to his father for his birthday already in 1983. This song-anthem has been greeted with huge respect since the first performance at Chervona Ruta in 1989. In general, Komu Vnyz have the greatest accumulation of spiritual power, identity, and innovation in everything they do as musicians, arrangers, and performers. They are still occupying the place of ideological non-conformists that no one could take for such a long period. These musicians have never tried to adapt to a current system of subordination in the show-business but always moved in their own direction. *In kastus* is an perfect example of their quality.

ETHNO-ROCK DISCOURSE

For 12–14 years now Ukraine has witnessed the birth and dynamic development of a musical trend that can be called "ethno-fusion." The founders and adepts of the style include the widely famous Haydamaky, Perkalaba, Burdon, AtmAsfera, Ocheretiani Kit, Drymba da Dzyga. They are the ones who represent the main

achievements of the trend and have many fans and followers. There are a number of regular events that popularize the aesthetics of ethno-rock.

It is a common truth that the first shot is always the loudest. It is what was the debut album by Haydamaky with its honest pathos of renewing almost forgotten values. Actually, it was a motif for Wojciech Waglewski, the leader of Voo-Voo to suggest Olexandr Yarmola and his company a few all-Polish concert routs and releasing the album that became "golden" in a year of selling in Poland. Until 2012 Haydamaky were the most touring Ukrainian band in Europe and in the world in general, until the leader of the group decided to entirely change the members of the band. Having preserved the name, he gathered new musicians, announced a new album, but was able to present next to nothing in the following six months, unlike the former members of the group who created Kozak System and are constantly traveling throughout all festivals together with Taras Chubai.

Ivano-Frankivsk-based Perkalaba, which successfully makes its way in Western Europe, show a bright example of ska-punk type of ethno-discourse. *Ocheretianyi Kit* from Vinnytsia does not seem to have done anything more interesting than their own stylish album *Mandrivka v Kosakivku*. Meanwhile, the brightest example of Lviv Burdon's achievements is their third album *Taistra chuhaistra*.

Concerning the young generation of world music adepts, it is worth mentioning Krapka, the ethno-hip-hop band from Zaporizhzhia, and their second album *Khrestyky i nuli*.

25 YEARS ON THE ORBIT

A colossal anniversary show by a popular Ukrainian band took place in Kyiv Sport Palace under the title "25 Years on the Orbit" last year and became the central music event of the year. A new DVD with a film-concert *W on the Stage of the Festival Rock-Sich* was presented there.

Everything new is the well forgotten old. This saying comes to mind as soon as I start listening to the latest studio album *Buly Denky* (2006). It is associated with crazy parties of the 1980s, broken chairs and windows, burst-type drive of the turbo-punk-rock machine, and Oleh Skrypka that is flying over the scene, abundantly covered with sweat. Like a circus juggler, he is changing an accordion for a trumpet and a trumpet for a guitar. I recall overcrowded halls, mass agiotage,

wild dances near the stage, and fighting representatives of all subcultures. Indeed, those were fine days. 90% of tracks originate from them – the golden 1980s – the unforgettable times of punk juvenility multiplied for clumsy but funny muddle of the late Soviet Union. At that time, the guys did not stand a chance of more or less high-quality recording so they were regularly migrating throughout concerts and often became a gain of audio pirates. So the main idea of the album *Buly denky* consists in emotional restoration of the band's classical sound. In the 1980s, "life on wheels" began for our non-Liverpool Fab Four – constant tours in Ukraine, Russia, the Baltics, and Poland. It is after the concert in Warsaw where punk hits were performed, that Skrypka sang a medley of Ukrainian folk songs in his style, which just conquered the audience. The guys achieved professional growth due to the "French period" when there were two Parisians playing together with Skrypka and Pipa. It was very valuable experience of life in accordance with show-business rules for the band.

Everybody has a number of reasons to like or dislike VV. To like them for inartificial drive, piercing honesty, real staginess and plasticity, sentimentality and lyricism, for founding the famous ethno-festival Kraina Mriy. Not to like them for unconscious distortion of the literary language, though there is a specific slang in their variant, for Skrypka's participation in glamorous TV shows. But advantages are still prevailing. In addition, VV has been a national band that has always been in the centre of momentous events in the country for already 25 years.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

In the two past decades of the independent non-profit rock-stage in Ukraine's development, the age of which not accidentally coincides with the age of the independent state, we saw a clear crystallization of musical trends both on the level of a certain non-conformist ideology and on the level of aesthetic musical preferences. Today, it is already obvious that the best rockers gained the status of mega-stars in their country, became the most sought-after performers – it is enough just to look at the lists of the biggest open-air of this summer. Here are some of them: Tartak, TNMK, Taras Chubai, Kozak System, Mad Heads, Druha Rika, Skryabin, Komu Vnyz, Perkalaba and Dakha Brakha. And this is despite the treasonable, anti-Ukrainian repertoire policy of the leading TV channels of the

state... Ukrainian young rock-stage, though it has had only a very short “credit history” so far, still has a reliable backing in the form of support from the second, younger generation of rock-musicians that will definitely continue Ukrainian rock’n’roll tradition.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



KATERYNA BABKINA*

THE HOLIDAY WHICH MAY STILL COME AROUND – UKRAINIAN FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

The term *festival*, which comes from Latin, stands for organized mass celebration. Our festivals are already becoming massive, but still are to become organized and treated as holidays.

The reason for which the information about the number of festivals held in Ukraine cannot be obtained from any sources is simple –it is not quite clear what should be counted. As a genre of cultural activity, as a kind of leisure activity, or as a way of organization and self-organization of representatives of certain occupations or adepts of certain outlooks, and, what is more, as a business, the festival has no clear-cut criteria and definitions. It means that a festival is not only an open field for improvisation in any genre, but also an opportunity to write off a mess on the format.

If to trust Wikipedia, which you are made to refer to due to the absence of somehow arranged information about Ukrainian festivals, in Ukraine, there are

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approximately fifty music festivals, fourteen cinema festivals, nearly ten theatrical ones, and festivals of medieval and Trypillian cultures, art doll, festivals of hitchhiking, football, healthy lifestyle, martial arts, as well as another two tens of whatnot festivals, and at least one person who has felt the need and desire to list, systematize, and perpetuate all this in an article. Even if this unknown enthusiast has paid no attention to literary festivals and also has practically no clue about festivals of dance, historical reconstruction, flowers, blacksmith art, festival of Jesus, plastic art or performance, their work still demonstrates the fact that we have many festivals. This is especially evident for those who are at least somehow involved in the context, and therefore know that this list is not even the top of the iceberg, but just waves caused by the movement of its immense weight through the ocean space.

Under the conditions of the absence of any fundamental research on festival movement in Ukraine, the mass and social media remain the only sources of information on the issue. The information that can be found is mostly about music festivals, and this is not surprising because it is a sphere of art available and interesting to the broadest population segments; besides, sound and rhythm are the most helpful means of reaching the minds and emotions of many, and the more massive are the events, the more coverage they get in the media.

Therefore, no wonder that Chervona Ruta, considered the first Ukrainian festival, which during the period from 1989 till early 2000s played the role of a very modern, very underground, and very Ukrainian music indicator, is still present in all acknowledged conversations and materials about Ukrainian festival movement. The fate of the festival is symbolic – it continues to exist nowadays, but has not transformed accordingly to the change of public reference points. Presently, it is talked about only in the past tense, and now the participation or win in Chervona Ruta means nothing for a band – a number of You Tube views of videos from concerts is much more significant for producers or music recording studios and potential investors. In the early '90s, Chervona Ruta was practically the only organized mass event where modern Ukrainian music could appear and declare itself as the Modern Ukrainian Music. In other words, musicians were striving for a listener who would voice preference for pop or rock and who would openly declare that they are Ukrainians and long for the Ukrainian; Chervona Ruta was the ground which gave musicians such a listener. Listeners, in their turn, wished for something well-known, youthful, and crazy in music, and also for clashes with the militia, for the extreme and romantic. And the festival was the place where listeners received

the desired – the militia would take away from the stadium girls in yellow blouses and sky-blue skirts; and at the first Chervona Ruta in Chernivtsi, electricity went out just at the very concert, and Kost Pavlyak brought his performance to an end *a capella*, without a microphone, in complete darkness. The festival, which once served for many as a measure of quality and authenticity and coalesced around itself the rebellious youth, which in its majority was destined to be opinion-leaders of the society, is now neither important nor prestigious.

All this is because the organizers and the involved have missed the point when the rushing wave of emotions caused by the independence and new prospects abated and it became necessary to live and breathe more calmly. Musicians started feeling the need for promotion, royalties, high-quality equipment and meeting the gig rider, logistics, and marketing; listeners began to strive for qualitative sound and show, clean toilets, world-class celebrities. The present day Chervona Ruta cannot provide neither one nor the other longed for both sides.

The second most discussed music festival and, perhaps, the leading one taking into consideration the level of organization and the amount of funds invested during the period of its creation and development, is Tavria Games. Not really associated with any ideology (political and national identity, declaring certain way of thinking and lifestyle, etc.) and more entertaining, established in 1993, this festival aimed at reproducing the average scheme of a successful massive open air – a place of celebrities and entertainments in the challenging Ukrainian reality. A festival steamer sailing down the Dnieper River and stuffed mostly with Ukrainian celebrities, a beauty contest, beer festival and participation of the world famous performers were remotely advancing the festival in Kakhovka towards coveted scheme. Year after year, Tavria Games were getting closer to the pattern of 1993, while the international level of analogous events was improving much more dynamically. Over seventeen years, 237 performers from 17 countries have participated in Tavria Games, but it turned out to have no positive effect. In 2012, Tavria Games are finally not going to take place – I say “finally” because it was already getting sad to contemplate the bitter non-effective endeavours to change the format and venue. The festival lost its topicality and attractiveness during the first decade of its existence – it was neither affordable nor of high quality. Hungarian Sziget, for example, which started in parallel with Tavria Games, is officially the best festival in Europe. Conclusions about the effectiveness of development schemes and project management are obvious.

Other more or less large-scale music festivals with more or less continued period of existence also demonstrate the sad trend – they are not getting better; instead of developing, traditionally once or twice a year they perform a dance (or rather a musical composition) on the bones of what once became popular in the situation where no choice was left.

Regarding the cinema here, a better trend is demonstrated, however paradoxical it may seem – there is still a lot of Ukrainian music which is making steps towards quality and originality, whereas cinematographic art at the time of Independence was not so promising. The Kyiv International Film Festival Molodist specializes in film debuts and student films. The festival was established in 1970 and since then is held annually every last Sunday of October in Kyiv. A number of currently recognized European directors have debuted at Molodist; among them there are Fred Kelemen, Tom Tykwer, Daniel Boyle, Alexey Balabanov, Jacques Audiard, Francois Ozon, Stephen Daldry, Sergey Masloboyshchikov, and many others. Among the participants of Molodist in the '90s, there are lots of prize-winners of the most prestigious film awards in the world; nevertheless, even nowadays, the festival demonstrates approximately 240 films per year from over 40 countries. Molodist is one of the biggest festivals in Ukraine; besides, everything there really happens in an “adult way”- celebrities, first nights, film market, red carpets.

In my opinion, the key to its survival, and even success, lies in three main principles. First of all, it has not emerged out of a sudden with the appearance of Ukraine on the world political map. Twenty years of existence before Ukraine gained independence provided that background against which everything happens meaningfully and not emotionally or spontaneously. Secondly, the absence of competition in comparison to present music festivals – cinema festivals in Ukraine can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and music ones are growing like mushrooms, scattering the audience as well as sponsorship and organizational resource. The third reason for Molodist being successful compared to other Ukrainian festivals is, however weird it may sound, the very preservation of the ritual and format. The situation with financing and support of the festival is becoming less stable over the years, yet organizers are doing their best to be up-to-the-mark – the more or less stable processing of information service and the service responsible for public relations, a regularly updated site, translators working at events and on the translation of films, the presence of overseas film stars and, of course, red carpets, evening dresses, the ceremony.

I purportedly do not touch the issue of the quality of movies and the content of other events – it is another level of comprehension and understanding. But even on the initial, “outer” level of a large-scale event like this, the expectations of the audience, potential partners or sponsors and participants should be satisfied. Molodist succeeds in demonstrating its ability to be up-to-the-mark and gives at least what is expected and, probably, something more. In the same way, Docudays.UA. International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, which is rather young compared to Molodist, and the recently launched Odessa International Film Festival are conquering their potential partners. You should not think I am relegating the very parameter of quality to the background – not at all; for sure, the quality of suggested films and the contents of accompanying actions (seminars, discussions, presentations, round tables), as well as the level of experts, are important. But just in order to enjoy it, all certain conditions are required. Vidkryta Nich, Irpin Film Festival, or the Lviv Festival “KinoLev” lose the opportunity to develop and grow just because the audience and partners literally often do not know at a simple and mundane level what to expect from them.

Year after year, the importance of keeping up to the standard and maintaining the very fact of existence is illustrated by the history of the International Theater Festival “Kyiv Travnevyi,” which grew on its day from the idea of partner cities festival. Theatrical stars and troupes from many countries visited Kyiv annually in spring, though sometimes there was a lack of funding, and there were also cases when there was no funding at all. However, the very fact that something was taking place and had to take place prompted organizers to continue acting until the festival was called off by decree of the then mayor of Kyiv on the eve of the forthcoming presidential elections – allegedly, Kyiv might have been dangerous for foreign visitors under the conditions of the anticipated opposition between “the blue” and “the orange.” One of the most important theatrical festivals of the country which set the level of quality failed to take place once and, as far as I know, has not taken place ever since.

The efforts to gather and build up something once again, to begin work from the ground up, significantly exceed those needed for simply maintaining activity, contacts, agreements, and keeping up-to-the-mark.

The analysis shows that comparatively recently established festivals find it easier to exist and adapt. It seems that their organizers are more prone to strategic planning, good logistics, marketing, sensible fund rising, adequate PR, and sober

assessment of their abilities. I have a feeling that this problem is not so age-related, but rather generation-related – people who became self-dependent after 2000 already do not think that somebody owes them something – this scheme is still widespread among us nowadays. The state and sponsors owe organizers, participants owe partners, and visitors owe sponsors, all the rest, including other visitors, owe visitors, and so on. Ironically, more down-to-earth, businesslike, and less inspired and ideological approach to the matter yields very good fruit.

One of the biggest festivals of blacksmith art in Eastern Europe, the Blacksmith Festival in Ivano-Frankivsk, has existed from 2001 and started as a local non-commercial amateur event of professional blacksmiths, particularly the members of the Union of Artist Blacksmiths of Ukraine. However, it is obvious that experts in blacksmithing clearly realized what exactly was interesting for specialists in blacksmithing, and even for those who treated blacksmithing as a hobby. In a few years, the festival became international, large-scale, and one of the key incentives of event tourism in Ivano-Frankivsk. And it is despite the fact that blacksmithing is not music, cinema, or theatre, so there are potentially less people involved. Nowadays, the festival is visited by craftsmen from over 35 countries, and potential European tourists interested in blacksmithing know well about the date it is held. Approximately the same story of success happened with the festival of historical reconstruction The Land of Heroes (*Zemlya Heroiv*), which has been taking place since 2005 in Kamyanets-Podilsky. The event is spectacular: the old city turns into a real carnival; tourists have an opportunity to get acquainted with military camps, drills, and life in the army of the 17th century, performances at kobza-players workshops, historical dances, street theatres and spectacles. Historical reconstruction is a quite expensive and time-consuming hobby, as far as it requires the preparation of armour and costumes based on special and quite profound historic knowledge. Participants gather not just simply to brandish swords, but also to study the 17th century military reality and manoeuvres. However, there are always lots of participants and viewers at the festival. The Land of Heroes is not a media event, nevertheless, the information about the festival is spread timely and accessibly among the interested groups – centres and clubs of historical reconstruction in different countries, as well as during other similar events. The festival of historical reconstruction The Battle of Nations (*Bytva Natsij*) has existed for only a few years but repeats the successful scheme of Terra Heroica – structured professional events interchanging with

generators of tourist attraction – concerts, performances, marches, and meeting the needs of participants as well as viewers. Both festivals play an important role in the development of event tourism in the region – participation in the festival or access to all the events cost money, of course, but in any case, this sum does not exceed 20 euros. On the other hand, Kamyanyets or Khotyn, where medieval armies are situated, turn into spectaculars attractive even for those who do not take part in the festival. It is an excellent opportunity for tourists to arrange themselves a non-trivial and practically free of charge weekend.

As it has already been mentioned, there are a lot of festivals in Ukraine, if not too many. Basically, every serious cinema house contributes to the initiative of “whatever cinema festival” – Italian, Spanish, Israeli, or French. It is often done according to the principle “have your cake and eat it too” – at the same time an opportunity to show high-quality art house movies, though not blockbusters, and to sell tickets for what nobody would go to watch on big screens otherwise. There are enough music festivals to go to during the entire year non-stop under the conditions of sufficient mobility – the problem is that besides a few known and purportedly organized ones (e.g., Jazz Koktebel, Kazantip and Z-Gamez in Crimea, Stare Misto in Lviv, Best City which appeared in Dnipropetrovsk in 2012 and demonstrating at the onset the level of preparation and organization unprecedented for Ukraine), which will be discussed later, the same stars and the same guests come there, and they go through the same problems and experiences again and again – therefore, it is not surprising that with the lapse of time more and more people are leaving the vicious circle.

Festivals of literature, poetry, and video poetry often exist in some isolation from the sphere to which they practically belong – the sphere of book publishing and distribution, since folklore already lost its topicality tens of hundreds years ago. It turns out that “the dogs bark, but the caravan goes on” – guests come, writers deliver speeches, publishers debate, but the development of literature and its popularity among people remains hampered by simple things: expensive, bad quality books, miserable and infrequent translations, inability to earn a living by writing, and people being reluctant to read since nobody has explained them in plain words why it is good to read.

Theatrical and dance festivals are experiencing difficult times due to the unpopularity of theatre and dance as such in Ukraine; however, over the recent years, due to the endeavours of a few local enthusiasts and foreign cultural centres,

the situation concerning modern drama has enlivened, which makes possible the existence of the festivals Drabyna, Drama.ua, and The Week of Topical Play, though they still cannot be considered massive or significant.

Ethnic festivals (among which the most famous are Artpole and Kraina Mriy) are aimed at everything and nothing at the same time – still attracting enough people, they, however, lose their focus and the very purpose, for the further it goes, the less clear is who should go there and for what – for music, ethnic Ukrainian art doll, dance master class, land art, or maybe authentic beverages? Organized versatile leisure time is good and prospective only when it is really well organized, whereas in our case it is rather the same mess successfully justified by the format, which hangs on luck – one year is a success, another year – a complete failure.

The rest of festivals, not so massive, seem to be existing not “for the sake of” but “against” – it is difficult to expect quality when the main purpose is to overcome all the circumstances and eventually take place, while all the rest will become clear with time.

On the whole, the reasons for the failure of Ukrainian festivals are difficult to single out, and so are the criteria of success – but in each separate case much depends on very specific details. Ill-success consists in the absence of sufficient financing, inaptitude of a team to elaborate a strategy and stick to it, deficient planning of actions and activity, unwillingness to meet the needs of the audience, participants, partners, and potential sponsors. This is appended with the reluctance of the viewers to contribute to the improvement of their favourite event, people who cannot make out why they should pay for entertainment in the format of festival, and, finally, the misinterpretation of the social role of festivals and their attractiveness as objects for investments of the state and Ukrainian business structures (I guess I will not be mistaken if I say that the greatest amount of money meant for Ukrainian festivals of different types arrives from foreign funds, cultural centres, and commercial structures). All in all, in a philosophical conversation all this could be condensed to one phrase – level of consciousness. When I have read that the participants of the festival Burning Man in the USA during 8 days were recollecting and carrying with themselves all water which they consumed because it was forbidden to pour out water in the desert, I caught myself thinking that if I had paid \$300 of festival entrance fee, I would have expected that somebody would take care of my consumed water and I would not have worried at all about desert issues. We have still somehow not matured to a broad understanding that

nobody will lift a finger for us except ourselves. The priority for organizers is often to lead an output out to “zero” (rarely to a profit), remain in good relations with partners, media publicity, and only then – the quality of the programme, interests of participants (participant’s agreement is important), and actual impressions of viewers. The participants’ priority lies in a possibility of promoting themselves and establishing useful contacts, royalties, and meeting of their rider, and only then – the social importance of the event as such, positive emotions of viewers, and contribution to the development of what we call “Ukrainian culture.” Viewers are getting more and more interested in the quality-price ratio in a somehow distorted form. In our conscience crippled by the continued absence of money (there are different individual situations, but the existence of the nationwide poverty period in the ‘90s is difficult to deny), according to numerous reviews in the mass and social media, an ideal festival of anything consists in conveniently planned space with all the amenities and without limitations, with affordable food and beverages, fine content, celebrities and organized leisure activities, structured and accessible in all possible ways information, streamlined scheme of logistics, and, what is more, free of charge. Obviously, for sponsors (and, as it turns out, for relevant government structures), the best festival is the one which requires nothing from them. Our traditions of sponsorship and patronage have not been formed yet; besides, the function of festivals remains underestimated: their attractiveness as of PR-ground and a factor of forming the image of the institution and prospects of their usage for promotional purposes.

It is not hard to form the criteria of festival successfulness – more difficult is the task to keep to them. The start has to be not the focus on the outcome (such an approach automatically programs the gives birth to the gap between the desired and that which has actually worked out), but on the evaluation of available resources and the prospects for their utilization. That is what was done, for example, by the organizers of Kazantip and Jazz Koktebel, who made use of of the attractiveness of a seaside location and the tourist season, by the organizers of Terra Heroica and Bytva Natsiy, who have availed of an authentic townscape which organically complemented the attractiveness of the event, or the organizers of the poetry festival Meridian Czernowitz, who took advantage of the equivocal and prominent place of Chernivtsi on the map of world literature as a crossroads of cultures.

Another important starting point is to realize what are the needs and prospects. The absence of an adequate open-air festival of European standards, the performers of which are not afraid of going to and where visitors would feel well and comfortable at the mundane level, gave a few bonuses during the organization of The Best City and ethnic festival Unizh (which did not exist for long though) which in its time stirred a wave of thanks and praise just having installed on the territory a sufficient number of clean toilets and showers. At this point, we should consider in detail the needs and expectations of those who can stake a festival or support it by the involvement into its organization – there is nothing wrong in trying to satisfy these needs, it is not a limitation of freedom of creativity, but a way to the simplest provision of financial support to this freedom. Understanding social background and global trends contributes to the establishment of international cooperation and the creation of a positive image of Ukraine abroad (here Docudays.UA. International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival is outstanding), and understanding the needs of invited participants and experts may cover certain organizational chaos (at literature festival within the framework of Lviv Forum of Publishers, which year by year is becoming more oversaturated and less structured, you still do not take leave of your senses only because this is a venue where writers on the go get acquainted with translators or representatives of foreign publishers, year upon year literary critics discover for themselves new ledges of various literary trends, authors make up joint international projects, musicians find authors of lyrics, illustrators bring ideas of books into the world, poets and romantics sometimes arrange their love life – the chaos plays into their hands).

