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Why privatization of Odesa Port Plant failed

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