The availability of a professional team and functional distribution of responsibilities are still atypical even to large-scale international festivals. As an example, there is the Odessa International Film Festival, different services and departments of which are functioning during the whole year; as an anti-example, let us take Book Arsenal, the event-phenomenon which almost in all aspects – as a book fair and as a literary and art festival – takes place due to the efforts of one person, now famed in legends, the champion Olga Zhuk. The comment of one of my female friends who was directly involved in organization of such a large-scale event as *Arsenale 2012* is illustrational, “Everything worked out so well, I cannot make out by myself how it happened so!” In other words, planning the evolvement of preparation and gradual result, and orderly implementation of the planned still do not constitute our principle, and this may be very harmful, especially to the cooperation with

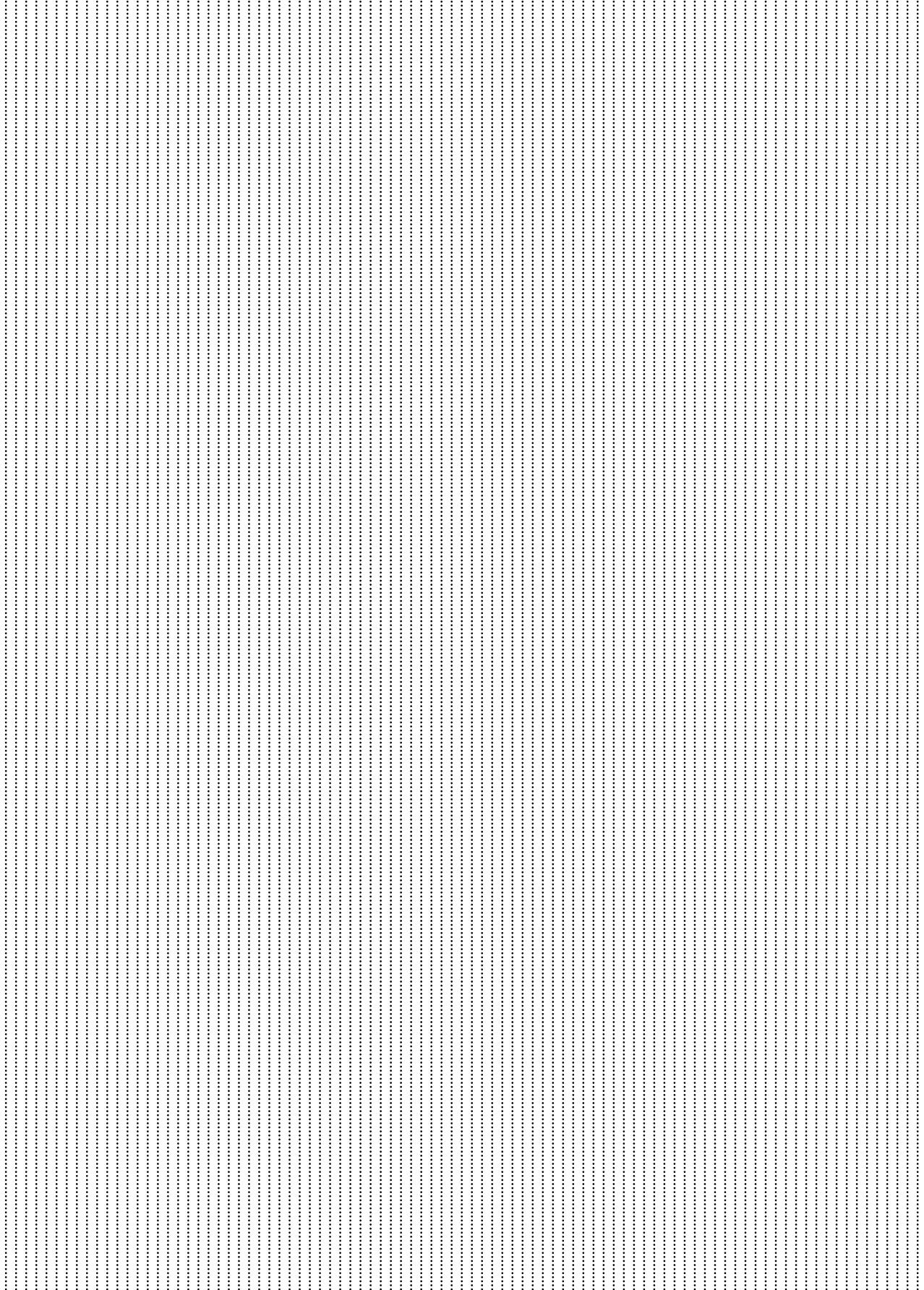
institutions of international scope. Perhaps, this situation can benefit from educational grants provided for managers in the cultural sphere who have recently began to appear in Ukraine (i.e., a manager of culture is rather to be considered as a separate business activity, not a hobby), schools and seminars on festival management. This year, for instance, a hard core of Literature Festival within the framework of Lviv Forum of Publishers will lie in the project *Context* – educational and facilitating set of events aimed at creation of a literary network and intended for organizers and champions in the field of literature. The preparation of several other analogous educational and consolidation projects has been announced.

The recognition of the fact that PR and marketing are not needless in the sphere of high literary activity will help to improve the situation with festivals. There is nothing wrong in studying and analysing the needs of the audience, informing and involving it in a way which is affordable and acceptable, attracting attention, generating qualitative and interesting things for the festival not to be forgotten in a year. It is worth spending money on if you have them, or at least spending the efforts of a team.

Perhaps, qualitative partnership and cooperation will further reduce the number of festivals, but now under the conditions of festival boom it is not so scary. By means of consolidating organization resource, sensible targeting of the audience, sponsors, potential participants, and partners, it is possible to approximate the cherished scheme which sooner or later begins to work for itself, creating a trendy and well-organized event, the wheels of life of which are spun by integral interest from all sides.

After all, the collective sense of responsibility for the process and outcome towards which we are moving will transform chaos into a constructive accumulation of experience. Here comes to mind the above mentioned recollection of consumed water, complaints of organizers, or corresponding experts in every second interview that the government is unwilling to support and sponsors who fail to provide expenses. If everybody strains every sinew starting with the suppliers of equipment (e.g. high quality sound at festivals in Ukraine still has not become a norm, it is rather an optional advantage) and ending with the visitors which will not take a leak wherever they want, the result will be just around the corner. Quantity will turn into quality.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



UKRAINIAN NGO SECTOR – AN ATTEMPT
AT COMPREHENSIVE DIAGNOSIS





TETIANA IATSKIV*

What is your diagnosis of the current condition of NGOs in Ukraine?

It can be said that the first stage after the soviet period, when no one considered even the right for assembly as an opportunity to choose cooperation which was not supervised by the state, has been successfully overcome by the civil sector. This stage implies the incipience and formation of civil society institutions, also known as non-governmental civil organizations.

As a result, there is a big number of such organizations: civil organizations, charitable foundations, population self-organization entities,¹ and so on. Today, they are facing new challenges and tasks. These tasks are development and finding themselves in a new reality.

The transfer from “external” activity to “internal” orientation has already started. It so happened that, due to the fact that the state does not cope with the crucial portion of its liabilities (social ones, human rights protection, and democratic development), non-governmental organizations are oriented towards helping the state, practically somewhat compensating for what it does not accomplish.

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1 In 2001, a Law of Ukraine was adopted *On Bodies of Self-organization of Population (Orhany samoorganizatsiyi naseleennia)*, according to which this idea should be understood as the representative bodies created by the citizens, being one of the forms of the local communities' members participation in the decision-making at the local level (<http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2625-14>).

Therefore, there is a significant amount of organizations that provide social services, legal aid, solve other problems of target groups. Many are dependent on donors, including foreign ones, since much money is necessary to fulfill these tasks. Meanwhile, the state starts thinking that it is how it should be – and starts to neglect its tasks. Those it should take care of do not demand that the state fulfill the liabilities, while non-governmental organizations, without governmental funds, do their best to accomplish the tasks for which taxpayers grant money to the state. In this way, social liabilities are overlooked, while, for example, other kind of the state's spending (e.g. maintaining the state apparatus, tenders serving as a source of financing the enterprises run by oligarchs close to the ruling elite) is ensured.

So the second stage which is up-to-date for the Ukrainian civil sector is the stage of realizing the aim of its creation and development, as well as reconsidering the role of the sector itself and the methods of work. The reason is that providing services on one's own or donors' costs is limited. Instead, there is the state, the budget, and taxes, and liabilities the accomplishment of which should be demanded and advocated.

What do you think are the priority goals for the Ukrainian third sector at the moment?

The Ukrainian civil sector is characterized by a diversity of types and directions of its activity. Speaking about what is preferred about the activity of non-governmental organizations is certainly not rare.

Why? Freedom of assembly presumes the opportunity to look for sympathizers and allies for any activity tolerated by the law. Initiators or founders of a non-governmental organization, while creating it, agree on what legal interest they want to implement into life and what are the goals and tasks of their consolidation. Some questions are pressing for youth, others are up-to-date for older generation, different problems are crucial for handicapped people, and particular occupations representatives are interested in something else too. It is not worth arguing about what is more important for youth concerning leisure time organization in comparison with the elderly people's need to meet, communicate, and spend evenings together. It is also relevant.

How big is the untapped civic potential in Ukrainian society? What are the ways of unlocking it?

Freedom of assembly should be legislatively provided by the state, and conditions should be created for people's expressing needs and looking for ways of their satisfaction. It is necessary that the state creates friendly environment for the foundation and activity of various non-governmental civil organizations.

While trying to assess the potential of NGOs one can refer to the statistics, for example, the quantity and types of civil non-governmental organizations, the numbers of members of such organizations, the number of events held, and many others. Such calculations are very often prepared by the state and different authorities. However, if to consider such organizations from the inside, the most effective is the organization the founders and members of which achieve the goal of its creation (in the process of its activity the goal can change), the tasks of their consolidation. This constitutes the strength and potential of freedom of assembly. And this demands the state create conditions for foundation, activity, and development of various non-governmental civil organizations.

To what extent is it possible to transfer and implement the experience of foreign NGOs in Ukraine? Is there anything unique about the Ukrainian third sector? If yes, what is it?

Ukraine has considerable problems in legislation, its practical implementation, and other conditions that should be created by the state for non-governmental civil organizations. Revealingly, the European Court of Human Rights has already decided on the case *Koretsky against Ukraine*² and recognized that our state violates the European convention on human rights and fundamental freedoms concerning providing freedom of assembly.

Ukrainian legislation is outdated. If at first it was sufficient for organizations to be created in the post-Soviet period, nowadays there are new demands: freedom of assembly realization should be simple, cheap, and convenient. This

2 In 2008, the European Court of Human Rights held a judgment on the case *Koretsky and others v. Ukraine*, finding Ukraine guilty of the negative decision of the Kyiv City Department of Justice regarding the registration of the "Civic Committee for the preservation of the wild (indigenous) nature of birch forests."

is why, for example, administrative obstacles and the complicated procedure of state registration should be eliminated. Many European countries have already done that, having developed different variants, practices, and examples. There is even a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe with minimum standards which should be provided for implementing freedom of assembly. According to these criteria, Ukraine does not meet even minimum standards.

Instead, very often we try to do everything our own way, totally rejecting the attainments claiming them to be “foreign,” “alien,” refusing to learn new practices and make use of already accumulated experience. As a result, we either invent a know-how which is not adopted or hinder development through making mistakes. But in any case, sooner or later, we find an acceptable solution which does not differ from already elaborated ones. However, it takes time, and, maybe, it is not bad due to gradual transition to which the civil sector and state apparatus can be adapted. In fact, legislation can be changed, copied from some European example, but consciousness and understanding will not change. And this is what the state apparatus, legislators, and government lack – understanding what freedom of assembly and freedom itself are and that sooner or later organizations pass on from providing social services to addressing the demands of their members in the state, advocating them, and putting forward demands concerning fulfilling state’s liabilities.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



MARTYNA MICHALIK *

What is your diagnosis of the current condition of NGOs in Ukraine?

The situation of NGOs in Ukraine should certainly not be judged by their number. It is not easy to speak about the general condition of all such organizations because it can differ and may be influenced by a number of factors, e.g. their location, time of establishment, and the area in which they operate. Based on what I have seen, I can draw some conclusions, but of course, they will always involve some amount of generalization and reveal a number of exceptions.

In each region, there are “old” organizations; they are relatively strong and can be roughly divided into two groups: those that have already lost their momentum, and those that have chosen to go professional and take all the consequences of this choice (positive and negative). Unfortunately, although not that common, there are also negative outcomes of becoming professional: organizations narrow down their initiatives to their own loyal group of clients and, in a sense, “shut themselves away” in the third sector. The organizations established after the Orange Revolution have now closed their forming phase and operate in their target areas (after the exploration phase observed in the years 2005–2007). A noteworthy phenomenon is new and young organizations (or not even fully-fledged organizations but initiatives) operating in southern and eastern Ukraine. They are often established out of the desire to join forces and solve some real problem existing within a group or community; I perceive this phenomenon

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as positive. Besides, I am witnessing a growing number of Watchdog organizations; they are usually very effective, with good monitoring formulas, and with a research methodology in place that promises objective results. In my opinion, however, there is a discernible lack of direct correlation between the performance of Watchdog organizations and think tanks and measurable advocacy results at the local and central level. Without that last step, the existing research and monitoring prove largely useless.

Speaking about networking, Ukrainian organizations are increasingly connected in networks or alliances, and this is a positive and desirable phenomenon. Unfortunately, efficient alliances or networks are rare. But bear in mind that this is true also about similar organizations in Western and Central Europe.

The existing rules and regulations leave much to be desired; yet, in my opinion, they are not a prerequisite for the effective functioning of the Ukrainian third sector.

You can hazard a guess that over the past few years there has been a visible increase in the number of NGO sponsors in Ukraine. On the one hand, donors are more and more often financing organizations directly. On the other, there are European instruments that Ukrainian organizations can benefit from as partners of their EU vis-à-vis. And there are Ukrainian sponsors (businesses or entities directly or indirectly associated with political parties) who are more willing to finance social or cultural projects. They are particularly active in the east and in the south of the country. I would like to underline that I am by no means against responding to existing social and cultural needs of a local community. However, the financing of such general projects only is a minor contribution to the development of civil society in Ukraine at the local level.

What do you think are the priority goals for the Ukrainian third sector at the moment?

1. They need to seek ways to legitimize their activity in local communities. Ukrainian NGOs should do their best to be seen by local communities as helpful and important social actors, working hard for the desired transformation.
2. There is also an urgent need for efficient networking coupled with a well thought-out advocacy.

3. Speaking about the inside of the organization, it is building long-term operation strategies combined with external communication and financial policies.

How big is the untapped civic potential in Ukrainian society? What are the ways of unlocking it?

It is very difficult to assess. Both early and recent history of Ukraine reveals that Ukrainian society has enormous civic potential. Two things are sure. First, the post-Orange Revolution changes have been quite profound. Today, no return to the pre-revolution Ukraine is possible. Second, the changes that occurred affect the entire country, not only the west or the centre; moreover, there is a new generation awaiting their moment to come to the fore. Those who were 15–16 years old in 2004 are now 23–24 and are entering the labour market. This generation is more mobile and well-connected.

When it comes to the ways of unlocking their potential, I am far from offering ready solutions. There are a few ideas, but it is impossible to assess whether some action will guarantee the expected change. I think the Ukrainian NGOs should focus on getting people together in local communities around shared and achievable ideas of change. The possibility of influencing the surrounding reality would empower them to change the situation to their advantage. It is absolutely mandatory to complete the local government reform. Long-term action should be given priority; it will yield results in 5–10 years from now: greater mobility of young people, their openness to take initiatives for their neighbourhood, or a sense of responsibility for their immediate surroundings.

To what extent is it possible to transfer and implement the experience of foreign NGOs in Ukraine? Is there anything unique about the Ukrainian third sector? If yes, what is it?

Wherever you go, the NGO sector is somewhat different. We should ask what and in which areas such an experience might be transferred. I would venture an opinion that it is relatively easy to transfer experience from the social and cultural sphere, as well as from broadly understood ecology. It is and will be more demanding to transfer the experience from the area of the mass-media; Ukraine is different in this regard, which is justified historically, economically,

legally; there is also a different sort of competition and type of the recipient. It is even more challenging to transfer the experience of the general political transformation, although such a transfer, if successful, would, no doubt, expedite the expected changes. The transfer of such an experience must be concurrent with the transfer of legal solutions. As regards advocacy policies, they seem almost impossible to be copied from abroad. Similarly, the development of private or corporate fund-raising.

Translated by Konrad Szulga



VIKTOR ANDRUSIV*

What is your diagnosis of the current condition of NGOs in Ukraine?

Using medical terms, the patient is rather dead than alive. Sociological data confirm this explicitly – according to them, 2% of the citizens are involved in social activity. Of some tens of thousands organizations, those having more than ten active members can be counted on the fingers.

At the same time, it has to be noted that a positive trend has been observed for two years now. This is due to the increasing necessity to protect their own rights from arbitrariness and pressure of authorities. I would say that we are now going through the stage of the public interest formation, which in future will require organizations for its protection.

What do you think are the priority goals for the Ukrainian third sector at the moment?

It may sound strange, but the main task for the third sector is to become the Ukrainian one. Today, the civil organizations existing in Ukraine are abstracted from the society and are independent of it, and therefore they treat it as a guinea-pig. For instance, we can observe that civil organizations are successful in their campaign against smoking tobacco or AIDS, while there are enormous violations

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in the consumer rights area (quality of products and services). This means that the third sector activity is focused rather on priorities provided from outside than required by the society.

How big is the untapped civic potential in Ukrainian society? What are the ways of unlocking it?

I would say this potential has not been employed at all. The Orange Revolution was the only case when politicians and organizations used civic activity potential, though after the revolution neither authorities, nor the third sector have employed it. It is a well-known fact that most civil organizations begin their activity not with attraction of the citizens' funds for their work but with submitting application for a grant.

There are three steps which, in my opinion, can contribute to real civil society rise. In the first place, the public interest must be formed and strengthened. Many Ukrainians can have a good understanding of the problems of the relationships between Ukraine and EU, but few of them know how the problem of drinking water quality can be solved. In the second place, civil organizations have to become financially dependent on the citizens, not on donors or state institutions. It is true that in the Ukrainian situation it is difficult to receive financial assistance from a citizen, but this means that a real organization has to gain his or her confidence by real actions. The organizational development of Ukrainian NGOs is in the third place. Networks of supporters, members, and activists have to be developed, since only a large and complex organization can maintain independence and remain influential.

To what extent is it possible to transfer and implement the experience of foreign NGOs in Ukraine? Is there anything unique about the Ukrainian third sector? If yes, what is it?

In my opinion, experience cannot be transferred. The knowledge about foreign experience has to be transferred. Besides, such knowledge has to be transferred through horizontal contacts between similar civil organizations. Organizations-phantoms, whose activity was absolutely beyond the target group understanding, appeared as a result of such attempts just to put European experience into

practice. As it is true with any country, the Ukrainian social and cultural environment is unique. Here we encounter fear of the authorities, have low level of political culture, expect the state to take responsibility, fail to see trust among the citizens etc. With these factors remaining unchanged, no experience can be put into practice.

Translated by Serhiy Snihur



NATALIA GMURKOWSKA*

What is your diagnosis of the current condition of NGOs in Ukraine?

In recent years, Ukraine has been closely following the democratic path inspired by the example of the developed democratic states where the civil society and the state are equal partners in the implementation of social, economic, humanitarian, and political objectives. Therefore, the development and strengthening of civil society is the guarantee of democratic progress in Ukraine. This development was ranked among the key priorities of the state's internal strategy and incorporated into the Ukrainian Law on Internal and External Policy from 1 July 2010. The state's agenda for the development of institutions and civil society organizations assumes the strengthening of joint actions with public authorities, civil supervision over the authorities, regular local development planning, and consultations with citizens.

According to studies held by world's leading international organizations, the development of civil society and NGOs in Ukraine after the regaining of independence has been on the constant upturn, although the last few years have seen some lack of dynamics. All in all, there is a degree of stability. Ukraine's position in global ratings is superior to those of other post-Soviet countries; still, it is much worse than the position and specific indicators of the Baltic states and the Visegrad Group.

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At the beginning of 2012, the State Statistics Service of Ukraine reported that, according to the State Register of Enterprises and Organizations of Ukraine, there were 71,767 registered civil society organizations (including international, national, and local organizations, as well as their centres, branches, and units). A year before the figure was 67,696.¹

What do you think are the priority goals for the Ukrainian third sector at the moment?

Due to its history, climatic and geographical situation, political divisions, and the events of the last few years, Ukraine is a very diverse country. Given Ukraine's sustained effort to get closer to the European Union and its membership in the Eastern Partnership, as well as the financial support of a number of global and European donors in recent years, the current priority objectives of the "third sector" include: support and development of local self-government and civil society, including the improvement of the standards of public life; professional and effective management of big-budget projects; cross-sectoral cooperation and public-private partnerships; local development; promotion of cooperative initiatives; eco-tourism and social sphere.

How big is the untapped civic potential in Ukrainian society? What are the ways of unlocking it?

According to the research by Research&Branding Group from August 2011, only 2% of Ukrainians were members of non-governmental organizations, and 82% did not participate in the activities of civil society institutions at all. As seen from the CIVICUS Index² of 2004, only 5% of the Ukrainian population admitted taking part in civic activities. In 2008, the O. Razumkov Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies conducted another study which showed that the number had increased to 11.6% compared with 72.6% of Ukrainians who still show no interest or activity in this area.³

1 O. J. Winnikow, A. O. Krasnosilska, M. W. Lacyba. *Wskaźniki rozwoju społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Ukrainie*. Ukraińskie Niezależne Centrum Badań Politycznych, 2012.

2 https://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Germany_Country_Report_English.pdf

3 http://www.uceps.org/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=367

The main factors awakening the untapped civic potential in Ukraine should be political stability, increased confidence in central and local authorities, real prospects for economic growth, and the achievement of a minimum and relatively evenly distributed standard of living. Unfortunately, it is not achievable at this moment. Every year, many European countries, including Poland, hold dozens of international conferences, seminars, and forums. Due to the diversity of topics and projects, many organizations can find something for themselves, something that might be aligned with their own development plans, visions, and needs. It is very important not to be deprived of such opportunities to exchange experience, find potential cooperation partners, and get involved in international cooperation aimed at the development and activation of the civil society as such, not only in Ukraine.

To what extent is it possible to transfer and implement the experience of foreign NGOs in Ukraine? Is there anything unique about the Ukrainian third sector? If yes, what is it?

Gradual but regular transfer of the European experience in building the core principles of cooperation between the public administration and civil society organizations is very important for Ukraine. As the largest country in the Eastern Partnership, it expected and still expects to benefit from the EU aid programmes aimed to promote regional development, enhance the effectiveness of the administration, strengthen the development of agriculture, and help investment in infrastructure and public safety. European countries have for long been taking advantage of the various mechanisms enabling the activity of non-governmental organizations in all possible fields, not only the social one. The states have delegated some of its tasks and transferred powers to the third sector, which promises greater benefits and more impressive results. Ukraine builds on the experience of all European countries and does its best to tailor it to its specific needs. This European input allows Ukrainian NGOs to follow a process-based and quick strategy of shaping their own model of activity, also drawing on the experience of non-EU countries.

A major challenge for Ukrainian NGOs is the lack of regular and adequate funding from the state, local self-governments, and donors. This is attributable to the economic and political situation. This, in turn, is reflected in an unstable

situation of many people, the inability to meet people's basic everyday needs, not understanding these needs, reluctance to take initiatives for the development of civil society, the lack of active participation in the local life, and disinclination to become involved in non-governmental organizations.

In the period of reforms, Poland relied upon the support of other countries. Without financial support, its transformation processes would not have advanced so rapidly. Ukrainian local self-governments and non-governmental organizations are seeking, both in Poland and elsewhere in Europe, to establish partnerships to ensure an effective and long-term cooperation based on trust and transparency.

Translated by Konrad Szulga



PAWEŁ PROKOP*

What is your diagnosis of the current condition of NGOs in Ukraine?

Non-governmental organizations in Ukraine are, in my opinion, in a better position than NGOs in other Eastern European countries. Many of them are just wonderful organizations gathering genuine community people, individuals with a passion and vision. They operate regardless of circumstances, and they have been pursuing and completing numerous valuable projects. They are the “salt of the earth” on the map of Ukrainian NGOs.

There are, unfortunately (and often), organizations established only to “consume” the donated money; they end up dependent on external assistance, cynical in demanding financial support and offering little in return. Pity, they are part of the overwhelming and antisocial mechanism of corruption. Rather than pursuing their mission and using the opportunity to raise funds, they become hinged on influential people (politicians, oligarchs, or high officials of dubious professional and moral competence). They use their status as public trust institutions to attain private commercial goals.

What do you think are the priority goals for the Ukrainian third sector at the moment?

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The priority should be a strong support for idea-driven organizations which are active regardless of the economic situation and changing circumstances and are honest, committed and boast unquestionable achievements. I think about organizations that have remained faithful to their statutory goals. It is important to share knowledge and offer them technical support, inform about grant opportunities, attract to international partnership networks, invite to study visits and traineeships. It is no less crucial to impart managerial knowledge and infect them with the way of thinking that there is no contradiction between working towards noble goals and taking care of effective management (i.e. taking advantage of modern, non-standard managerial and promotional ideas). I think that the area of activity is of secondary character – culture, education, charity. Of crucial importance are credibility, legacy, and transparent intentions.

How big is the untapped civic potential in Ukrainian society? What are the ways of unlocking it?

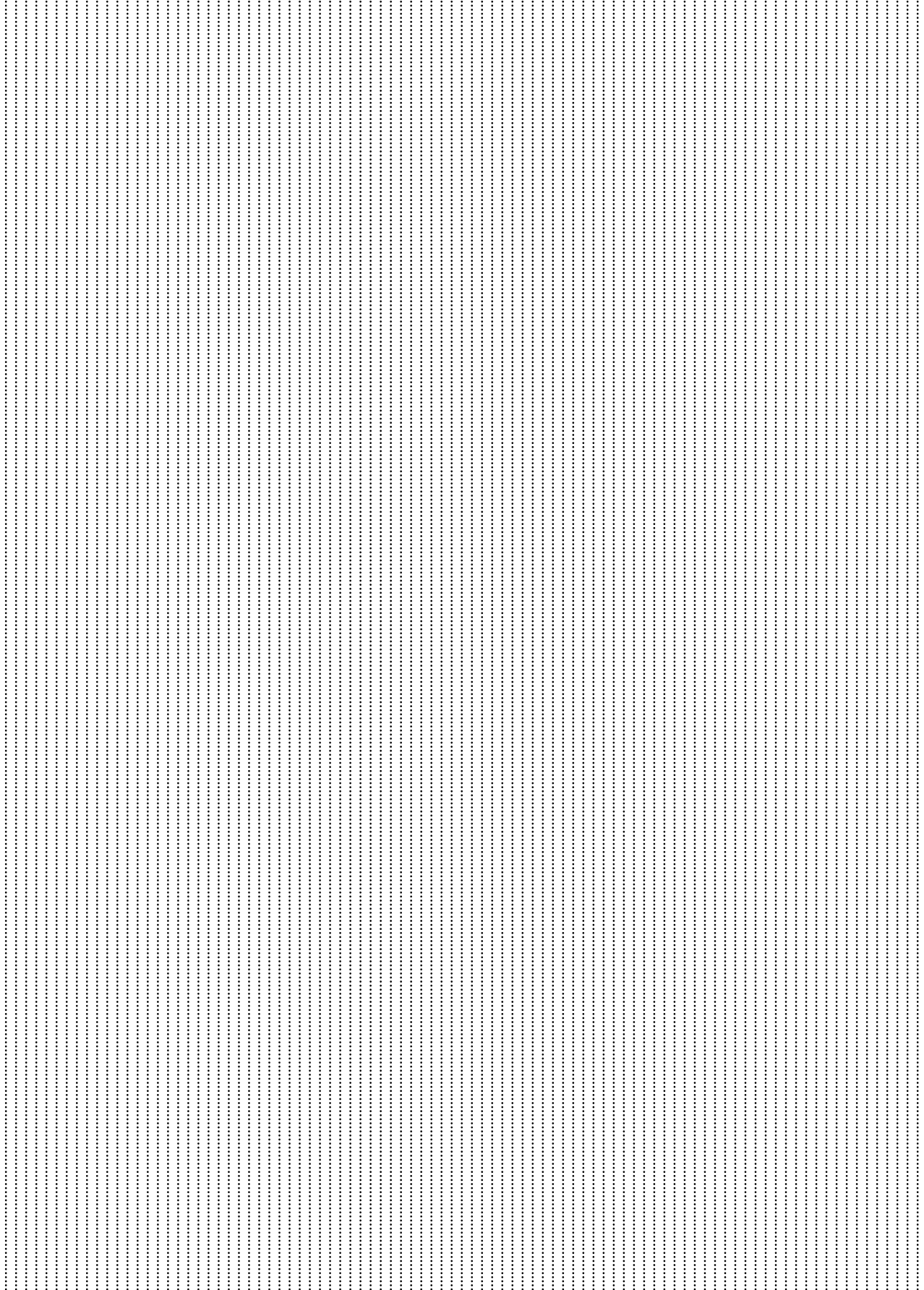
Oh, it is huge. Previously, the outburst of civic attitudes and initiatives was incidental. For example, the great awakening and involvement in the Orange Revolution. This is also true about less spectacular but significant (often local) activities. However, these valuable initiatives and projects were discontinued and, when fuelled no more, they died out. Their leaders have either given up their activity or their passion and ideas were cynically abused. But this is only one (negative) side of the coin. The other one is that, although dormant, there is a great potential. All those who have gone in for any sort of civic action uncompromisingly and with great confidence will always be easily galvanized into positive activities. Ukrainians display great creativity and imagination. But the prerequisite for success is for them to realize the need to be consistent and far-sighted. And it must be stressed on a permanent basis that you must not be discouraged by teething troubles. Unlocking civic potential is a discipline for long-distance runners. We also need to demonstrate the importance of transparency and processes and procedures that facilitate it. It is important to strengthen the idea that partners are not only there to provide financial and logistical support, but that they can also share standards and fundamental values.

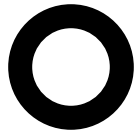
To what extent is it possible to transfer and implement the experience of foreign NGOs in Ukraine? Is there anything unique about the Ukrainian third sector? If yes, what is it?

Of course, the Ukrainian non-governmental organizations need to develop their own model of operation that makes allowances for the mentality, historical background, and local specificity. Fully aware that non-governmental organizations (despite the listed problems and limitations) are the best allies in the advancement of civil society, we are obliged to share the European experience.

Perhaps it may come as an oversimplification, but the people and institutions involved in the transfer of experience make two major mistakes. The first one is the uncritical acceptance of an excuse that the specific character of life and the capabilities of Ukrainian NGOs are so utterly different from European conditions that any transfer of knowledge about the management and ethical standards is next to impossible. Therefore, the first priority should be to pour money and ask nothing in return. European experts are often easily seduced by the traditional Ukrainian hospitality. They fall for the sham of remarkable activity and fresh ideas. The other extreme is the attitude of total distrust, since in no post-Soviet country is it possible to build a civil society; consequently, NGOs should be kept under tight control. My experience of more than ten years of work with non-governmental organizations in Ukraine (as well as with the administration, because the synergy of activities shared by the public sector and NGOs is crucial) shows that Poland's contribution has been immense and – at the same time – detached and full of respect. It is by no means advisable to let the Ukrainian partners believe that the key success factor is only money and not effective (though painful) reforms. We should emphasize and reiterate the importance of being consistent, of supporting grassroots initiatives, of adhering to high ethical standards and financial and personal transparency.

Translated by Konrad Szulga





NGO – ARTICLES



PIOTR KAŹMIERKIEWICZ*

THE CONDITION OF UKRAINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY – AN ATTEMPT AT DIAGNOSIS

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, 10 SEPTEMBER 2012

The history of the growth and stagnation of the Ukrainian third sector inevitably leads to a question of whether non-governmental organizations are capable of acting as important actors in the debate on the ultimate shape of the state and defend the rights and freedoms of citizens.

AN ATTEMPT TO ANALYZE THE POSITION OF THE UKRAINIAN THIRD SECTOR

A noticeable decline of democratic standards in Ukraine is a major challenge for Ukrainian civil society and a call for the encouragement of the defense of civil liberties. It is not easy to tell to what extent Ukrainian society is able to face this and similar challenges. On the one hand, non-governmental organizations have been enjoying a growing social trust, which is particularly noteworthy when considering a more skeptical attitude towards other opinion-making bodies. On the other hand, the civic sector has been largely fragmented and has been relying

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on shaky financial foundations. The situation has even deteriorated over the last two years when a more noticeable aversion has surfaced of central and local self-governments and business to non-governmental organizations. Whether the non-governmental sector meets the expectations of the growing number of Ukrainians will depend on its capacity to self-organize and improve reliability before the public.

This text is an attempt to diagnose the position of Ukrainian civil society; it will highlight its strengths and weaknesses, as well as point to the threats posed by the new political setting and resulting from the revised support strategies of international donors. The text relies upon available reports on the position of non-governmental organizations in Ukraine and on the analysis of more than forty interviews with the representatives of Ukrainian organizations made in November 2011 in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, and Odesa. An unabridged version of this text is available in the publication of the Institute of Public Affairs, *Making Ukrainian Civil Society Matter*, co-authored by Irina Bekeshkina, director of Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in Kyiv.

THE GROWING ROLE OF THE CIVIC SECTOR

The Ukrainian public opinion express hope for the non-governmental sector to make the change. In 2011, more than three quarters of survey respondents agreed with the statement that the activities of non-governmental organizations are absolutely necessary, which was almost twice as much as six years earlier, when less than half of surveyed Ukrainians (41%) said so. Such a high level of trust makes NGOs stand out among the institutions of public life. Both the authorities and the opposition parties enjoy much less support: in February 2012, the voters' confidence in President Yanukovich fell to 22% and in the opposition to 24%.¹

Also international observers regard civil society in Ukraine as one of the few areas unaffected by the decline of institutions and democratic standards. Freedom House's index shows a drop in Ukraine's rating in most democracy indices (all Freedom House ratings use a seven-point scale, where 7 is the lowest rating) – while in 2006 the total score was 4.21, the following years reveal a gradual

1 Data from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.

deterioration; this process has even accelerated since the presidential election in 2010 to reach the level of 4.61 in 2011. Especially the judiciary and democratic institutions at the central and local level are rated relatively low (all at 5.50). By contrast, the condition of civil society is reasonably good (the same score of 2.75 since 2006), which, considering the limited access to the independent mass-media (down from 3.50 to 3.75 in 2011), testifies to the growing importance of this sector for Ukrainian democracy.

The position of the Ukrainian third sector is also outstanding compared with other post-Soviet countries. Freedom House ranks Ukraine among the top scorers on the list, ahead of Moldova (with the score of 3.25), Armenia, Belarus, and Georgia (all rated 3.75). Ukraine is also much ahead of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Central Asian countries. Similar results are to be found in the non-governmental sector index published annually by USAID. Since 2000, Ukraine has been improving its third sector development indicators (4.4 in 2000, 3.8 in 2005, and 3.5 in 2010). It is worth noting that back in 2000, the Ukrainian civil society was rated lower than the ones in Georgia and Russia; yet, a decade later, it is far ahead of these two countries (the score for Georgia is now 4.2 and for Russia 4.3).

Although the estimation of the size of the sector is still difficult, available data suggests that there is a growth in the number of newly registered organizations. At the beginning of 2012, the state register of organizations and companies included 13,475 charities (a year-to-year increase by 515). There was also an increase in the public register started by the Ministry of Justice in March 2009: in early 2012, the register contained 3,526 national and international entities, 323 local organizations, and 1118 charities.

THE SECTOR'S LEGAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL FOUNDATIONS (1991–2004)

Some organizations started as early as in the Soviet period; formally, the development of the third sector in Ukraine is thought to begin in 1992, i.e. with the adoption by the Supreme Council of the *Law on Public Associations*. The preamble to the law reads that the right to establish and participate in associations "is an inalienable human right, set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of Ukraine." Article 3 defines public

organization as “a public association of citizens established with the purpose of satisfaction and protection of their shared and lawful social, economic, creative, age, national, cultural, sport, and other interests.”

The law also provided for a number of restrictions on the establishment or activities of organizations, which, if imposed, may be established only by the Constitution and laws of Ukraine (Article 6).² The list of restrictions contains, besides provisions adopted in the legislation of democratic states and addressing such issues as incitement to hatred on grounds of nationality or religion, attempts to violate territorial integrity or overthrow the constitutional order by illegal means, the wording that may be interpreted arbitrarily. One of the grounds for state intervention is “undermining of the state security in the form of activity to the advantage of foreign states.” The law also reduces the liberty of organizations violating “universally recognized human rights.”

The *Ukrainian Law on Public Associations* was referred to the European Court of Human Rights which, in its judgment in *Koretskyy and Others v. Ukraine*, April 3, 2008, recognized that the act does not meet international standards, as it imposes on NGOs disproportionate limitations regarding their aims, legal personality, activities, territorial extent, and conditions of membership. The Ukrainian government acceded to the Court’s arguments and amended the act as required; according to non-governmental organizations, this was “a significant step towards ensuring freedom of association.” However, after the political shift in March 2010, the amendment was withdrawn and adopted only after two years of consultation with the representatives of the third sector.³

The 1990s were crucial in shaping the third sector in Ukraine. New legal and political conditions and the mounting interest of international donors expedited the growth in the number of registered organizations; in 1996, the register (which also included trade unions) included 12,000 entities and only four years later the number exceeded 27,000. Paradoxically, one of the factors that helped budding organizations attract qualified personnel was the economic slowdown caused by the collapse of centrally-planned economy, which led to a temporary lack of demand for jobs in the business sector. According to Bekeshkina, in the early

2 The English text of the law is available at: <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/7132>

3 *Proekt Zakonu pro gromadski organizatsii*, available at: <http://gska2.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb_n/webproc4_1?id=&pf3511=33677>.

1990s, the wages of third sector experts exceeded those of university teachers several times.⁴

A major challenge that non-governmental organizations were confronted with in the following decade was the personnel drain attributable to the overall improvement of the economic climate. The new situation furnished an opportunity to consolidate the sector which was made to define its mission anew, particularly in the area of human rights protection and democratization. Another reason was the cooling of relations with the authorities which were heavily criticized, both at home and internationally, in the closing period of Kuchma's term as president. In 2004, civil society played a pivotal role in drawing international attention to the instances of violation of the electoral law, which resulted in repeating the second round of presidential elections. During the Orange Revolution, NGOs proved to be a real representation of the society which was given a chance to demonstrate its autonomy.

Such a mass awakening of civil society in 2004 probably would not have taken place without initiatives pre-dating the revolution and launched by research and monitoring organizations. The action called "Ukraine without Kuchma" demonstrated the third sector's capacity to work together and drew the attention of the international community to the urgent need for the defense of democratic standards in the country. An important performance test for non-governmental organizations in Ukraine was the 2002 general election campaign; with international support, careful monitoring was ensured along with the nationwide exit polls. The success was a limited scale of electoral irregularities and a considerable representation of the opposition in the parliament, which helped the sector entrench itself and prove its credibility before the society. This allowed many organizations to weather the difficult period of confrontation with the authorities shortly before the presidential elections in 2004.

THE CRISIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY (2005–2010)

Again, however, in the wake of success came another crisis. The victory of the Orange Revolution conveyed a false impression, both among Ukrainian society

4 I. Bekeshkina, P. Kaźmierkiewicz *Making Ukrainian Civil Society Matter*. ISP Warsaw 2012, p. 33.

as well as among the international observers, that the democratic legacy is safe and that the third sector does not need such an extent of support or commitment as in 2004. Ironically, it was in 2005, so shortly after the success of the reform block, that the public did not see the need for non-governmental action, which can be explained by established confidence in democratic institutions and the political parties.

What followed was a large-scale lassitude of citizens who, having attained their immediate goal, i.e. manifesting their opposition to the impunity of authorities, failed to get engaged in regular activity in the non-governmental sector. The phenomenon of mounting inaction of Ukrainian citizens was captured in a study for European Social Survey in 2005 and 2007. While in 2005, one in five (21.6%) respondents admitted to participating in a demonstration, this figure fell three times two years later (7.1%). The number of people declaring the willingness to sign a petition decreased by half (down from 9.3 to 5.1%), and much fewer were ready to take up employment in an NGO in 2007 than two years before (down from 2.2 to 1.4 %).⁵

The decline in civic activity in Ukraine after 2005 exposed the gap between Ukrainian and other post-communist societies. If, as noted above, in 2007 only 1.4% of Ukrainian respondents owned up to the involvement in public life, the same score for Poland was 5.5%, 8.4% for Slovakia, and 9.5% for the Czech Republic.⁶ Likewise, NGOs do not contribute much to the GDP: the Ukrainian third sector produces 0.73% of GDP, which is the same as in Poland and Romania, but half less than in Hungary and the Czech Republic.

The growing number of registered organizations (according to the State Statistics Committee) does not help this trend. While in January 2006 the number of public organizations was above 46,000, six years later there were almost 72,000 of them. A report by the Counterpart Creative Center, which regularly monitors the condition of Ukrainian civil society, noted that "every year, many organizations cease to operate without notifying the authorities."⁷ In their report for 2010,

5 E. Golovakha, A. Gorbachyk *Social Change in Ukraine and Europe: Outcomes of European Social Survey 2005–2007*. Institute of Sociology of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Kyiv 2009.

6 M. Wenzel, J. Kubik "Civil Society in Poland. Case Study." The paper prepared for the international conference, *The Logic of Civil Society in New Democracies: East Asia and East Europe*, 5–7 June 2009, Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica, Taipei, p. 22. <http://www.cbos.pl/PL/wydarzenia/04_konferencja/Civil%20society%20in%20Poland.pdf>

7 L. Palyvoda, S. Golota *Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine. The State and Dynamics (2002–*

it was estimated that less than 9% of organizations were actually functioning. On top of that, there was a gradual decrease in the number of active organizations; in 2009 the size of the third sector was estimated at 4–5 thousand organizations, but just a year later the figure was 3–4 thousand.⁸

In her attempt to pinpoint the causes of the Ukrainian third sector crisis in the period after 2004, Irina Bekeshkina identifies three factors. The first one is a relatively critical evaluation of NGOs by Ukrainian society. In one of the indices published by USAID, Ukrainian organizations obtained a poor score in the category of public reception (3.8 points out of 7). This resulted, among others, from the general disappointment with the quality of public life in Ukraine, in particular with the open conflict between the leaders of the Orange Revolution.

The second factor is the difficult financial position of many organizations which suffered after the international support had been largely taken away from the area of democratization and civil rights and channeled towards direct technical assistance to the government administration. Organizations were forced to curb costs and began to face difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel. Many organizations revised their HR management policies and gradually switched from contracted employment to volunteering. Regular surveys among Ukrainian organizations showed that between 2006 and 2009, the percentage of non-governmental organizations with full-time employees fell from 61% to 48%.⁹ During this period, every fifth non-governmental organization declared a desire to increase the proportion of volunteers (although it is worth noting that almost three-quarters of them are actually paid).

Finally, the Ukrainian third sector struggled with an identity crisis. If during the run-up to the Orange Revolution the mission of many organizations was clear: the defense of civil liberties and democratic standards, the transfer of power to the former opposition meant that the pursued goals had actually been attained and that there was nothing left to be focused on. This was partly due to the overall social lethargy and partly resulted from a shift in the strategy of many international aid agencies which believed that Ukraine had exceeded the threshold of political consolidation.

2010). Kyiv, "Kupol" Publishing House, 2010. <http://ccc-tck.org.ua/en-default/file/biblioteka/CSO2010_Eng.pdf>

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., pp. 36, 38.

Unfortunately, the lack of adequate response from NGOs was too often seen by the public as a symptom of departure by the third sector from issues held dear by the society. According to Bekeshkina, the fact that civil society adopted a “wait and see” attitude instead of demanding a specific program of reforms and the implementation of campaign promises contributed to the reinforced feeling of distrust of democratic benefits, which translated into an increased support of the strong-arm tactics promoted by the Party of Regions.¹⁰

THE NEED TO CREATE A NEW IMAGE (2010–2012)

The history of the growth and stagnation of the Ukrainian third sector inevitably leads to a question of whether non-governmental organizations are capable of acting as important actors in the debate on the ultimate shape of the state and defend the rights and freedoms of citizens. On the one hand, these organizations complain about the insufficient financial and organizational background, and their chosen fields of activity are too often influenced by the priorities set by international donors. These circumstances cause the slogans and ideas of politicians reluctant to accept pro-European NGOs and claim that they serve the interests of other countries to fall on fertile ground. The international study IFES of 2011 demonstrated that 22% of respondents were of the opinion that NGOs represent the interests that are not aligned with the will and interest of Ukrainians; 37% disagreed with this view.¹¹

On the other hand, since 2010, there has been a major revival of civic activity. Several social groups, for example, entrepreneurs and veterans of the rescue operation in Chernobyl, organized spontaneous protests in many regions to defend their interests. Although these initiatives were not overtly political, they recalled specific governmental decisions and were often effective, as was the case with entrepreneurs campaigning against changes in tax regulations. Even if there were no immediate results, as with the student protests against the attempts

10 I. Bekeshkina, P. Kaźmierkiewicz. *Making Ukrainian Civil Society Matter*. Op. cit., pp. 35–36.

11 Summary results to be found at: http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/Press-Release/2011/~Public_Opinion_in_Ukraine_2011.Presentation.pdf

to limit the autonomy of universities, such actions drew the public attention to fundamental democratic principles.

The level of social activity does not necessarily translate into a greater importance of non-governmental organizations. In fact, the vast majority of participants of the protests in 2010–2011 had not been involved in any civil society organizations before. Although two thirds of respondents in 2011 acknowledged that the third sector plays a complementary role to the state authority by pursuing tasks that are carried out by state offices, it is not sure whether civil society is ready to speak on purely political matters. What stands in the way is a disagreement between various organizations as to the strategy of dealing with the authorities and the ensuing difficulty in hammering out a shared position. The practice of implementing projects financed by international donors is not conducive to the sector consolidation: research shows a gradual decrease in the number of projects implemented jointly by several organizations. For example, in the years 2007–2009, the percentage of non-governmental organizations participating in project activities decreased from 82 to 73%, and in 2009 only 35% of them declared collaboration in activities intended directly for beneficiaries (compared with 44% two years earlier).¹²

The need to develop a unified position becomes highly topical in connection with the new shift in government's policy that induces varied reactions of NGOs. On the one hand, they expressed satisfaction with the adoption of new regulations in March 2012, which were drawn up with the participation of third sector representatives. After two years of legislative stalemate, the parliament passed a new law on associations which met many expectations of non-governmental organizations, including easier registration, the right to operate countrywide, and permission to pursue economic activity. What is more, on March 24, that is two days after the adoption of the law, President Yanukovich issued a decree called the National Promotion Strategy for the Development of Civil Society in Ukraine. The strategy was conceived in partnership with a coalition of non-governmental organizations and provides for mechanisms of cooperation with the authorities in the implementation of public initiatives.

On the other hand, doubts remained as to the real intentions of the authorities. Bekeshkina is right to ask whether the expected legal standards were adopted out

12 L. Palyvoda, S. Golota, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

of concern for the advancement of the third sector, or whether it is an attempt to persuade the West of the democratic aspirations of the government, or still, whether they are intended to establish – by following the Russian pattern – a model of control over civil society.¹³ The latter concerns are justified when the experience of NGOs with the local authorities is taken into account. In a study from 2009, most organizations operating in the regions reported only a “limited” degree of cooperation with local administration.¹⁴ Interviews with representatives of local organizations in several regions of the country carried out by the experts of the Institute of Public Affairs in November 2011 confirmed the existence of barriers to cooperation and serious anxiety about the possibility of a meaningful dialogue. Some of the highlighted problems were: unexpected financial audits, proposals of fraudulent practices, and attempts to influence the content of projects.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN UKRAINIAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS?

Pro-European organizations and defenders of human rights fear that because of the weakness of the sector as a whole, individual decisions about entering cooperation with the authorities might expose various organizations to the risk of losing public trust. An alternative solution might be for the main actors of the NGO sector to work out shared standards of cooperation with the authorities at the local and central level. This would help avoid a scenario in which dialogue and cooperation would be narrowed down to the so-called “constructive” organizations which would be aligned in their mission and purpose with the official political course.

Apart from the integrating initiatives inside the sector, a clear message of assistance is expected from international donors. Non-governmental organizations emphasize the importance of external aid to the strengthening of the capacity of Ukrainian organizations to engage in a dialogue with the authorities with a view to defending civic rights and liberties. This might be furthered by the donors broadening the areas of support for democracy and human rights, thus

13 I. Bekeshkina, P. Kaźmierkiewicz, op. cit.

14 L. Palyvoda, S. Golota, op. cit., p. 51.

allowing burgeoning organizations, which inspire trust of the local community, to benefit from such support.

Undoubtedly, it is too early to rate the chances of the third sector to strengthen its position in the dialogue with the authorities. Many organizations in the regions do not have the required organizational capacity to continue a sustained and consistent operation. They remain hinged on international aid. At the same time, there is a need for a climate shift in the relationships between organizations and local authorities, which is currently marked by distrust.

Translated by Konrad Szulga



ANDRIY KOHUT*

THE UKRAINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY OF 2012: IN SEARCH OF AN ALTERNATIVE

Though it is difficult to forecast further developments that may take place after the elections of 2012, one thing can be put in words quite clearly: nobody has any illusions regarding both desire and capability of the present-day political forces and politicians to change the situation in Ukraine for the better.

Surveying the sector of Ukraine's public organizations just after yet another election, the first observation could be as follows (obvious but not less trite on this account): every election is a kind of mark that allows tracing the dynamics of the sector. The last ten years, at least, are really good for this.

In the last ten years, the elections results (in the broad sense of the word, that is, their winners, manner of conducting, consequences) fulfilled the function of a kind of caesura which marked the end of a certain stage and the beginning of a new one. Typically, this observation can be applied to presidential elections rather than to parliamentary ones. The most illustrative example of this tendency was Viktor Yanukovych's election to the Ukrainian presidency in 2010 when another

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stage started for public organizations of Ukraine, namely a search of an alternative or answer to the global question: What to do?

Describing in brief the processes that took place before this turning point, it is worth mentioning that the previous point of this kind happened to be the presidential elections of 2004. Since that time, after the victory of the Orange Revolution, and till the presidential victory of Viktor Yanukovich, the following tendencies were typical of the public movement:

- (1) Rather a lot of public leaders took up party or state positions. Unfortunately, their substitution by new personnel in the civil sector was a real problem. As a rule, among those who took up party or state positions not many remained there for a long time. The expectations that the public service needed new personnel capable of effecting changes appeared to be wrong, and later a group of public leaders returned to the civil sector filling again the thematic niches that remained empty after they had left.
- (2) The recruitment process of new staff was rather poor; fully fledged personnel instruction was fairly insufficient. After 2005, most foundations and other donors, which had previously supported instruction on a mass scale, reexamined their priorities and established some new ones, quite frequently aimed at cooperation with state structures.
- (3) A lot of public non-formalized organizations have appeared, intended for solving their local problems, for example those of illegal construction in cities and towns.
- (4) A certain growth of the level of professionalism was characteristic of an insignificant part of the civil society, reduced usually to expert and analytical organizations from the capital and a little number of regional ones.
- (5) In fact, powerful exterior and interior uniting factors for the civil sector were lacking.

In the post-revolution years, the efforts to solve most issues through launching public actions cause a decrease of civic activity because of its frequent imitation. Pseudo-public initiatives were created everywhere, but politicized soon afterwards, aiming, as a rule, at either political gain or work in the interest of a concrete business and political group. A real representation of the public interest was certainly not the point.

In the course of five years (2005–2010), a general decline in public activism was observed rather than an increase.

The first event that found its reflection in the independent public environment was a political crisis that started in 2007. However, even before the crisis entered its active phase, it was clear that the political circles were not capable of an active, state-building position. The need for a new force was quite evident for everybody (this vision is still valid today, since no organization, person, or group that claimed to create such a force has been able to achieve this aim).

The first attempt was the creation of the Public Forum of Ukraine which was to become the new force just mentioned above. Its activity was based on the idea that it was enough to mechanically unite the most authoritative, successful, and recognized leaders of the civil society to effectively create a new social and political force. The appearance and more or less constant activity of just two or three regional associations was the only consequence of this attempt to unite the leaders of public organizations.

There were a few more attempts at creating various general political organizations on the basis of public activists in the course of the following two years. This activity, however, did not cause the creation of any all-Ukrainian organizations and did not achieve the aims intended by the organizers.

In spite of the fact that a whole series of initiatives had not been implemented, the idea of a need for a public activists' association began to appear independently in different environments and to acquire new and new supporters; in the following years, there were several attempts that still produced some result.

Thus, with the political crisis of 2007 entering its active phase, the representatives of the most active public organizations decided to hold the Public Assembly of Ukraine, which was actually held in July of 2007. Later, an informal network of public organizations (Civil Assembly of Ukraine, CAU) was created on its basis. Over 400 public organizations have entered the Assembly in the course of its five-year-long history. The singularity of the Assembly consisted in the fact that these organizations represented all regions of Ukraine and various sectors of the civil society.

The positive aspect of the CAU was that at least once a year representatives of public organizations could meet representatives of other sectors of the civil society and try together to determine the problem most important and common for everyone; they also could have a discussion on what is worth doing to solve this problem. Beginning from the first Assembly convoked in response to the political crisis of 2007, the CAU members are still stressing that political problems

can be solved due to the adoption of a new version of the Constitution by the specially elected constituent congress, the Constitutional Assembly.

Thanks to the CAU activity, the idea of the Constitutional Assembly is undoubtedly becoming more and more popular. That the idea has been really spread among the masses is confirmed, at any rate, by the fact that Yanukovich's Administration decided to imitate the Constitutional Assembly to suit their own ends. In the spring of 2012, members of the Constitutional Assembly were appointed by a decree of the President; according to the calculations, they are to develop a new version of the fundamental law.

The imitation of the Constitutional Assembly and adapting it to Yanykovych's needs is a hard challenge for organizations participating in the CAU. The task of organizing the Civil Constitutional Assembly in response to the actions of the Presidential Administration seems too difficult to be carried out not only by the CAU but, in general, through the efforts of public organizations, at least at the present moment.

One of the ideas that stimulated unifying processes in public environments was the need for reformation. So the Public Constitutional Committee (PCC) was created; it united the chief independent experts in this field and functioned actively for almost two years. It is due to the Committee that the White and Green Books of the Constitutional Reform were elaborated.

Another initiative, that of the Network of the Reforms Support, was created at the prompting of the Legislative Initiatives Laboratory and included eight powerful regional public organizations with a considerable institutional potential and substantial experience in the field of analytics and expertise. The Network activities were focused on analyzing politics both on the national and local levels. Elections monitoring, analyzing their results, and lobbying for legislative changes that would favor local self-government are in its spotlight. From time to time, the Network makes statements regarding political events in Ukraine. Now the Network is conducting a campaign for improving the draft law on the local referendum.

In 2009, an interesting step in the life of the civil society was the appearance of the "New Citizen" Public Campaign timed to coincide with the presidential election. The main idea of the campaign was that everyone had to start from oneself to become a "new citizen," active and responsible. The campaign unified about forty public organizations based mostly in Kyiv. Keeping good contacts

with the journalistic environment and skillfully enlisting interesting people, the campaign organizers were able to produce a very bright and creative “picture” which was quickly spread particularly on the Internet.

The “New Citizen” campaign was concluded with a forum where the newly elected President was invited; together with the popular Internet medium *Ukrainska Pravda*, the campaign organizers gathered more than thousand questions addressed to him which were also rated through readers’ voting.

After the campaign was finished, the “New Citizen” was renamed Partnership and turned into another informal association of public organizations. Activists who were the driving force of the “New Citizen” also created the *Center UA* public organization which became a kind of the “New Citizen” headquarters as well as a few more interesting and active initiatives.

In general, however, the public was consolidated poorly at the time of the presidential elections of 2010 and did not produce new interesting ideas or mass movements, except for the “New Citizen” campaign.

Viktor Yanukovich’s election to the Ukrainian presidency, the new government’s policy, and the work of the Verkhovna Rada have triggered some activity among the society. New initiatives started to appear while the existing ones got a chance to start up a large-scale activity in defense of democracy, rights, and liberties.

The number of reasons for the growth of activism increased every day and is still increasing. At first, it was introducing censorship in the media, closing of archives, and pressure on historians. Then, it continued with pressure on public organizations and attempts to bar from entry into Ukraine a number of some international foundations representatives. An attempt to establish the so-called Russian world in Ukraine is being made through cancelling the achievements of European-style reforms in the field of education, neglecting the Ukrainian language as the official one, trying to subordinate the Ukrainian Churches to the Russian Orthodox Church through pressure. The economy is being rebuilt to function exclusively on the basis of corrupt practices, in particular due to the introduction of a discriminatory tax code. In consequence of the judicial reform, courts ceased to be independent. The adoption of the law on regional languages, new and new ridiculous decisions provoke new street actions and favor the creation of new initiatives. Both old and new public initiatives have taken and keep taking an active part in these processes.

2010 became a time when new associations of various public organizations, environments, and individual activists started to dynamically come into existence. This activity was rather social and political in its essence. A kind of "ferment" was going on everywhere among public activists, showing itself in frequent meetings, constant discussions, and making plans on "what?," "how?," and "who with?" to do in the situation when stability was becoming worse and worse.

In the last two years, the main tendencies have been as follows:

- 1) The appearance of a considerable number of new public initiatives. As a rule, they are rather social and political by nature and act on the verge of public activity and politics.
- 2) Public activity was becoming more and more active and, though the process slowed down a bit as for 2012, it is still felt. Actions held together by different public environments (quite often informal ones) without using personal brands while exposing only the slogan of the action have become more frequent.
- 3) The need for unifying all public initiatives in defense of democracy, rights, and liberties has become evident, and different public environments attempt at assuming the role of the general coordinator from time to time.
- 4) The search for common objectives and points of contact between different public environments is constant. Despite the fact that everyone knows what is opposed and understands more or less what is supported, nobody has so far managed to verbalize a common goal for creating a mass movement. After 2004, when people were united "against" rather than "for," and the winners appeared not to know what to do next, the lack of a unifying program is what has prevented the appearance of a mass movement which would oppose the anti-democratic policy of the Party of Regions and President Yanukovich.
- 5) The peculiarity of the last two years consists in the fact that people who were not interested in activism earlier have been gradually but constantly coming into public activity. In the situation when political parties are not capable of ensuring the protection of citizens' interests and, moreover, their basic similarity is quite evident, non-party activity offers many people a possibility to defend their rights and to struggle against the "back to the USSR" movement.

One of the most dynamic activist initiatives is the public movement “Vidsich,” created by the former activists of the “Pora!” civic campaign (Mykhaylo Svystovych, Olha Salo, and others) in the early spring of 2010. This movement is based on students and young people and engaged, for the most part, in organizing protest street actions. Although “Vidsich” has not reached the scale of the “Pora!” campaign so far, it is the most active and branched structure capable of mobilizing young people to protest.

“Vidsich” carried out active protest actions against the odious education minister Tabachnyk and his novelties in the field of education, against the arbitrariness of the police; also, the members of “Vidsich” supported entrepreneurs’ protests against the adoption of the new tax code and organized active protest actions against the law on languages, both on their own and in cooperation with other initiatives. The action initiated by “Vidsich” named “The Revenge for the Split of the Country” and consisting in the activists’ going to the electoral districts of the deputies who voted for the law on languages and conducting a counter campaign was copied by several other youth and opposition organizations.

One of the first active protest events uniting public activists and journalists was the creation of the journalist movement named “Stop Censorship,” at first actively coordinated by the “New Citizen.” The movement appeared de facto because of the introduction by the Presidential Administration of censorship, when there were attempts to dictate to journalists what and how they had to write or speak about and what topics were undesirable. The movement was initiated by the statement of the then “1+1” TV channel journalist Myroslav Otkovych, who openly stated that he had been forbidden to take alternative comments on Yanukovych’s denial of the Holodomor as an act of genocide on the Ukrainian people. The movement has been supported by nearly fifty public organizations and actively works at present defending liberty of speech.

In 2010, several new, mainly local initiatives were created, right away positioning themselves as social and political associations: the Initiative of Zarvanytsia (Lviv), the Initiative of Kholodny Yar (Kyiv), the “Hidnist” social and political movement (Kamyanets-Podilsky), etc. These initiatives unified public activists, businessmen, researchers, and teachers, as well as opposition politicians who, for some reason or other, found themselves outside opposition parties.

The initiatives of Zarvanytsia and Kholodny Yar were planned and implemented in accordance with the same pattern. Both were initiated in significant for the

relevant region places, respectively, in the village of Zarvanytsia (Terebovlia district, Ternopil region), which is a significant place for the faithful of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and in the Kholodny Yar forest (Cherkasy region). However, only the Initiative of Zarvanytsia was active; the nearer were the parliamentary elections of 2012, the more it focused on them.

In the last two years, a few other interesting initiatives appeared attempting to unify different activists and different environments. The “Ukrainian alternative” public association managed to unite mostly those who had not at all or little experience of public work, actively organizing motor races around Ukraine and being engaged chiefly in cultural projects. One of the main trends of the association is conducting discussions of the successful reforms in Georgia, which are popular in Ukraine.

The movement and social network named “Ukraine 2.0” was created at the initiative of the environment of active public figures and businessmen in Odesa. It is an interesting attempt to use the principles of social networks functioning for uniting in the real life. For some time, they tried to use in Ukraine the practices of the American tea partying movement.

Due to the events connected with the adoption of the new tax code in 2010, small and middle entrepreneurs’ environments became considerably more active and conducted a whole series of various protest actions. In consequence of the so-called “Entrepreneurs’ Maydan” the Assembly of Small and Medium Business Organizations was created as well as, a little later, the “Free Space” Public Movement. Entrepreneurs’ associations cooperate actively with various public environments and take part in most social and political actions carried out together by many environments. The activation of entrepreneurs’ communities and their energetic participation in public actions is an interesting and positive tendency of the last two years.

While in 2010 the rapid appearance of new initiatives was prevalent, 2011 was a year of a kind of stagnation when there were few new things, but both among the newly created associations and already existing organizations and environments a response was sought to the principal question: what to do?

As a result of this search, two more initiatives appeared. The first one, “The First of December” Initiative group, was created in response to the appeal of the three traditional Ukrainian Churches (Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church)

and unified eleven recognized Ukrainian intellectuals and public figures. In the spring of 2012, the National Round Table discussion under the slogan "A free person in a free country" was held, about a hundred of the leaders of public thought and activists from all over Ukraine being invited to participate. The goal of the round table was to elaborate new priorities both for common activity and the development of the country.

An interesting attempt at unifying representatives of different public environments was the creation of the SAN (Self-governing Alternative Network). The objective consisted in creating an alternative force which would be even rather political than exclusively public. The network's activity developed in two directions: that of proper activism (in this way actions in support of the political prisoners of the regime and against the construction in Peyzazhna Alley as well as a number of others were conducted) and that of developing a political program which would also serve a uniting principle for other public environments.

Among the associations of public organizations (in the proper sense), one should not forget the creation of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in 2011. This informal association unites about fifty public organizations structured into four working groups. The first and the most numerous one is devoted to the questions of democracy, liberty of speech, and human rights; the second one engages in economic issues and those of transboundary cooperation; the third one is involved in the sector of energy and ecology; and the fourth one regards communication among people (education, culture, young people, volunteers, researches). The most important event held by the Platform was organizing an accompanying forum for the official Ukraine-EU Summit in the autumn of 2011, when the EU Presidents met the representatives of local public organizations. An interesting point is that the Ukrainian President has so far neither come to such meetings nor answered the invitations sent to him.

Before elections, public organizations in Ukraine always join their efforts to conduct different campaigns, and these are not only classical observation campaigns. The parliamentary elections of 2012 prompted these organizations to unite as early as 2011. The reason was the elaboration and adoption of a new law entitled "On the Elections of People's Deputies." In the spring of 2011, the Public Consortium of Election Initiatives was created, uniting two analytical organizations (Legislative Initiatives Laboratory and Ukrainian Independent Center for Political

Researches) and two organizations engaged in election observation (“Opora” Civil Network and the Committee of Electors of Ukraine).

Another association focused on the parliamentary elections of 2012 was the “Chesno” campaign, planned and realized by the heart of the “New Citizen.” While the Consortium activity concerned chiefly legislature and was aimed at the efforts to popularize the idea of proportional elections on the basis of open party lists, the “Chesno” campaign concentrated on monitoring the morality of the candidates for election. The monitoring was based on six established criteria, and if any candidates from any party list failed to meet the standards of the “Chesno” campaign, activists exerted pressure on the relevant parties to make them withdraw the candidates.

Summing up the review of uniting tendencies in the civil society, it is worth accentuating that the main irritant stimulating joined action is the contemporary Ukrainian authorities. By this time, public activists have no doubts as to categorizing their actions. However, one should not expect any significant change for the better. Though it is difficult to forecast further developments that may take place after the elections of 2012, one thing can be put in words quite clearly: nobody has any illusions regarding both desire and capability of the present-day political forces and politicians to change the situation in Ukraine for the better.

The lack of alternative to the actual state of things, the lack vision of future development, as well as the creation of a mass movement capable of turning reforms in the country into reality – this is the problem fervently discussed in various public environments. It is high time the Ukrainian third sector offered a persuasive alternative, otherwise the next presidential elections will bring us closer to the Belarusian or Russian scenario.

Translated by Andriy Masliukh



YULIYA TYSHCHENKO*



VLADYSLAVA BAKALCHUK**

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT: ON THE BORDERLINE OF IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND POLITICS

Civil society organizations do not have significant influence on the process of governmental decision making. Authoritative bodies and civil society organizations lack experience and skills of public policy procedures and consultations implementation. It frequently occurs that authoritative bodies use civil society organizations for their own decisions' legitimization.

INTRODUCTION

Ukraine, as well as some other countries of the post-Soviet space, has faced the evident phenomenon of specific dichotomy of civil society institutions. At certain political periods the influence of this duality can be felt in varying social concentration. In this respect we are talking about “quasi-civil society” – those institutions that are, unlike civil society organizations of “grassroots” type, actively used and supported by authoritative bodies for the sake of conducting policy of “odobriams,” i.e. specific formal legitimization of various governmental initiatives,

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which is a reflection of Soviet formalism on modern Ukrainian ground. Among typical examples of such “quasi-usage” we can mention, for instance, “massive” discussions of political reform in the years 2001 and 2009, which were initiated by different presidents regardless of their eloquence and colors of party symbolic; discussions of governmental programs, etc.

In most cases, the activity of these institutions is financed exclusively by means of government budget, and the state has significant influence on the agenda and standpoints of these organizations. For example, in the government budget of Ukraine for the year 2011 it was stated that financial support for civil society organizations of disabled people was envisaged in total of 55,9 million hryvnias; support for civil society organizations of veterans and those responsible for taking care of military burials and monuments constituted 11,5 million hryvnias, etc. Mainly, such decisions are made without competition procedures and unnecessary publicity. However, it is reasonable to pay attention to the inconsistency of general policy which is revealed, for instance, in the attitude towards the organizations of Afghan veterans, partially towards victims of the Chornobyl catastrophe, who during last years have gone on protests against governmental actions aimed at the reduction of benefits intended for these categories of citizens.

The roots of social institutions’ specific duality can be traced back in the history of civil society organizations establishment in modern Ukraine. The early 1990s are marked, on the one hand, by the settlement of civil society movements significantly connected with legal assistance and dissident traditions, while at the same time Soviet organizations skillfully co-opted to the changed social and political reality and still continue their existence supported by the government.

The situation concerning implementation of cultural self-administration of communities and cultural activity of organizations can also be characterized as pseudo-reformative. Despite the fact that in the 1990s a range of laws on decentralization of cultural policy in Ukraine was passed, namely *On Local Self-administration in Ukraine (1997)* and *On Local State Administrations (1999)*, which granted local authorities with the power to develop local cultural policy, the subsequent reorganization of governance remained unfinished. The majority of local budgets are practically deprived of resources for financing citizens’ cultural life. At the same time, the right of local communities for defining the program of cultural development which is stated in the article 143 of the current Ukrainian constitution remains on the declarative stage. Therefore, the conditions for community’s

full-fledged participation in cultural life of the country remain unsatisfactory. The majority of cultural institutions and organizations oriented towards budget financing appeared to be not adapted to functioning under the conditions of market economy. As a result, a wide range of cultural and recreational practices and the activity of numerous cultural organizations and amateur teams are being curtailed. The level of population's cultural initiatives implementation is extremely low.

Different population strata not always comprehend the peculiarities of NGOs activity and, therefore, lack an appropriate attitude towards it. According to sociological research, the number of citizens who do not trust civil society organizations consistently exceeds the number of those who support them. The data provided by Olexandr Razumkov Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies declare that 28.4% of Ukrainians trust civil society organizations, only 3.4% out of them trusting completely and 25.2% only tending to trust. The percentage of population not supporting civil society organizations constitutes 53.3%, out of which 21.7% do not trust completely and 31.58% tend not to trust.

Nowadays, Ukrainian citizens consider their involvement into governmental politics to be realized not by means of personal participation in civil society organizations and associations activity, but, first and foremost, by means of elections and voting for different political parties. However, it is reasonable to state that over the last two years the number of citizens who do not trust civil society organizations dropped by 10%, and the number of those uncertain about their trust or distrust dropped by 3.5 %. The number of those who trust civil society organizations completely increased by 2%, and of those who tend to trust – by 10% (as based on comparative analysis of data provided by Razumkov Centre in the years 2008 and 2011).

Anyway, during the 20 years' span of Ukrainian statehood, civil society organizations went through a long process of institutionalization and change of generations. The Orange Revolution, which is often characterized as a revolution of civil society, and particularly its mistakes and failures allowed civil society institutions to draw a range of conclusions concerning, for instance, the necessity to evaluate all politicians regardless of political colors and electoral preferences. Nowadays, the third sector is constituted by people who, due to their age, are unaware of what pioneer lineup or komsomol meeting are, which obviously influences the consciousness, stylistics, and pattern of activity. However, age cannot be a panacea for incorporation into traditional political playing rules. Modern Ukraine abounds in numerous

examples of how young public figures and politicians comprehend and apply varying governmental corruption schemes more effectively than their teachers. In the 20th year of independence, Ukrainian civil society is "limited by its heterogeneity, dispersion, and constant dependence on political and other sponsors."¹

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN NUMBERS: EN FACE AND PROFILE

The official number of registered citizens' associations in Ukraine is increasing. According to the data of the National State Registry of Ukrainian Enterprises and Organizations declared by the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, as of the beginning of 2012, 71767 civil society organizations were registered including international, nationwide, and local organizations, their cells, branches, and separate structural subdivisions (as of the beginning of 2011 there were 67696 of them), 27834 trade unions and their associations (26340 in 2011), 13475 charity organizations (12860 in 2011), 13872 condominiums (11956 in 2011), and 1306 bodies of population self-organization (1210 in 2011).²

Not all of the non-governmental institutions registered in Ukraine are constantly and actively working on the realization of their statute activity. We would like to emphasize that only 21677 central civil society organizations, which constitute 39.2% of their total number, reported on the results of their activity during the year 2011. With the flow of time, these data do not alter sufficiently.

There is a range of constituent components hindering the development of civil society institutions, which to a great extent depend on the character of their relationship with governmental institutions:

- Institutional (weak institutional capability of civil society institutions).
- Legislative (imperfect legislation regulating the activity of civil society organizations; obstacles for registration and functioning).

1 David J. Kramer et al., *Sounding the Alarm Round 2: Protecting the Democracy in Ukraine. A Follow-up Freedom House Report*. July 2012. Available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Ukraine%202012%20English%20FINAL.pdf>

2 Data of the National State Registry of Ukrainian Enterprises and Organizations as of January 1, 2012 [Electronic resource] – Available at: http://ukrstat.org/uk/express/expr2012/01_12/13_zip

- The problem of cooperation between NGOs and the government, between different non-governmental organizations (lack of effective mechanisms for the realization of democracy of the government – NGOs relationship).

Thus, a significant obstacle for developing the private sector is constituted by the lack of effective system based on the diversification of sources and financial support. In particular, budget support remains the main source of culture financing, which is oriented mainly towards state and municipal cultural institutions; the mechanisms of involving extra budgetary sources for the development of the cultural private sector are not developed. Therefore, the cultural private sector which constitutes the basis of dynamic cultural development and the implementation of cultural and artistic practices and initiatives appeared to be outside the sphere of governmental support.

The organization of the theatre festival HoholFest in 2011 can be considered an example of how complicated is the process of obtaining governmental support. Using private funds, the festival has significantly developed and become an important image project of the country. However, having experienced financial difficulties in 2011, the festival organizers did not manage to obtain governmental support even though their president repeatedly approached the Minister of Culture M. Kulyniak. In 2012, the festival was conducted without financial support from the state budget.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE GOVERNMENT: RATINGS AND REALITY

Over the last years, Ukraine has faced disturbing tendencies connected with ambiguous political processes of concentrating political power in the hands of the president and groups from his entourage, which contradicts the principles of democracy. There is even a new term for defining such political phenomenon – the notion of “family” meaning a group conducting personnel policy in the government, financial, and force areas to the president’s benefit. The parliament is dependent, politically subordinate to the president and other influence groups. The opposition is partially dispersed and in most cases ineffective, since it does not suggest successful ways of solving problems, reforming hardened economic relations, and combating corruption.

In 2010, Ukraine was excluded from the category of free states in the rating suggested by the American non-governmental organization Freedom House. In the same year, the European Union marked deterioration in the sphere of observing human rights and freedoms and supremacy of law. "Civil society organizations and oppositional parties complained about the restriction of freedom of assembly," – the document emphasizes. Moreover, the European Union indicated that "in Ukraine, respect for democratic standards and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of media and assembly is decreasing."³

Though it may sound paradoxical, data of the researches conducted by USAID in the framework of defining NGO Sustainability Index indicate that the level of Ukrainian civil society institutions' development (organizational capacity, infrastructure, image, etc.) is still not characterized by negative dynamics, even taking into account the increasing dependence of the mass media, the lack of democratic governance on national and local levels, corruption, and dependence of the judiciary on administrative institutions.

It is indicated in the above cited report of Freedom House concerning Ukraine *Sounding the Alarm Round 2* that only a couple of new facts of systematic pressure on "civil society associations by Security Service of Ukraine and other law-enforcement authorities, interference into civil society organizations activity, and preventing foreign sponsors from giving grants to Ukrainian organizations"⁴ have been registered. In accordance to these characteristics, the following conclusion is drawn – the government, obviously, introduced a more neutral and balanced policy towards the third sector and endeavored to engage with those initiatives which were not judged to be a direct threat.

Due to the long-term influence of NGOs, the year 2012 is marked by the adoption of new legislation which is supposed to simplify conditions of civil society organizations' registration and functioning. However, the final conclusions can be made only when the law takes effect.

3 Joint Staff Working Paper *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2010. Country Report on: Ukraine*, in addition to *Joint Notice for European Parliament Committee, Council of Europe, European Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions. New response towards changes in neighboring countries*. Available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/documents/eu_uk_chronology/enp_report_2010_ukraine_uk.pdf

4 Kramer David J. et al., op. cit.

LEGAL GROUND OF NGOS' ACTIVITY IN UKRAINE: EXISTING AND BRAND-NEW ISSUES

The law *On Civic Associations*, adopted in 1992, is outdated in comparison with legislative norms concerning official registration of legal bodies. Though it might sound paradoxical, the legislation has imposed a range of constraints on the current activity of NGOs. For instance, local organizations are supposed to function exclusively on the local level. Judicial authorities had the right to monitor NGOs' compliance not only with legislative requirements but also with those stated in their statutes. This strengthened the risk of interference into the internal activity of civic assemblies, e.g. by refusal to register changes to constituent documents because of violating the determined procedure of making amendments to these documents. On March 22, 2012, the Supreme Court of Ukraine adopted the law No. 7262-1 *On Civic Associations* which takes effect on January 1, 2013 on condition of being signed by the president of Ukraine. The new law is supposed to significantly simplify the procedure of civil society organizations' registration. Thus, according to the adopted law, the government is obliged to register civil society organizations during the time period of seven days. The registration should be conducted free of charge and include the possibility of civil society organizations to be involved into commercial activity. The real possibilities and consequences of proposed changes can be observed when the new law takes effect in 2013.

The activity of organizations and initiatives of civil society institutions in cultural domain have their specificity which requires the decentralization of cultural policy. This process will ensure the its flexibility towards real life cultural needs of local population and create positive environment for cultural life, especially for the non-governmental sector.

SIMULATED DEMOCRACY: THE GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TODAY

After the Orange Revolution, public engagement has increased, and these tendencies can still be traced today. However, during the time period of 2011–2012, the right for peaceful protest got significantly more complicated. In 2011, local authorities sued 240 cases concerning the prohibition of assembly, 89% out of

which were fulfilled. Meanwhile, experts indicate that during five months of 2012, there were only 63 of such cases, but the percentage of their fulfillment constituted 92%. This means that the percentage of authoritative prohibition of protests is constantly increasing though the number of cases of prohibition decreased.⁵

A) INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN NGOS AND AUTHORITATIVE INSTITUTIONS: RIGHTS AND REALITY. POLITICAL AND PUBLIC ASPECTS

In Ukraine, there are approximately 20 laws and legal acts which regulate certain aspects of “participatory democracy” by means of defining institutional mechanisms of civil society organizations and authoritative institutions’ cooperation.

We may say that communication on selected political problems has taken place. For instance, the process of preparing the law *On Election of the People’s Deputies in Ukraine* (November 17, 2011) was accompanied with the establishment of the Working Committee which included, among others, a couple of civil society organizations and analytical centers. However, the possibility of public and expert discussion was almost eliminated by the categorical decision taken without discussing the election system configuration when the president has chosen the mixed proportional-majoritarian model. Meanwhile, the suggestions of NGOs, which constituted a part of the Working Committee were taken into account only selectively. After the law’s implementation, authoritative institutions responded to criticism by indicating that civil society organizations had also been involved in the process of preparation, which could technically legitimize their political decisions.

In Ukraine there is a system of citizen councils. As of October 1, 2011, 566⁶ of them were established. Meanwhile, corresponding consultations are mostly of formal character and have no significant influence on the process of decision-making. The analysis of public attitude towards this problem which

5 See interim report on *Civil society’s monitoring of implementation of EU-Ukraine Association*, December 2011 – May 2012, published by Ukrainian Civil Society Organization “OPORA” (in Ukrainian), pp. 20.

6 *Hromads’ki rady v cyfrakh: zahal’nonacional’nyi zvit iz monitorynhu formuvannya hromads’kykh rad pry central’nykh ta mistsevykh orhanakh vykonavchoi vlady* / UNCPD. Kyiv: Ahentstvo Ukrayina 2011, p. 4.

was conducted in 2009 indicates that average citizens' interest and knowledge about the work carried out by citizen councils by authoritative bodies is on the minimum level. According to the results of the sociological research provided by Razumkov Centre, only 14.3% of respondents are aware of the work of advisory structures under ministries and departments, while 7.4% of them are not familiar with what is being done.

A number of questions may arise due to the activity of advisory structures under the president, which include a range of civil society organizations: this refers particularly to the Constitutional Assembly under the President of Ukraine and the Humanitarian Council under the President of Ukraine. Establishment of such structures was the reason for the public world view discussion on the problem of interrelation with the government and possibilities for cooperation. Generally speaking, over the last years, public discussions concerning different authoritative initiatives have been conducted even without abidance of norms and maintaining formal character. In the process of policy formation, officials frequently forget about the necessity to consult interest groups – it concerns language, antidiscrimination, and tax policies. Thus, in 2010, the criminal case “for damage of street tile” against 7 activists of Podatkovyi Majdan who were opposing against several points of the Tax Code concerning small business was initiated. Court hearings started in September, 2011 and are going on until this day. One of the leaders of the tent camp on Maydan Nezalezhnosti is accused of setting “an organized crime group.”

The increasing number of public protests is also a reaction to unsymmetrical steps made by the authorities in the realm of social policy. In 2011, the Supreme Council adopted the law ensuring the right to use the red *Victory* banner together with the State Flag of Ukraine during festive celebrations which resulted in a number of drastic protests openly provoked by pro-Russian political parties. During the year 2012, authoritative institutions did not draw any conclusions concerning their relations with the society and NGOs. Thus, on July 4, protests broke out as a result of adopting the law *On Principles of State Language Policy* (No. 9073) by the Supreme Council which significantly narrowed the sphere of the Ukrainian language functioning. The law adoption was preceded by NGOs indicating the negative consequences of the process. However, it was left without attention since the government was guided by other motives among which we may mention the negotiations with the Russian Federation concerning the topic of natural

gas supply. The claim of the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine dated by April 9, 2012 dwelled on the idea of open discussion of initiatives shortage which would involve minorities and manipulative character of consultations aimed at obtaining support for the bill.

Moreover, during the past years, the state has demonstrated policy aimed at deteriorating working conditions for domestic subjects of country's cultural life. An example of it is constituted by lobbying the interests of foreigners, particularly in the sphere of film distribution. The absence of effective mechanisms of support, promotion, and distribution of domestic cultural goods weakens the position of domestic manufacturers and gives them an unlevelled playing field in the tough reality of a free market. Reshaping cultural institutions, cultural organizations, and art workshops premises (refusal to extend the lease contracts, transfer [sale] of premises to other institutions and organizations) becomes common practice. This problem is particularly burning in Kyiv, where during the year 2012 a significant number of art workshops found themselves in danger of destruction. Despite public protests, privatizing and reshaping cultural institutions and objects of cultural heritage is conducted. The privatization of Hostynnyi Dvir is a bright example. Initiated by activists, the project *Hostynna Respublika* as a socio-cultural space (within which lectures, master-classes, and concerts were held) remained a bright form of public self-organization, which was, though, deprived of real influence on country's cultural policy.

In Ukraine, there are civil society organizations (Centre for Cultural Management, *Democracy through Culture* Development Center, Institute of Socio-Cultural Management) which strive for the implementation of modern approaches and practices of cultural policy, as well as for expanding the sphere of cultural influence. Such a tendency is exemplified by launching the project *Ukrainian Network of Culture* aimed at establishing communication and cooperation, exchange of information and experience.

B) NGOS AND THE PROBLEM OF CIVIL IDENTITY

The corresponding duality of political culture and interrelations between the government and civil society organizations is not a very topical question for the very society. The point is that Ukrainian society remains ambivalent in its social

and cultural preferences and, therefore, can be defined as rived, “disjoint society” which comprises different and oftentimes contradictory socio-cultural, regional, religious, language identities, varying visions of geopolitical future of the country, which significantly influence the processes taking place. “Our anxious Ukrainian is scratching their head while considering where to put a comma in the sentence ‘Uniting is not allowed drifting apart.’ To a Western Ukrainian, it seems enough to get rid of Donbas for things to go smoothly. At the same time, another Ukrainian – who lives in the Eastern part – is convinced that Ukraine will live happily only under condition of ‘correcting Stalin’s mistake’ and getting rid of Halizia. Nowadays, the idea of drifting apart is getting more and more popular”⁷ – this is how Myroslav Marynovych characterizes civilization faults in social consciousness. For instance, 45% of Ukrainian citizens tend to have positive attitude towards entering the European Union, 19.1% of Ukrainians are rather skeptical, and 35.3% of them hesitate to give an answer. At the same time, the idea of joining the union together with Russia and Belarus is positively referred to by 61.6% of population, negatively by 22.1%, and 16.3% of Ukrainians hesitate to give an answer.⁸ In this respect, examples of active civil society involvement and its institutions in corresponding discussion moderation and ensuring opportunities of rationalization of social problems in general is a positive aspect.

It is possible to observe gradual development of cooperation between NGOs from different regions of Ukraine. The results of an expert poll⁹ conducted by UCIPR indicate that a considerable part (25%) of respondents have partners in other regions or cooperate with them from time to time (14%). Only 3% of respondents do not consider common projects with representatives of other regions to be possible. The poll demonstrated high frequency of involvement into coalitions of civil society organizations, which potentially anticipated the existence of mutual trust.

7 M. Marynovych, “Ukrayina u sviti chy Ukrayina pomizh dvox svitiv?,” *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, No 42, November 13, 2010.

8 See the report of the Institute of Sociology of the NAS of Ukraine: *Ukrainskoye obshchestvo – 2010 (Mneniya, ochenki i usloviya zhizni naseleniya Ukrainy)*. Kyiv 2010.

9 Results of the nationwide expert poll “Social Capital Today: State of Civil Society Organizations’ Development”. Selection of experts for the research was made with the help of “snowball” method. The poll was conducted in September-October 2011 by means of written anonymous survey of respondents. 118 respondents from 24 regions from Ukraine, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Kyiv, and Sevastopol took part in the survey. Available at: http://www.ucipr.kyiv.ua/files/books/expert_polls_report_social_capital_Sep-Oct2011.pdf

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Civil society organizations do not have significant influence on the process of governmental decision making. Authoritative bodies and civil society organizations lack experience and skills of public policy procedures and consultations implementation, which results in ineffective decisions. It frequently occurs that authoritative bodies to a different degree of intensity use civil society organizations for their own decisions' legitimization. The process of consultation is of formal character.

The main negative aspects of developing participatory democracy, particularly in the process of establishing partnership and cooperation between the government and civil society organizations, are the following:

- The formal approach of governmental institutions towards establishing advisory structures involving civil society organizations;
- Neglecting or totally ignoring civil society organizations' suggestions concerning certain aspects of policy;
- The formal approach of governmental institutions to conducting consultations and discussions on strategic questions and burning development problems together with civil society organizations and interest groups, which results in the inefficiency of such work;
- The absence of integral strategic policy concerning the development of relations with civil society organizations (e.g. the problem of the government delegating some of its authorities to civil society organizations remains in limbo, the systemic cooperation between the governmental institutions and civil society organizations aimed at the realization of programs and social orders is not developed, open competitions between civil society organizations intended for the sake of their involvement into policy analysis are not held);
- The absence of effective communication between the government and the expert environment, and lack of financial support for such activity;
- "The specificity" of procedures of decision making within the state system which are often determined by "emergency" methods and, therefore, prevent civil society organizations from being involved into the process.

Besides, these are oftentimes the very civil society organizations that do not make use of those possibilities, given to them by legislation, in order to establish

tight cooperation between the government and society. The reason is that it demands corresponding institutional capacity, appropriate resources, and high qualifications level.

Such methods of supporting cultural and art initiatives as competition grants are not frequently used, and the conditions of their realization remain not transparent.

The reformation of governmental administration over cultural sphere presupposes expanding the scope of authority of local self-governance concerning certain problems of cultural development and implementation of mechanisms of communities' real influence on local cultural development.

An urgent requirement for developing cultural initiatives in Ukraine is constituted by specific legislation and practices concerning stimulation of sponsor and charity activity in the cultural sphere, especially in such branches as venture and interest philanthropy, as well as endowment. It is also necessary to guarantee training for highly qualified specialists in cultural sphere administration, particularly specialists in economic management for cultural and artistic environment which would meet new market requirements.

At the same time, public responsibility and corporate business responsibility stimulation for ensuring cultural development is significantly important. It is necessary to elaborate a favourable legislative environment for the sake of raising funds from charity, patrons, and sponsors for culture development.

We can also talk about the isolation of regional cultural life resulting in the preservation of socio-cultural diversities. Consequently, lack of cultural communication between regions complicates the process of establishing an integral cultural space in Ukraine. This can be handled by means of interregional cooperation in the cultural-artistic environment and in the environment of NGOs.

Translated by Marianna Balyta



YEVHEN BORISOV*



ANDRIY YANOVYCH**

LOCAL GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR THE NGO SECTOR IN UKRAINE

The practice of recent years has given enough proof that the third sector organizations in Ukraine are not only non-governmental, but also civic ones: they have been founded due to the internal need of the citizens and communities.

The strategy of branding non-governmental organizations as dependent on foreign capital “grant-eaters,” which is consistently carried out by representatives of the “state” sector and the mass media, which depend on it, is the first thing which comes into one’s mind while reflecting on the problem of public trust in civil society organizations in Ukraine and trying to find the factors that restrain this trust. It is interesting, but the voices are heard inside the third sector of those who see a threat to the very idea of civil activity in the system of external financing

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of projects' applications by funds. A Polish proverb says that when it is not clear what they are talking about, then they are talking about money. In this case, they certainly are talking about things based on principles and of ideological nature as well. Nevertheless, the practice of recent years has given enough proof that the third sector organizations in Ukraine are not only non-governmental, but also civic ones: they have been founded due to the internal need of the citizens and communities.

Further survey of several characteristic initiatives (which often do not even have the status of an organization), which are different taking into consideration their localization, methods of work, structure, target group, and their objectives, is above all meant to prove the diversity of Ukrainian grassroots initiatives palette and to demonstrate the diversity of the forms of their work, which would be gladly seen as new chances and sources for the potential of the third sector in Ukraine.

INTERNET-MOBILIZATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CITIES' HISTORICAL FACE

The grassroots civil movements founded to save architectural and general cultural face of Kyiv and Lviv are rather typical local initiatives, though they became known far beyond the boundaries of their cities.

In September 2007, Kyiv authorities decided to construct a multi-storey building at the corner of Desiatynnyi Alley and Peizazhna Alley, on the territory of the State Historical and Architectural Reserve "Ancient Kyiv." In answer to the authorities' plan, three Kyivans founded the initiative *Save Old Kyiv* (<http://saveoldkyiv.org/>). In half a month, the number of its members increased to 20 people. Those were their friends and acquaintances they had invited to protest action. The most important goal of the initiative was the protection of the historical part of the city from developers; however, with time, *SOK* extended its activity to unlawfully constructed buildings around all territory of the capital, and also to those constructions that deteriorate its landscapes.

The activists say that they are average people of various age, occupations, and tastes, do not represent any political force or organization, and maintain the initiative exceptionally by self-financing. The initiative has not registered as an organization; everything works only because of the individual wish of every

participant to do something. The initiators are certain that all old buildings have to be renovated and their historical appearance has to be kept intact in future; that it is necessary to guarantee the functioning of museums, picture galleries, artistic studios, children's and teenagers' clubs, libraries, bookshops, and prevent their premises from disposal; to protect green areas and renew unlawfully destroyed trees and shrubs, lay out new parks and public gardens.

The defenders demand from the authorities to impose a moratorium on the demolition of green areas and on the construction of tall buildings in the historical centre of Kyiv, to oblige corresponding bodies to check legality of all planning permissions that have been issued from 2002 until today. Besides, the activists are convinced that authorities must hold public consultations before issuing any planning permission. The activists hold various actions against unlawful constructing. Fights and hustle with "athletes" and criminals, hired by the developers, often happen during the protests. Many times the activists had to destroy fences around constructing sights and block the road for heavy machines.

The defenders are proud of four victories over developers in five years of their activity. In January 2009, the activists defended the territory of Zhovtneva hospital, whose grounds the city authorities wanted to turn over to developing companies. That same year, in November, they defended Peizazhna Alley – there is a landscape park now there. In December, the citizens defended another playground from encroachment of businessmen and hired hooligans. The public garden in Prorizna Street near Khreshchatyk is one of their most notable victories.

Several new associations for the protection of various historical territories have been founded on the basis of the Kyiv initiative. A similar initiative appeared in Lviv – *Save Old Lviv* (<http://zsl.yv.lviv.ua>). It was formed in 2009 owing to a post in *LiveJournal* community. One of its users wrote that at the corner of Krakivska and Virmenska Streets – in the historical centre of Lviv, which is under UNESCO protection – someone was planning to build a large hotel. The community called this project the "Bunker." It took several days for the activists to raise an alarm in society; they picketed the City Council several times and attracted attention of the people from the metropolitan and all-Ukrainian mass media. They successfully stopped construction, which was supervised by the city architect, the mayor Andriy Sadovyi, and an influential businessman.

Furthermore, the Lviv defenders monitor the situation in other historical streets. Now they keep an eye on the situations on the plots at the corner of Krakivska

and Virmenska Streets, at the Citadel, and in Fedorova Street. However, it has to be mentioned that Lviv initiative is less active than their Kyiv fellows – their main activity boils down to updating the site contents.

KHARKIV GREEN FRONT

Probably, the most serious ecological confrontation of the authorities and citizens in the history of Ukraine took place in May and June 2010, in Kharkiv, after the municipal authorities gave their sanction to cut down trees in Gorky Park of Culture and Leisure. The corresponding decision was taken at the City Council session on May 19 with the violation of both required formalities and the current law. On the next day, developers began to cut down trees in the park determined to build a highway and hotels along it. Activists from different civil society organizations – at first tens of them, some time later hundreds – tried to block them from the very beginning. They tried to check whether the woodcutters had proper documents (by the way, they had none), made live chains, raised barricades on the way of bulldozers, roped and chained themselves to the trees, finally, mountain climbers climbed the trees and watched on them day-and-night. All these actions were brutally suppressed by the police, who stood up for the protection of the woodcutters, also non-identified persons both in municipal guard uniforms and in sportswear. Several activists were arrested without any grounds; some of them sustained injuries during physical confrontation. On June 2, the tents of the defenders were taken down by force.

During this short, but intensive confrontation, the number of park defenders increased every day. During the last night about a hundred people watched on in the park, in daytime their number increased to 300–500. Numerous inhabitants of Kharkiv helped to make copies of informational and agitation materials and spread them, rendered legal, methodical, and medical assistance to the defenders of the park. Participants of these events spontaneously created a structure which included informal leaders, legal office, office of coordination and information, Internet backup. It has to be mentioned that from the very beginning, among the park defenders were both people with absolutely various political views and people generally apolitical.

The day their tents were taken down, the park defenders decided to establish a civil society organization named Green Front. On August 3, 2010, they held a constituent assembly where they adopted the statute and policy documents. The organization initiated several other campaigns – the fight with stealing away chernozem in Kharkiv Oblast agricultural areas, also activity directed to the creation of ecological territories and the protection of already existing ones. The activists from Green Front participate in all-Ukrainian and international ecological actions.

WITHOUT OFFICE, WITHOUT REGISTRATION, WITHOUT SUBSCRIPTION...

The Native City (“Ridne misto”) association from Berezhany, the capital of a rayon in Ternopil Oblast, is an example of an active and efficient provincial local civil society organization. An important role in its formation and growth was played by the weight of personality – the recognized businessman and ex-deputy of the local council Volodymyr Yakymiv, who stood at the head of this structure in 2009 and owing to his charisma and activity could gather around himself a group of people with initiative, who continue the organization’s work.

One can venture a remark that in Ukraine the end of the first decade of this century was a favourable time for the creation of local civil society initiatives. Due to the favourable economic situation in preceding years the energetic people, who had potential to be leaders in their communities, succeeded in settling the material side of their lives. In such a situation, they could spend some of their time at deliberation, and, in the end, realization of non-profit projects and projects of social utility. The example of Volodymyr Yakymiv is interesting because before his active work in the civil society organization, he had already tried himself in politics – he was the City Council deputy. However, the work to the community’s advantage in such format was not always efficient, exactly because of its political character. Political opponents criticized him, and even tried to “throw a spanner in the works” regardless of the usefulness and possible success of a proposed initiative. That political reality certainly discouraged many active people from doing anything. However, some people – the above-mentioned Yakymiv among them – found a niche where they could fulfil themselves avoiding

political clashes – together with his adherents, he created a civil society organization. Actually, Native City is an example of a grassroots unprofitable organization, which thanks to its active work on the limited territory gained authority within both the community and bodies of power.

During the time of its functioning, Native City organized several mass festivals at an all-Ukrainian level and repaired three playgrounds in the city; at present, it carries out two events a month, directed mainly to young people. At present, as in many local organizations in Ukraine, the activity of Native City is weakly structured. The association does not have an office. Its members do not pay membership dues, its leaders are not paid any salary, and it does not have any permanent sources of funds. The members look for funds for particular events, but they are not always successful. For instance, when in 2011 they were organizing the musical festival *Rurysko*, the activists of Native City failed to find enough sponsors to cover expenses, so they had to privately take a loan from the bank and repay it in the course of the year from their own pockets. It is easier to find patrons for more practical things like the repair of playgrounds – local entrepreneurs help with materials, moreover, they recently offer their assistance to the organization themselves.

Another example of a highly specialized civil society initiative, which is active within limited location, is the organization Cyclists Association of Ternopil (CAT). It is an exceptional association because it managed to unite people that seldom agree with subordination – these are cyclists-amateurs, members of informal clubs of extreme cycling, cyclists-travellers. The association actually rose from different informal groups. In this case, the organization serves as a coordinating and intermediate body between different groups of cyclists from one side and between cyclists' activists and authorities from another. This organization would have never been created without several people ready to do this bureaucratic job connected with the formal registration of the organization, also the preparation and registration of constituent documents and the keeping of current documentation. It looks like this is that bureaucratic work – necessary for organizations in their activity – that scares away young activists who have civil society leaders' potentialities.

Since the Cyclists Association of Ternopil is an unprofitable organization, it functions on the principles of practical absence of claims to their members, including its leaders. Only due to such liberal principles, without any “enforcement,”

it was possible to keep modern young people in the organization and involve them in concrete actions. It is convenient for the people to actively participate from time to time in the organization of some events on a condition it is not their duty. Though they do not have any strict hierarchy, vertical subordination, and organizational duties, there are always members available who initiate the events and take responsibility for their realization, those who support them, also those who come to the events as ordinary participants. CAT worked without any formal registration for two years; in 2012, its activists finally submitted documents for registration to the City Council. During last four years, the Association annually organizes a mass event in the city – Ternopil Bike Day; the mayor has already taken part in it twice. The Association made it possible to install bicycle stands in the city. A corresponding department of the City Council, together with CAT, drafted a project of cycling infrastructure development in Ternopil. At present, talks are conducted regarding the construction of a ground for bike trials in the city park.

MULTILATERAL... NATIONALISTS

One of the most active and well-known third sector movements in Lviv is Autonomous Resistance (www.opir.info), which appeared in summer 2009 in the city on several young activists' initiative, who positioned themselves as nationalists. Their aim was to create a new type of a civil society association, where maximum efficiency of members would combine with minimal bureaucracy. The movement was not officially registered; no membership list was ever made. At their meetings, the adherents discuss problems and propose ways for their solution. The main goal of the movement is defined as a revolution in human head, change of value system in the society, which must bring real social change and direct rule of people. The movement founders think that everybody has equal possibilities to live active political life, even more: everyone has to directly take part in public life exclusively on his or her own initiative. The members finance the movement themselves. Every month all activists give the elected person some money – as much as each of them can. The movement activists carry on agitation through social network, by spreading leaflets among passersby, painting graffiti with slogans and address of their site on the walls of buildings, by gluing stickers and via personal talks.

The march of healthy youth for sober way of life and clear consciousness was their first action; it took place on July 26, 2009 and gathered about 60 participants. About 200 persons already took part in a similar march on November 15. About a thousand people came on April 28, 2010 to the Vyshyvanka Parade ('vyshyvanka' is a traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt) organized by the movement. Apart from marches, the activists hold various pickets, protests, and sensational actions. Painting walls of the buildings in the city through stencils with faces of a man who resembled the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich with a red spot on his forehead and their site address below was one of the most famous actions of the movement. The police qualified this drawing as a call to murder and commenced a criminal investigation. The movement has conducted several other anti-government graffiti actions as well.

The characteristic peculiarity of Autonomous Resistance is that it has generated a chain of subsidiary grassroots initiatives, which engaged themselves in particular spheres. Thus, Ecological Resistance, busy with ecological actions, first of all cleaning woods and parks which attracts from 20 to 50 people every month, was founded almost simultaneously with AR. Lately, the movement representatives actively help an animal shelter. The Sincere Heart movement came into being on the basis of AR in March 2010. Its members took care of an orphanage. Every week young people visit the orphanage, spend time with the children, amuse them, give them lessons and concerts, and lavish constant attention upon them. Besides, the musical association A Thousand Voices in One, which includes three music groups of different styles, the association Visual Resistance, which unites the amateurs of graphic arts, who occupy themselves with graffiti-agitation and creating interesting drawings with ideas, the movement Philosophy of the Protest, which unites creative young people, and the trade union Students Solidarity – all of them emerged on the basis of the movement. The initiative Healthy Sport of Ukrainian Streets has a goal to inculcate habits of healthy and athletic way of life in society. Its activists try to organize various sport competitions every week, like five-a-side football and streetball matches, multi-discipline competitions, and mass sports shows.

In 2012, AR activists rented some room in a former plant and work now on creating their own social centre where they plan to organize sport competitions, poetry readings, concerts, discussion clubs, and meetings.

The expansion of the movement is especially worthy of attention. For today, the most active are the Resistance branches in Vinnytsia and Lviv. At the same time in Kyiv, Sumy, Uzhhorod, Sevastopol, Mykolayiv, and other cities in Ukraine the movement is less active. In March 2012, an international event took place in Lviv – Autonomous Resistance organized a conference of nationalists from different countries with the representatives of two movements from Russia, organizations from Latvia, Belarus, Poland, and Italy. A ceremony of reconciliation of the peoples was performed together with Poles. Representatives of Ukraine laid wreathes at the Lviv Eaglets Cemetery, and the Poles – on Ukrainian Sich Riflemen graves.

Since nobody registers their membership, it is impossible to calculate the exact number of Lviv Autonomous Resistance members. However, their big events gather up to three thousand people, and from 30 to 50 persons usually come to regular ones.

WITHOUT THE INTERNET, BUT WITH A BOAT

At the end of 2010 in the centre of Ukraine, in Talne, the capital of a rayon in Cherkasy Oblast, Ivan Yakymenko, 32, established Talne Fisherman's Club with a view to opposing the poachers, who during several preceding years, using fishnets and electrofishers, exterminated all fish in the Hordashivka storage reservoir. In summer 2011, four people came when he invited local fishermen to the constituent meeting. The autumn of 2011 was used for processing documents and the registration process – in the rayon administration, in tax administration, etc. The fighters with poachers asked the fishermen from Zvenyhorodka advice – they had established a similar club several years earlier.

In spring, 2012 members of the Club held a meeting in the village of Hordashivka, where they let the local people know that from now on they will patrol the Hordashivka storage reservoir and will destroy fishnets and electrofishers. Some of the people who came were not happy with this initiative; they said "I've been using fishnets; I'm going to use them again." However, 33 people joined the Fisherman's Club in the course of the spring. They bought a motor for their private boat and every day three people patrolled the storage reservoir on its board. In spring 2012, the patrol drew and destroyed half a hundred fishnets. As for the State Fishery Conservation Inspectorate assistance, the Fisherman's Club

activists cannot say they wait for it – they confessed that since they know cases when fishermen societies stopped Fishery Conservation Inspectorate executives with poacher catch, they beware of acts of provocation from them. That is why they photograph the drawn fishnets, make the protocol, cut the fishnets directly in the boat, and burn them on shore. Every patrol keeps a patrolling book, where they write down the time and place of departure, make the protocol of poaching instruments seizure, and stamp it. Dangerous, armed gangs occur among poachers as well.

By the Fisherman’s Club activists estimate, within several years their bunch will enlarge to 150–200 people. They will be able to monitor the whole river Hirsnyi Tikych within their rayon then and coordinate their activity with the fishermen from Novoarkhanhelsk in Kirovohrad Oblast, in order to monitor the river Syniukha together. Members of the Club also plan to organize sport fishing oblast championship at Hordashivka storage reservoir.

* * *

Taking in account that local civil society initiatives often have spontaneous, local, and even occasional character, this phenomenon slips out from statistics: often associations of citizens directed to solving of local problems neglect registration procedure and sometimes – vice versa – they are hidden among the registered associations, where there are also inoperative organizations, “dead” ones, which exist on paper only. Actually, the potential of local civil activity in Ukrainian society is self-sufficient, independent of political situation, of legal basis, and, what is of no less importance, can also be independent of the sources of external financing – this is the conclusion that can be drawn from this brief survey of this several “histories of success” of grassroots initiative.

Translated by Serhiy Snihur



RÜSTEM ABLÂTIF (RUSTEM ABLYATIF)*

THE CRIMEAN TATAR CIVIL MOVEMENT: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Today, when in the country there is a threat to democracy, when there are problems with freedom of speech, when the society is imposed one correct view, the view of the ruling party, the Crimean Tatar non-governmental sector feels its responsibility for the destiny of the country.

The Crimean Tatar public organizations play a considerable role not only in the Crimean Tatar society, but also in the Crimean society at whole, being a certain exponent of the Crimean Tatars' sentiments or desires.

In general, the beginning of development of the Crimean Tatar third sector dates back to the '50s of the last century, the times of the former Soviet Union, therefore it is not strange the Crimean Tatar civil movement is inherently a strong human rights one. The Crimean Tatar action groups, which came from the very midst of the people in the '50s of the twentieth century, of course, could not be officially registered under the conditions of the totalitarian Soviet regime, but they became the basis for the present-day Crimean Tatar civil movement. In due course, these groups united in two main organizations of the Crimean Tatars: the Crimean Tatar National Movement Organization and the National Movement of

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the Crimean Tatars. According to the prominent human rights activist, L. Alekseyeva, about 5 thousands of activists were selflessly working in the Crimean Tatar action groups in the Soviet Union. The main requirements of the Crimean Tatar movement were: return to the historic Homeland and the restoration of the political and national equality regarding indigenous nation of Crimea.

So it is not strange that among the Crimean Tatar NGOs until recently there were no organizations that would have been created by initiative “handed down.”

According to various estimates, there are about a hundred Crimean Tatar non-governmental organizations at the moment. According to the organizing committee of the World Congress of the Crimean Tatars, held in May 2008, representatives of 77 NGOs working on the territory of Ukraine took part in this great event.

In general, all Crimean Tatar NGOs can be classified according to several criteria:

- 1) geography – certainly, the overwhelming majority of organizations work on Crimea’s territory but there are a few organizations registered by the Crimean Tatars living compactly on the territory of the continental Ukraine. This is Kyiv City, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions. Also, there are several organizations with international status such as «Bizim Qırım» (Our Crimea) and Foundation for Research and Support of Indigenous Peoples of Crimea;
- 2) profession – a number of NGOs unite people according to their speciality. The most famous organization is the Association of Crimean Tatar Educators “Maarifçi” (that means the “Educator”). Such Associations (Crimean Tatar Physicians’ Union, the Union of Crimean Tatar Officers “Arbiy Birliđi,” the Association of Crimean Tatar Artists, etc.) started to appear with Crimean Tatars’ return to their historical Homeland in the goth of the 20th century. This was due to the necessity to protect the rights of the Crimean Tatars to work because of outright job bias and to a wish to study the human resources potential of the Crimean Tatar people;
- 3) age – among the Crimean Tatar NGOs there are both youth organizations (“Yaşlar şurası,” which means “Youth Council”) and organizations which unite pensioners – the League of the Crimean Repatriates “İrade”;
- 4) scope of activity – culture (the Fund on Crimean Tatar Culture), political activities (Crimean Tatar National Party “Adalet”), or business (Crimean International Business Association);

- 5) religion – about 350 of the Crimean Muslim communities are united in the Religious Administration of the Muslims of Crimea (or Muftiyat of Crimea). In addition, there are more than 50 Autonomous Muslim communities. The proponents of the so-called “Mufti of Ukraine” Lebanese Ahmad Tamim created the so-called “Religious Centre of Muslims of Crimea,” which unites about 100 people;
- 6) status – one of the peculiarities concerning the status of the Crimean Tatar NGOs is the fact that among them there are organizations registered at all levels (as it was mentioned above, there are even international ones) except all-Ukrainian. It is clear especially considering the fact that the Crimean Tatars living compactly only in three regions of Ukraine – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts. Because of this, to observe the legislative provisions concerning registration of an organization with the all-Ukrainian status is almost impossible for the Crimean Tatars. This creates certain difficulties in working with governmental bodies, as for example last year, the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine refused to support projects of the Maarifçi Association due to the lack of the all-Ukrainian status in the organization.
- 7) the leader of the civil society of Crimea is the supreme representative body of the Crimean Tatars – the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar nation, which consists of 33 members elected by delegates of the Qurultay (National Congress) of the Crimean Tatars. By the way, all adult voters – the Crimean Tatars having legal capacity can take part in elections to the Qurultay. In spite of the fact that the decisions of the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar people are of a recommendatory nature, the overwhelming majority of the Crimean Tatars follow these decisions. The Majlis remains the only institution that has the right, power, and authority to speak in the name of all the Crimean Tatar people. Despite this, the legal status of the Majlis, despite repeated attempts for a legal solution of this issue, is still uncertain.

It is a well-known fact that a great number of public organizations are registered in Ukraine. But according to different estimates, from 10 to 20% of them are really effective. According to the public organizations’ list of the Main Department of Justice of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, there are more than 2100 NGOs registered in the autonomy. The same situation concerning NGOs can be observed on the peninsula too. But, according

to experts, although the level of the Crimean Tatar NGOs' activity is different (some work systematically and consistently, some remind of themselves with one-two events a year), the Crimean Tatar segment of the third sector in Crimea is the most active part of the civil society on the peninsula.

As previously, the main purpose of the Crimean Tatar organizations is the protection of all the Crimean Tatar nation's rights, its development in their own Motherland. As before, the Crimean Tatars excel at their own public activity, the desire to achieve the purpose by joining efforts. In the first place, this is due to the fact, unchangingly, the Crimean Tatars do not trust the authorities, so far as they feel that between the Crimean Tatar people and the Crimean authorities there are certain barriers, including, however annoying it is, ethnic ones. As known, the bureaucracy is a certain "snapshot" of the society.

It is worthwhile quoting the words of the world-known human rights activist, former Soviet prisoner of conscience, leader of the Crimean Tatar national movement Mustafa Cemilev, who said several Crimean power bodies were "ethnically pure" concerning the Crimean Tatars. Unfortunately, the Crimean society keeps a certain "watershed" – "we" vs. "they." However, though it may seem strange, in the relations with the continental Ukraine such a "watershed" is almost non-existent: both in everyday life and in relations with the authorities. At least that did not exist until the Party of Regions' ascension to power. One more feature of the Crimean Tatars' non-governmental organizations is their unconditional support of the idea of Ukrainian independence, their strong position on the Ukrainian state. According to some foreign political scientists' notes, it is almost unprecedented example of such support for the state by ethnic minorities in the modern world.

As regards the environment where they worked in the '90s and early 2000s, it was a rather strange situation when democratic sentiments dominated in Ukraine, the society was developing democratically, even if with mistakes, in Crimea was observed a «red reserve» as published in the foreign press. At that time, the Ukrainian and foreign NGOs as well as international organizations tried to establish cooperation, to render all possible assistance for the Crimean Tatar third sector. So, for example, the International Renaissance Foundation (the Ukrainian branch of the Soros Foundation) began to implement a large-scale programme "Integration of the Crimean Tatars, the Bulgarians, the Armenians, the Greeks, the Germans who suffered from the Deportation into the Ukrainian society" in Crimea in 1997. One of the main trends of this program, which also included education, support for

mass media, popularization of the ethnic cultures of Crimea, was the "Supporting the development of the non-governmental organizations' infrastructure." To the public organizations realizing their activities in the sphere of international relations, assistance in integration of the formerly deported persons, the protection of the formerly deportees' rights, the development of the open democratic society's institutions, and representing the interests of the ethnic groups in Crimea was rendered assistance. In general, more than 100 NGOs' initiatives were supported, 29 projects to the sum of more than 136 000 USD were designed to support to develop the public organizations' infrastructure. This assistance can be perceived as invaluable, as due to the support of the International Renaissance Foundation a network of active non-governmental organizations has been formed able to work independently, find the appropriate means, and implement their project proposals effectively. In addition, the UNDP and UNHCR, the King Baudouin Foundation, Counterpart, MATRAKAP Fund, Charles Mott Foundation, the embassies of the EU countries, the USA and Canada, etc. were actively operating in Crimea.

Instead, the core of the Crimean authorities' activity in these years, unfortunately, was the rejection of any ideas, requests, proposals of the Crimean Tatars. Things came to such a pitch that in 1992 the Supreme Council of Crimea decided to establish a separate regiment of militia to counteract the "Crimean Tatar extremists" that would be maintained by the Crimean budget. The Crimean Tatar public activists not only failed to be in society's good graces – they have been subjected to repression.

The acknowledged leader of the Crimean Tatar sector of the Crimea's civil society is the Crimean Tatar National Majlis, or in the Crimean Tatar language – Qırımtatar Milliy Meclisi. The Majlis as a self-governmental body was established in June 1991 by the II Qurultay (National Congress) of Crimean Tatars. It should be noted that the countdown began with the first Qurultay of the Crimean Tatars convened in November 1917 to emphasize the certain connection between generations. The purpose of the representative body's establishment was the protection the interests of the Crimean Tatars, their collective rights. Among other documents the Qurultay adopted the "Declaration on the National Sovereignty of the Crimean Tatar people." Unfortunately, then Crimean authorities chose confrontation as a communicative means with the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar nation (and with all non-governmental Crimean Tatar organizations too). According to experts, in the early '90s the power of the autonomy in spite of the

legal collision could establish a dialogue with the Majlis, at least to discuss the questions to settle the Crimean Tatars repatriates.

Despite the strained relations between the Crimean authorities and the Majlis, the last, taking into consideration its strong pro-state position, stays almost the single principal restrictive factor for the pro-Russian separatist forces on the peninsula, to the certain political forces of our Northern neighbor. One can remember at least three moments in the modern history of Ukraine when the Majlis of Crimean Tatars and the Crimean Tatars in general favored to achieve the Ukraine's independence or protected her territorial integrity. It is known that the Russian Federation made certain proposals through the former Soviet dissidents to the leader of the Crimean Tatar National Majlis to win their favor to the idea of joining Crimea to the modern Russian state.

But in the late '90s, the pragmatists came to power in Crimea; they tried to establish a fruitful dialogue with the Crimean Tatar forces. An attempt was made to find a place in the legal framework of the state for the Crimean Tatar people's Majlis. Thus, in 1999 the President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma issued his decree, created a consultative and advisory Council of the Crimean Tatar people's representatives under the President of Ukraine, composed of all the 33 members of the Majlis. It was a kind of a compromise reached on the wave of the Crimean Tatars' protests on the eve of the 55th Anniversary of the Crimean Tatar people's Deportation and enabled to establish a dialogue between the representative body of the Crimean Tatars and the authorities of Crimea and Ukraine. In general, in the times of Leonid Kuchma, from 1999 to 2004, there were four meetings of this body, which adopted almost 60 presidential orders on current issues and problems of the returnees' resettlement, preserving their cultural heritage. In view of the fact that only a third of presidential orders have been completed, it should be admitted that was an effective mechanism allowing the authorities to communicate with the Crimean Tatars' representatives without "losing face" (taking into account the criticism of the Crimean Tatars' opponents concerning the alleged "illegitimacy" of the Majlis) and involved them in the decision-making process legally. On the other hand, the Crimean Tatar representatives got direct access to the President and the government, the opportunity to speak with their own initiatives.

Gradually, the authorities have got used to working constructively with the Crimean Tatar NGOs, though sometimes not without coercion or persistent

recommendations of international organizations. So, an unprecedented, large-scale campaign in 1998–2001 aimed at the acquisition of the Ukrainian citizenship by the Crimean Tatars repatriates was held by the Foundation for Naturalization and Human Rights “Assistance” and the League of the Crimean Tatar Lawyers “Initium” with the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Subdivisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine had to cooperate closely with the public activists, concerning the huge amount of work: then, in the short term, the citizenship of Ukraine was received by more than 65 thousand citizens of other CIS countries and about 25 thousand stateless persons.

Therefore, in the conditions when on the one hand, the local Crimean government demonstrated alienation to the problems of the formerly deported Crimean Tatars and, on the other hand, the Crimean Tatars were thinking about the Crimean bureaucrats as “colonial administration,” the third sector became for Crimean Tatars the place where they are able to voice their needs and requirements, the tool with the help of which they could, at least, to try solve some of these problems. In such conditions the Crimean Tatar third sector was developing and consolidating.

Since the beginning of the Crimean Tatar people’s repatriation the Crimean Tatar non-governmental sector has strengthened, got some experience and authority in Ukraine and in the world, established partnership relations with Ukrainian, foreign, and international organizations. At the present stage of the Crimean Tatar third sector’s development, when the civil society is still quiet weak in Crimea as distinct from continental Ukraine, the Crimean Tatar NGOs have gradually shifted from the protection of the rights and interests of a purely Crimean Tatars to the issues that are significant for both the Ukrainian and Crimean societies. Organizations appear whose members are people of different ethnicities, are united by a common purpose: building and strengthening of the civil society, protection of human rights and freedoms, development of democracy, the European integration of Ukraine, etc. However, the protection of the Crimean Tatar people’s rights and interests in all possible areas (human rights, minority rights, culture, spirituality, economic interests, etc) remains a priority in the Crimean Tatar NGOs’ activity.

Such organizations as, for example, the Institution for Civil Society (Aqmescit/Simferopol) joined in their activities both the issues of protection and development of Crimean indigenous peoples’ culture and the strengthening of civil

society institutions and the European integration of Ukraine. Moreover, apart from the Crimean Tatars, this organization includes both Ukrainians and Russians. Among the projects have recently been implemented one can notice the project of the revival of the Crimean Tatar embroidery in Qarasuvbazar/Bilohirsk, the lectures by leading European experts in Crimean universities, discussion about the relations between Ukraine and the EU. The Centre for the East-European initiatives “Bakhchisarai strategy” is engaged in similar directions of activity.

In due course some organizations retired from the stage and actually stopped their activity, while some of them continue working actively; also, another NGOs appear. The Association of the Crimean Tatar Educators “Maarifçi” continues to work actively. It is not strange, concerning the human potential it can count on. In fact, the profession of a teacher is the most widespread one among the Crimean Tatars. Its leader, Safure Qacahmet, enjoys the great prestige among the Crimean Tatars that proves he was elected a Deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. As before, Maarifçi publishes the *Maarif işleri* journal (Matters of Enlightenment), the *Tasil* newspaper (Education), and methodological manuals for teachers of the Crimean Tatar language. As before, the Association, implementing its statutory goal, that is restoring the education system in the Crimean Tatar language, makes efforts to open new Crimean Tatar classes and promote the development of the already existing schools and classes with the Crimean Tatar language of instruction. The Association is a support for the thousands of parents around Crimea who seek to educate their children in their mother tongue.

The fact that a new generation of civil activists – young, educated, modern, thoughtful, with a broad worldview has grown pleases a lot. Organizations such as “Bizim Qırım” or “Yaşlar şurası” unite the Crimean Tatar young people, worrying about the Crimean Tatars’ fate, the Crimean Tatar language and culture and striving to contribute to the development of the Crimean Tatar people. It was young people who initiated the establishment of a new Crimean Tatar holiday – the National Flag Day celebrated annually on June 26. This new exciting holiday was held for the first time in the Aqmescit/Simferopol’s downtown in 2010 with the assistance of several Crimean Tatar NGOs, including the initiative group “Mecal” (Might) (which was subsequently rallied in the Yaşlar şurası), the Institution for Civil Society, “Vatanperver Gruppası” (Group of Patriots), the Crimean Tatar Youth Centre. The new generation of the Crimean Tatar activists has already established

contacts and cooperation with Ukrainian NGOs. Thus, the joint project of the Lviv's NGO "Museum of Ideas" and "Yaşlar şurası" for their presentation of the ancient Crimean Tatar culture in Lviv in 2010–2011 was extremely interesting and – to a certain extent – symbolic and emotionally positive. The city inhabitants had an excellent opportunity not only to acquaint themselves with songs and dances of the Crimean Tatars and their decorative and applied arts, but also to taste dishes of the Crimean Tatar cuisine and even to take part in the night wedding ritual of painting hands with henna.

Another interesting feature was the appearance of new women's organizations, indicative of the strengthening of women's positions in the Crimean Tatar society. Until recently, the Crimean Tatar women were united by a single public organization – the Crimean Tatar Women's League or Qırım tatar qadın-qızlar ligası created in 1994. The League of the Crimean Tatar Women represented a woman as a goddess of the traditional values of the Crimean Tatar people: family, children, and home in their activity. The organization sees its main object in assisting women in everyday life, the upbringing and education of children, keeping the family. But the recently established Crimean Tatar Women's Club "Nenkencan" (Nenkencan hanum was the daughter of the Crimean Tohtamış-Khan, a significant historical figure) brought together intellectuals, women with a pro-active attitude – journalists, lecturers on universities, figures of culture and art, public figures. Along with the publication of the literary magazine of the same name, the club holds literary readings, research and conferences, promotes the development of the Crimean Tatar language, etc.

The Avdet Crimean Republican NGO, dealing with land issues, remains as extremely influential one. According to the assertions of the NGOs' leaders, the organization defends the interests of about 20 thousand families of the Crimean Tatar repatriates, seeking to get plots on their native land. Obviously, the land issue is perhaps the most serious problem in relations between the Crimean Tatars and the authorities that becomes aggravated from time to time. It resulted in arresting the true Avdet's leader Daniyal Ahmetov in 2010 on the faked-up evidence for 4 years. Is it why Amnesty International recognized that the case against D. Ametov was politically motivated and appealed to the Prosecutor General of Ukraine with a demand to release him?

The non-governmental organizations' appearance being in opposition to the Majlis and the Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people has been a certain sign of

that time and probably the development of democracy and pluralism of opinions. It is possible to list a number of NGOs that have made the criticism of the Majlis the core of their activity: Milli Firqa, Sebat, Vatandaş, Milliy Hareket Partisi, Generation of Crimea, etc. Some of them are active, others are represented by one person, there are also mythical organizations like “The Crimean Tatars for the Union with Russia.” The last one is actually ridiculous for in the eyes of the mass media: the “leader” of the organization is an old man over seventy; journalists repeatedly demanded the disclosure of this man, tried to find him in Saky raion at the place of its registration – all in vain. In the Crimean mass media opinion, some of these organizations, as for example, Milli Firqa (National Party), also called “sofa party,” as all its members are placed on the same sofa, were consulted, lobbied and, perhaps, even financed by the Presidential Administration and the ruling Party of Regions of Ukraine.

The First Vice-Chairman of the Majlis Refat Çubarov, responding to a question about their attitude to the opposition NGOs, noted that “. . .it would be strange if all Crimean Tatars thought the same. . . It is clear that people in opposition always talk about the importance of their mission, role, opportunities of influence. . . We have another problem. The problem is that the Crimean Tatar opposition was not able to become the opposition of action, it becomes as “the opposition of voice.” Unfortunately, in the above-mentioned organizations’ activities a constructive idea is extremely small, more often it is just a naked nitpicking. It seems they criticize any actions or decisions of the Crimean Tatar people’s Majlis on principle. Sometimes the opposition organizations’ activities not only provoke indignation among the Crimean Tatars, but also a feeling of contempt for them. It can be recalled the Milli Firqa’s appeal in 2009, by which they asked the then President of the Russian Federation to protect the Crimean Tatar people “from ongoing genocide on the part of the Ukraine’s nationalist government.” The result shown on the elections to the Parliament of Ukraine is the clear evidence of these organizations’ authority. According to the *Brief Analysis of Results of the Elections in Crimea*, only 7268 people, which was 0,99% of all Crimean Tatar electors, voted in support of the candidates of the electoral list of the Crimean branch of the Ukrainian Peasant Democratic Party, recommended by the Milli Firqa. Besides, having a very low trust level among the Crimean Tatars, opposition figures or organizations are not able to get elected to the Qurultay in order to try to influence the situation from the inside.

Now it should be stressed that the activity of the organizations in opposition to the Majlis comes to nothing more than one-shot action and now it cannot compete with this representative body, first of all because of the lack of constructive systematic work. The efficiency of their activity is often reduced by the densely speculative and sometimes frankly provocative nature of the conflict against the Majlis.

Similarly to the previous years, the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar nation stays as the most authoritative and influential body of the Crimean Tatars in Ukraine and Crimea. According to the research of the Oleksandr Razumkov's Ukrainian Center of Economic and Political Studies, the rating of the Majlis is about 82%.

The system of national self-government of the Crimean Tatar nation is a unique example of people's self-organization, built on mutual trust, delegation of authority, and the principles of collective decision-making. The national self-government of the Crimean Tatar people is a vertically-structured system that unites local majlises from the smallest village to the central Majlis. In general, according to approximate estimates, about 15 thousand people are involved into active public activity. This means that almost every tenth Crimean Tatar, having the right to elect and be elected, is a part of the body of the national self-government.

As I have already mentioned, the Majlis consists of 33 members, elected by the delegates of the National Assembly – the Qurultay of the Crimean Tatar people. The citizens of Ukraine living in Crimea, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, Kyiv City, and also in the Republic of Uzbekistan can be elected to the delegates of the Qurultay and the Majlis members.

Now there can be observed a difficult transformation process of the election system of the Qurultay's delegates, intended to make the elections more democratic, more transparent, and to avoid any manipulation. Instead of a two-stage electoral system when the voters were first choosing the electors, and those were electing the delegates of the Qurultay, the direct election is developing when the voters themselves decide for what specific candidature or public organization to vote.

Besides, Mustafa Cemilev, the unchallenged leader of the Majlis from the moment of its establishment, announced his unshakeable desire to leave the post of the Chairman of the Majlis, according to him, in order to "make way for the youth." No doubt that anyone who is going to come up to take Mustafa Cemilev's place, the man with the great authority and respect both among the nation and

in the country and the world, will have a hard time with a task to transform the system of local self-government's bodies.

The relationship between the Crimean Tatar National Majlis and the system of national self-government with power can be described as mixed today. There is a certain deviation from the system of interests and compromise's balance that has been achieved in the relations between the authorities and the Crimean Tatars during Leonid Kuchma's presidency. It is strange, but President Viktor Yushchenko started this rollback, though he was unconditionally supported by the Crimean Tatar voters during the elections and the Orange Revolution, and he was also reposed the majority of Ukrainian citizens' hopes at that time. During the presidency of Yushchenko there was no meeting of the Council of representatives of the Crimean Tatar people under the President of Ukraine. Quite the contrary, after the meeting with the leaders of the Majlis in Bağçasaray/Bakhchisarai in 2005, after sitting together with the silver-haired veterans of the Crimean Tatar national movement on the carpet, on which a dissident was sitting before, a great friend of the Crimean Tatars, General Petro Hryhorenko, he demanded to abolish the Declaration of the National Sovereignty of the Crimean Tatar people, adopted by the II Qurultay in 1991.

The President Viktor Yanukovych has done even more: he has changed the principle of the formation of consultative and advisory board by his decree in August 2010. Instead of the delegation principle, when the Crimean Tatars were electing representatives of the Council, the principle of appointment was established when the President decides who should be included in its structure. Thus, the President took away the Crimean Tatars' right to choose their representatives. A firm Majlis representatives' rejection to participate in this reformatting council was the consequence of this decision.

It seems strange that the political science specialists who predicted to the Majlis very serious consequences of this refusal made a mistake. Showing the sequence in principle matters, the representative body gave to understand to the new power – both in the centre and in Crimea: it has no alternative to the Crimean Tatars' elective body.

Confirmation of the correctness of these words is the fact that the Council of the Crimean Tatar people's representatives in the new format has virtually stopped to exist, and it has not even been assembled. As before, the key policy issues are still settling with the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar people by the powers that be.

Today, the power elected the principle of “neither peace nor war” in relations with the Crimean Tatars. The governmental program on the resettlement of the formerly deported Crimean Tatars is in fact frozen. A person known for his xenophobic statements and discharging of the criminal Deportation of the Crimean Tatar people in 1944 was appointed for the post of the Head of the Council of Ministers of the ARC. Almost all the representatives of the Crimean Tatars in the executive branch of the Crimean autonomy were squeezed from their posts.

At the local level, the quarter, village, town majlises have won respect of the local governments long ago. Today, the villagers, neighbours who are not the Crimean Tatars originally, recognizing the authority and force of the Crimean Tatar self-government, often appeal to the local majlis for assistance in solving urgent issues, concerning to all inhabitants without exception. It can be stated without exaggeration that there is no issue that is important for the local community or any local event that could be done without participation of the village or quarter majlis. Exactly the Crimean Tatar activists are the most active part of the local communities, they often mobilize the population to solve common problems related to water supply, transport communication, educational matters, etc.

Today, when in the country there is a threat to democracy, when there are problems with freedom of speech, when the society is imposed one *correct* view, the view of the ruling party, the Crimean Tatar non-governmental sector feels its responsibility for the destiny of the country. Certainly, the protection of the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatar people, the issue of the national rebirth, preservation and development of their culture, language, and spirituality remains one of the main priorities in the activity of the Crimean Tatar public organizations. But still, the representatives of the Crimean Tatar third sector consider the solution of the Crimean Tatars’ problems is impossible without general democratization of Ukraine, without guaranteeing human and civil rights and freedoms, without the European choice of the country after all.

Today as never before the question to consolidate joint efforts with the Ukrainian and Crimean organizations for the purpose to develop the civil society, democratization of the society, and European integration raises before the Crimean Tatar NGOs.

In my opinion, the Crimean Tatar NGOs should go out from the “ethnic trap” to understand it is impossible to find freedom in a non-free country, to get their own happiness, without happiness of their neighbor. But Ukrainians and

Russians should also realize that the protection of the Crimean Tatars' rights is their cherished cause, their care, their troubles too. Together we can do much, if not everything.

Remembering the history of the Crimean Tatar national movement, the movement that was the only mass human rights movement in the former Soviet Union spread over the whole nation, the Crimean Tatar non-governmental sector can and should become a kind of a locomotive that will move forward and lead other healthy forces of the Crimean society.

Translated by Rustem Abliatif



OKSANA KIS*

FEMINISM IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE: FROM “ALLERGY” TO LAST HOPE

“It isn’t a woman’s business to introduce reforms” (Mykola Azarov, Prime Minister), “when [days] get warmer, and women in Ukrainian cities begin taking off their clothes – that’s great” (Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine), “only the woman must do all the housework” (Yosyp Vinskyi, national deputy).

The start of democratic transformation in all post-communist countries (including Ukraine) had one feature in common, namely an “allergy to feminism” (to quote Barbara Einhorn). Distorted by Communist propaganda, and discredited by Soviet practice, feminist ideas could hardly find resonance and support in the minds of the most educated segment of Ukrainian society. “Emancipated from above” and indoctrinated for decades, Ukrainian women from the era of late Socialism sincerely believed that they were bestowed with the fullest rights, and that gender discrimination did not exist in Ukraine. At the same time, even

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activists of the newly established women's organizations shared the socially prevalent perception of feminism as an alien, unnecessary, and out-of-place phenomenon. This is hardly surprising, for, isolated by the Iron Curtain, Ukrainians (along with the rest of the "Soviet People") missed the second wave of feminism, which took the world by storm in the 1960s and 1970s. And since it was feminist activism that contributed to the emergence and rapid development of women's (and, subsequently, gender) studies in the social sciences and humanities, this had direct bearing upon the academic field.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

In analyzing the process of feminism's flourishing in independent Ukraine, both in the sphere of public activism and in the academic milieu, it should be remembered above all that feminism can hardly be seen as alien. It had taken root and borne fruit in Ukrainian scholarship and public life a century ago. Feminist in its essence and consequences (though perhaps not in its declared goals and form) was the powerful women's movement in Galicia and in eastern Ukraine in the early twentieth century. Similarly, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Ukrainian historians, ethnographers, and folklorists showed an active interest in women's issues; in the early twentieth century, writing on women's issues made it into the oeuvre of leading students of Ukraine's past. Kateryna Hrushevska's ideas of the cultural perception of the woman as a deviation from the male norm, expressed in 1929, anticipated the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* by two decades.

For well-known reasons, the women's movement and women's studies in Ukraine expired for several decades, and hopes for their rebirth arose only after Ukraine gained independence. It was in the early 1990s that pre-Soviet women's organizations resumed their work, and new ones were formed. This period also saw the early stages in the development of women's and gender studies. Like in other countries, activism in Ukraine became closely intertwined with discrimination-related studies. For this reason, any distinction between feminism-as-research-strategy, and feminism-as-social-movement would be purely analytical.

The women's movement and women's studies in today's Ukraine have another characteristic in common – namely the difficulty they have with the very concept of feminism. Due to the lack of adequate knowledge about feminism as an ideology and methodology, the early-1990s society and scholarship fell prey to various myths about feminism, which conditioned noticeable prejudice against it. For a long time neither the activists nor the scholars dared publicly to term themselves feminists, in order to avoid open confrontation. "Gender," a little-known and comparatively neutral term, became a convenient euphemism; this afforded the opportunity to postpone the intense social and scholarly debates (in which the fledgling gender studies had no chance of winning). However, this seemingly good tactical move, had undesirable consequences both for social movements and for research of gender inequality.

ACADEMIC FEMINISM: "TO REACH AND OVERTAKE THE WEST," OR GROWING PAINS

The harbinger of academic feminism was Solomiya Pavlychko's programmatic article,¹ which postulated the need to introduce feminist methodology into social sciences and humanities research in Ukraine as a guarantee of civilizational progress. Essentially, the article made Solomiya Pavlychko the main spokeswoman of feminism in Ukraine for a decade.

The incipient years of women's and gender studies (1991–1994) could be termed a *catch up period*. Scholars suddenly discovered the existence of a whole developed and interdisciplinary research field. The awareness of their own backwardness forced them to make a desperate attempt at mastering the theoretical and methodological achievements of Western gender studies. The unavailability of even classic literature in feminist and gender theory, the lack of funding for participation in international academic fora, informational isolation, the language barrier, and the prejudice against women's issues in the Ukrainian academic milieu have made the goal of "catching up with the West" into a *mission impossible*.

1 S. Pavlychko, "Chy potribna ukrains'komu literaturoznavstvu feministychna shkola," *Slovo i Chas* 1991, no. 6, pp. 10–5.

The subsequent years (1995–1999) became a *period of strengthening and initial institutionalization* of women's and gender studies in Ukraine. Several independent gender studies centers were founded at this time (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa, Lviv), a number of national academic conferences took place, and the first translations of the classics of feminist thought were published. At the same time, the earliest local research appeared (Liudmuyla Smoliar, Natalia Lavrinenko, Vira Aheyeva). This period also saw the establishment of *Gendernye issledovania*, the first academic journal, and a number of training sessions for young scholars.²

The next period (2000–2005) became a time of *self-affirmation and consolidation* in gender studies. These years showed a rapid increase in the number of scholars and in their qualifications (as manifested by several dissertations). A number of specialized academic courses in gender studies were developed and taught with support from international donors. The early 2000s also saw an attempt at creating a professional association of gender studies scholars, which testified to a clear quantitative and qualitative growth of this research community. Another testimony of its consolidation was the appearance of formidable academic publications by local scholars (books, collections, special issues of periodicals). However, the main indication of the fact that gender studies in Ukraine were becoming a real academic discipline consisted in the publication of university handbooks.

2006 became a watershed year in many respects, as the Law of Ukraine "On the Provision of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women in Ukraine" entered into force, and the "State Program for Strengthening Gender Equality in Ukrainian Society for the Period until 2010" was passed. Both these documents envisioned state support for gender research. Thus, gender studies entered a *period of maturity and legitimization*, when scholars received greater opportunities for realizing their amassed knowledge and experience to systematically develop the field at institutions of higher learning (in 2010, gender studies departments were founded at five universities). The qualitative jump in gender studies is attested to by the fact that these years saw the defense of a number of doctoral dissertations on gender-related topics. An increasing number of Ukrainian scholars became successfully integrated in the international academic

2 Further information can be found at the website of the Kharkov Center of Gender Studies: <http://www.gender.univer.kharkov.ua/>

community through publications, conferences, and fellowships at the world's top universities. In turn, the academic maturity of some areas of research is attested to by the formation of professional associations for gender studies specialists in some disciplines.

However optimistic the story of gender studies in Ukraine appears, the picture is far more complex. Women's and gender studies in Ukraine emerged at a time of a theoretical vacuum and methodological chaos in scholarship. On the one hand, this allowed them to take root in some disciplines (like literature studies and sociology) in the conditions of academic desolation left behind by Marxism-Leninism. On the other hand, however, the institutional structures, intellectual climate and soil left behind by Soviet scholarship, proved not to be particularly auspicious for feminist critical theory. One such recurring problem in the social sciences and humanities is their ideological engagement, manifested in the clear "national bent" of the research. In particular, the national historical narrative established a hard discursive framework for the studies of the Ukrainian women's past, which significantly decreased the feminist critical potential of women's history as far as overcoming the andro-centric discourses in historical writing is concerned. As a result, women's history was instrumentalized to legitimize the Ukrainian national-state project.

Striving rapidly to overcome their theoretical "backwardness" became another serious trial for many scholars: some decided not to bother with learning the classics of feminist thought, choosing instead to learn postmodern gender theories as quickly as possible. An attempt to "jump over" feminism, and excessive admiration for the postmodern resulted in a divorce between "high" research and the real needs of the women's movement. Gender studies all but lost their social foundation. Another danger for gender studies consists in their popularity. Academic vogue has attracted numerous opportunists who do not bother to delve too deeply into gender theories. Instead, they treat the subject according to their own "average Joe" understanding, breeding extremely distorted (sometimes to the point of being diametrically opposite) ideas of it.

SIDEROADS TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE: NATIONAL PECULIARITIES OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE

The development trajectory of the women's movement has been somewhat different. The revival of old, pre-Soviet, and the creation of new women's organizations in Ukraine began in the late 1980s. The desperate grasping for an ideological foundation for women's activism brought forth the dominance of the maternalistic and national-traditionalist discourses. The first post-Soviet women's organizations positioned themselves as associations of mothers – a culturally legitimized role, allowing them to be heard in the public space. The demands of these groups, rather social than political in nature, proved to be clear and understandable to the general public against the backdrop of the collapse of the Soviet system of social security; thus, their activities found support among Ukrainian women and ensured mass membership. And although at this point nobody raised the question of the discrimination of women, or of gender equality, the fact of mass public activity on behalf of women allowed the activists to acquire valuable experience of organized public action, and adapted society to public activity of women.

Women's organizations of the national bent that started their work in independent Ukraine aimed their chief efforts at promoting national culture and building an independent state. At the same time, they were engaged in active propaganda of Ukrainian matriarchy as embodied in the image of the *Berehynia* (Mother-figure/Keeper/Protectress) – a Goddess-Keeper of women and the hearth, imagined in the context of new national mythology and presented as the ideal of authentic femininity. These public organizations transferred the functions of the *Berehynia* from the private sphere to the public and political sphere, called on women to take care of their large nation-family, and their large home – Ukraine, from the standpoint of a mother/housewife. The actual lobbying of real women's interests and rights remained on the margins of the activity of the most powerful and numerous women's organizations until the mid-1990s.

The first signs of paradigmatic shifts in the women's movement – namely progress towards concentrating on the problem of discrimination against women – emerged during the preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where Ukraine was to present a report on the situation of women in Ukraine, and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. The preparation of this

document brought forth the first extensive research on gender equality in Ukraine. Its findings, which attested to discrimination against women in various spheres, were made public at a parliamentary hearing in 1995. The summary documents of the Fourth Universal Women Conference – the Beijing Declaration, and the Action Platform – became a roadmap for women’s NGOs for the following decade.

In effect, the aforementioned events laid the groundwork for the shaping of state policy on gender equality in Ukraine. It was in 1995 that the first official state body was created (the Committee for Women, Motherhood and Childhood under the auspices of the President of Ukraine), which was officially tasked with monitoring the situation of women. However, at this stage (the late 1990s) the prevailing discourse was still about “improving the situation of women,” which envisioned various steps to be taken in isolated spheres (usually related to the support of the family and motherhood). It was only at the start of the new millennium that an understanding of gender inequality as a systemic flaw of the Ukrainian society that could only be corrected through far-reaching measures took root. Critical in this sense was 2001, when (with vigorous involvement of activists) the new Family Code, as well as the Law of Ukraine “On Preventing Violence in the Family,” and the “National Action Plan to Improve the Situation of Women and Promote the Implementation of Gender Equality in Society for 2001–2005” were developed, lobbied, and subsequently passed.

The second half of the 1990s was a period when powerful women’s organizations arose, whose goals, areas, and forms of activity can be described as strictly feminist (because aimed specifically at overcoming discrimination of women in various spheres). At the same time, it was a period of increased specialization, with some of these organizations focusing on women’s rights advocacy, others concentrating on raising the self-awareness of women and gender awareness, targeting women’s social and legal problems, or else promoting political participation for women.

A characteristic trait in the functioning of women’s public organizations in Ukraine consists in their cooperation with authorities at all levels. Until recently, the women’s movement has not only not stood in opposition to power (though frequently criticizing its activities or rather negligence), but, quite on the contrary – actively sought (and often found) support from state structures for its own initiatives. This situation is typical for societies functioning in the conditions of so-called “hybrid” – meaning quasi-democratic – regimes that exhibit elements of

somewhat controlled civil society to legitimize the dominant authority. In these conditions, public movements are forced to show flexibility in their relations with power, developing different ways to adapt and coexist. Considering the youth and relative weakness of the women's movement in Ukraine, and considering at the same time its appreciable ambition for radical social change, the Ukrainian women's organizations have chosen the path of situational cooperation (rather than confrontation) with the authorities to overcome gender discrimination. And though this state patronage was frequently nominal in character, it allowed the activists to acquire the authority of the state, if only to overcome the various local bureaucratic hurdles more easily. At the same time, Ukraine could submit successful reports to international institutions on active measure being taken to end discrimination against women, thus creating a positive image of a democracy for itself.

This seemingly symbiotic relationship holds serious risks for the women's movement. Chief among them is the fact that the Ukrainian state has developed an exceedingly formal understanding of its commitments with regard to ensuring gender equality. In passing laws, adopting programs, and creating institutions, the Parliament and the government effectively shift responsibility for their full functioning onto the shoulders of women's organizations. On the other hand, by adapting its directions and forms of activity to a level acceptable for the authorities, the women's movement has lost most of its revolutionary potential. The introduction of "gender mainstreaming" as a principle of state policy has shown that the state's appropriation of the idea of gender equality (and its subsequent modification) can prove destructive for the idea itself.

The passing of the Law of Ukraine "On the Provision of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women in Ukraine" (2005), more widely known as the "gender equality law," became a landmark event in the work of women's organizations. The "State Program on Promoting Gender Equality in Ukrainian Society for the Period until 2010," adopted soon afterwards, defined the mechanisms for the practical implementation of the principles declared in the law. Among these principles are the more far-reaching inclusion of civic organizations in the implementation of state policy in the sphere. Public advisory structures to bodies of executive power, comprising activists and experts in gender issues (but with little real leverage over the situation) were to become one of the instruments of public control over the implementation of state policy in the sphere of gender equality.

Properly speaking, in comparison to other postcommunist countries, the Ukrainian state appears reasonably progressive as far as promoting gender equality is concerned: it has been first to pass laws on domestic violence prevention, on gender equality, and on combating human trafficking (2011). But to say that state support for principles of gender equality has been consistent and systematic would be an overstatement. The Supreme Council of Ukraine has rejected the bill on gender quotas in party lists for the time of parliamentary election. Moreover, there are reasons to fear rollbacks, as indicated by the notorious bills on the ban of abortions (No. 10170), and on the ban on the propaganda of homosexuality (No. 8711).

The ambivalent position of the state makes it clear that it cannot be a reliable partner for civil society in ensuring women's rights. This has led to the consolidation of the efforts and potential of scholars, educators, the media, as well as civil rights movements and women's organizations. It is significant that gender studies in Ukraine have reached a level of development that enables them to boast thorough research into gender-related aspects of various social spheres, which provides activists and advocates with convincing arguments to brandish in their dialogue with the authorities. The involvement of educators and journalists is necessary for raising gender awareness and mass propaganda of the ideas of gender equality to ensure changes in the social consciousness. Women's NGOs have taken it upon themselves to educate journalists with regard to gender issues. Work with educators, too, requires special effort, which is why activists had to seek support from the Ministry for Education and Science to hold mass training sessions for teachers.

The question of the role of foreign donors in the emergence of the women's movement in post-Soviet Ukraine has stirred up much discussion and sharp criticism. Despite the many undesirable "side effects" (competition between women's organizations, which slowed down the consolidation process; consumerist and parasitic attitudes, opportunist tendencies and "grant-grubbing"; adapting the types and areas of work done by women's organizations to fit donors' priorities, etc.), one doubtless fact must be acknowledged: without this sort of support from abroad we could hardly conceive of any kind of a consolidated women's movement at all. And though some see the partial "professionalization" of women's activism as harmful, there is no other way to ensure efficient functioning of women's groups in Ukrainian reality.

One group that has presented difficulties for the women's movement in Ukraine in recent years has been Femen. The activities of Femen have generated bitter discussion among the scholars and activists. Opinions and assessments ranged from utter admiration for the "revolutionary nature" and "subversive character" of their street performances, to no less categorical criticism of their events for being unclear on their stand as regards women's rights, and for abusing nudity. Desperate attempts somehow to "inscribe" members of Femen into the palette of the women's movement in Ukraine (in spite of their own overt disinclination to be so inscribed), as well as any discussions of their (anti-)feminist character became moot after the "project" was exported to France.

REDISCOVERED IDENTITY: WOMEN'S ACTIVISM FROM RAISING FEMINIST AWARENESS TO FEMINIST ACTION

A special role in the rise of properly feminist awareness in the milieu of women's activism was played by the annual celebration of the International Women's Day on March 8th. It is no secret that in the days of official Socialism, the original meaning of the International Women's Day was distorted, divested of its feminist essence – women's solidarity in the struggle for their rights – and the holiday itself was used as an occasion for Communist propaganda and a far-reaching mobilization of women for the needs of "building a brighter future." In the final decades of the Soviet Union, the day transmogrified into "the day of spring, beauty, love, and the eternal feminine" – a kind of hybrid of St. Valentine's and Mother's Day. A tradition appeared among the Soviet leadership to publicly congratulate women on this day, which continued in independent Ukraine. The congratulatory texts themselves reflect profound sexism with regard to women, so prevalent in Ukrainian society and thoroughly masked by matriarchal myths. The discourse of these salutations is invariable – the speakers are unanimous in their essentialist view of Ukrainian women, glorifying them above all or even exclusively for their family roles, womanly charms, and other attributes of "true femininity" as dreamed and cultivated by patriarchy. It was precisely these texts that have drawn sharp criticism from feminists, united in their protest against the hypocrisy of the

powers-that-be, who declare their devotion to principles of gender equality while in practice reproducing the most conservative gender stereotypes.³

Sexist pronouncements from the lips of politicians have become increasingly frequent in recent years. Leaders of the ruling political powers keep falling over each other to remind Ukrainian women that “it isn’t a woman’s business to introduce reforms” (Mykola Azarov, Prime Minister), “when [days] get warmer, and women in Ukrainian cities begin taking off their clothes – that’s great” (Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine), “only the woman must do all the housework” (Yosyp Vynskyi, national deputy), “a woman’s highest calling is to be a mother, keeper of the family hearth,” and “man is the higher creature, since woman was created of Adam’s rib, and thus automatically stands on a lower rung” (Volodymyr Lytvyn, Head of the Supreme Council). Lytvyn faced devastating criticism from the women’s movement for this most recent sally. The unique significance of this instance is that it was perhaps the first one to force the women’s organizations both in Ukraine, as well as in the Ukrainian diaspora, to demonstrate a consolidated position and will to combat the attack against women’s rights in Ukraine.

Consistent effort of the activists of the women’s movement to renew the strictly political – i. e. feminist – significance of the International Women’s Day can first be traced to the early 2000s. The earliest steps in this direction were aimed at raising awareness of the holiday and its history. One such step was the all-Ukrainian event of sending letters to various-level officials before March 8, 2009, to explain the true essence of the holiday, and call on them to reject the Soviet pattern of its celebration. This event fostered solidarity in the women’s movement and demonstrated the capacity of grassroots activism. Ultimately, 2009 proved to be a watershed year for the women’s movement, because this was the first time in the history of celebrating March 8 when women’s organizations took women to the streets of Ukrainian cities (Kharkiv, Lviv, Chernivtsi) to protest against existing discrimination and demand equal rights.

A new opportunity to resume societal discussion of the problems of discrimination against women in Ukraine was provided by the 100th anniversary of the first celebration of the International Women’s Day in 1911. The anniversary moved the activists to stage larger-scale and more radical events, aimed above all at raising

3 See, for instance, the Open Letter to the President of Ukraine // Western Analytical Group. March 18, 2008. <http://zgroup.com.ua/article.php?articleid=260>.

feminist awareness. Exhibitions were organized on women's history, and the history of the holiday itself, in different cities of Ukraine, including the capital. Some of these exhibitions subsequently became virtual exhibitions and photo albums.

Especially exemplary in the context of feminist awareness and identity turning into feminist action is the work of the Feminist Offensive, a fairly radical initiative that has united a number of youth women's groups around the ideological platform of feminism (<http://ofenzyva.wordpress.com>) and rejects all forms of collaboration with the authorities. The arrival of the Feminist Offensive can be said to signal the completion of the formative stage of the women's movement in Ukraine, which now has a full spectrum of women's organizations, from the most conservative (traditionalist) to the most radical (anarcho-feminist), including a large segment of feminist groups of the liberal type. Naturally, Ukrainian women's organizations do not exhibit unanimous agreement on their ideological tenets, priorities, and forms of action (nor can such an agreement exist). One attribute, however, that they all do seem to have in common is their recognition of the existing discrimination against women in contemporary Ukraine, and the awareness of the need for change.

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK: GENDER AS A LITMUS TEST OF UKRAINIAN DEMOCRACY

The recent spike in social interest for gender-related topics is hard to overlook. Notably, these topics have galvanized both the adherents of gender equality and its diehard opponents. It is no exaggeration to suppose that the sharpness of the conservative reaction was conditioned precisely by the maturity and increasing influence of the women's movement and gender studies, along with the shift in the appropriate legal basis. At times, polemics around the potential advantages or harm of gender equality for Ukrainian society leave the constraints of civil discussion. Overt and active "warfare" by the opponents of gender equality in Ukraine began in late 2009, with a campaign aimed at discrediting the very concepts of gender and gender policy. It is, likewise, not surprising, that the "anti-gender" campaigns are especially active in Western Ukraine, whose population manifests higher levels of religiosity and loyalty for nationalist ideas. Religious organizations and right-radical political movements have become the chief

engines of the “anti-gender” campaign in the region. Their zeal and the scope of their actions in exposing the “threats” of gender policy is quite astonishing; they stop at nothing to discredit their “ideological foe.” Turning to glaring disinformation and manipulation of the Ukrainians’ consciousness, exploiting their national and religious sentiment, and homophobic prejudice, they present gender policy as a phenomenon aimed exclusively at propagating homosexuality and subverting traditional family values in Ukraine. The state authorities would seem called upon to take steps to stop this overt discreditation of gender policy and the incitement of hatred and intolerance in society. Instead, we are faced with the opposite: some rightwing-dominated local government bodies in Western Ukraine have turned to the national parliament and government with calls to reject gender policy. Attempts to forestall the activities of local gender studies centers are also symptomatic.

In spite of the discouraging tenor of the situation, it does have some positive attributes. According to a recent poll, almost a tenth of Ukrainian women are prepared to call themselves feminists.⁴ Thus, some sort of social groundwork for the dissemination of feminist ideas and practices in Ukraine has been formed. Perhaps for this reason, some political forces, particularly those that position themselves as pro-western and pro-European (UDAR, Ukrainian Platform “Sobor”), have recently shown a keen interest in ideas of gender equality. Another group – the Yuliya Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT in its Ukrainian acronym) – continues to send mixed signals as to its stand on matters of gender equality. On the one hand, deputies from BYuT had once initiated the gender quota bill. On the other hand, a BYuT representative put the abortion ban bill before parliament. It is truly difficult to understand the position of any given political party on gender equality, for in spite of periodically declaring their commitment to this basic tenet of democracy, they rarely take any concrete steps in this direction. Moreover, none of the key political players stress gender issues in election campaigns.⁵

Could the issue of gender equality in Ukraine unite the Ukrainian political sphere? There are grounds for some cautious optimism in this regard – such as

4 A description and findings of this poll can be found here: <http://www.unian.ua/news/520805-v-ukrajini-bilshe-feministok-nij-u-rosiji-i-bilorusi-opituvannya.html>

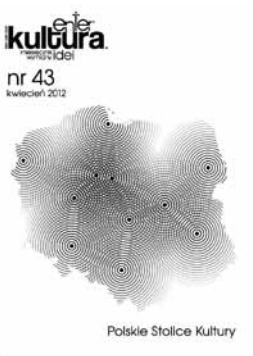
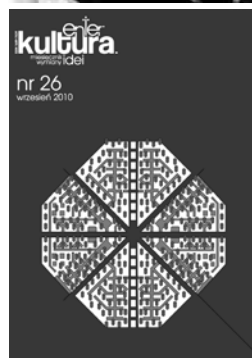
5 A gender analysis of election platforms of 22 political parties, held in September 2012 has confirmed the limited attention they dedicate to these issues: http://vybory2012.wcu-network.org.ua/Zaversheno_gendernu_ocnku_peredviborchix_program_parti

the formation of Equal Opportunities, an interfunctional association of national deputies. However, this promising initiative has not yielded many practical results. It is also notable that the face of Ukraine's opposition today is Yuliya Tymoshenko. For all the controversial character of this political figure, she has really inspired many Ukrainian women to leave the traditional domain of "barefoot and pregnant." Yuliya Tymoshenko's biography could become a classic example of a successful, self-realized, strong woman in a conservative society. However, although seemingly embodying a thoroughly feminist life project, she actively exploits the entire spectrum of stereotypical images of femininity in constructing her political image. Furthermore, she never positioned herself as an advocate for women's rights, and never sought or demonstrated properly *women's* solidarity. Thus, it would be a mistake to regard her as the embodiment of the feminist dream in the Ukrainian political milieu. The same, ultimately, goes for other powerful female figures: none of them (even Liliya Hryhorovych, the leader of the Union of Ukrainian Women) went into politics to overcome gender discrimination.

It would seem that from the early 1990s onwards, the situation has paradoxically changed in favor of feminism. Today we live in a society in which the selfless work of women's organizations and scholars in the field of gender studies over the past two decades has laid a solid groundwork for implementing gender equality. At the same time, mass effort by every kind of conservative group has discredited the very concept of gender and made it effectively unpalatable for the broader public. Over the past twenty years, the Ukrainian state has, on the one hand, hypocritically proclaimed its dedication to democratic principles of gender equality before the world community and named gender equality one of the priorities of state policy (supporting these promises with legal documents), while on the other hand taking hardly any practical steps towards implementing its declarations, allowing the continued discrimination of women in all spheres, at all levels, and in all forms. However, there's no reason to become despondent at the moment: the Ukrainian state has to honor its international commitments no matter what if it does not wish to find itself in international isolation. Against this backdrop of general confusion, we are finally seeing a chance, as Solomiya Pavlychko once put it, "to call a spade a spade": to call the struggle against the discrimination of women in Ukraine feminism, and to term the analysis of the manifestations and mechanisms of patriarchy feminist studies.

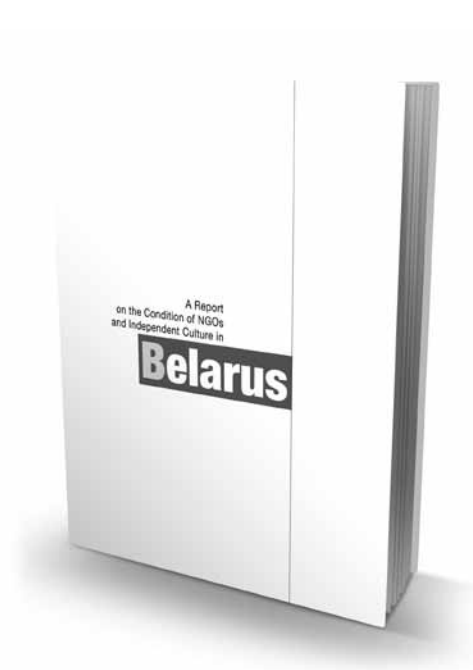
Translated by Pavlo Hrytsak

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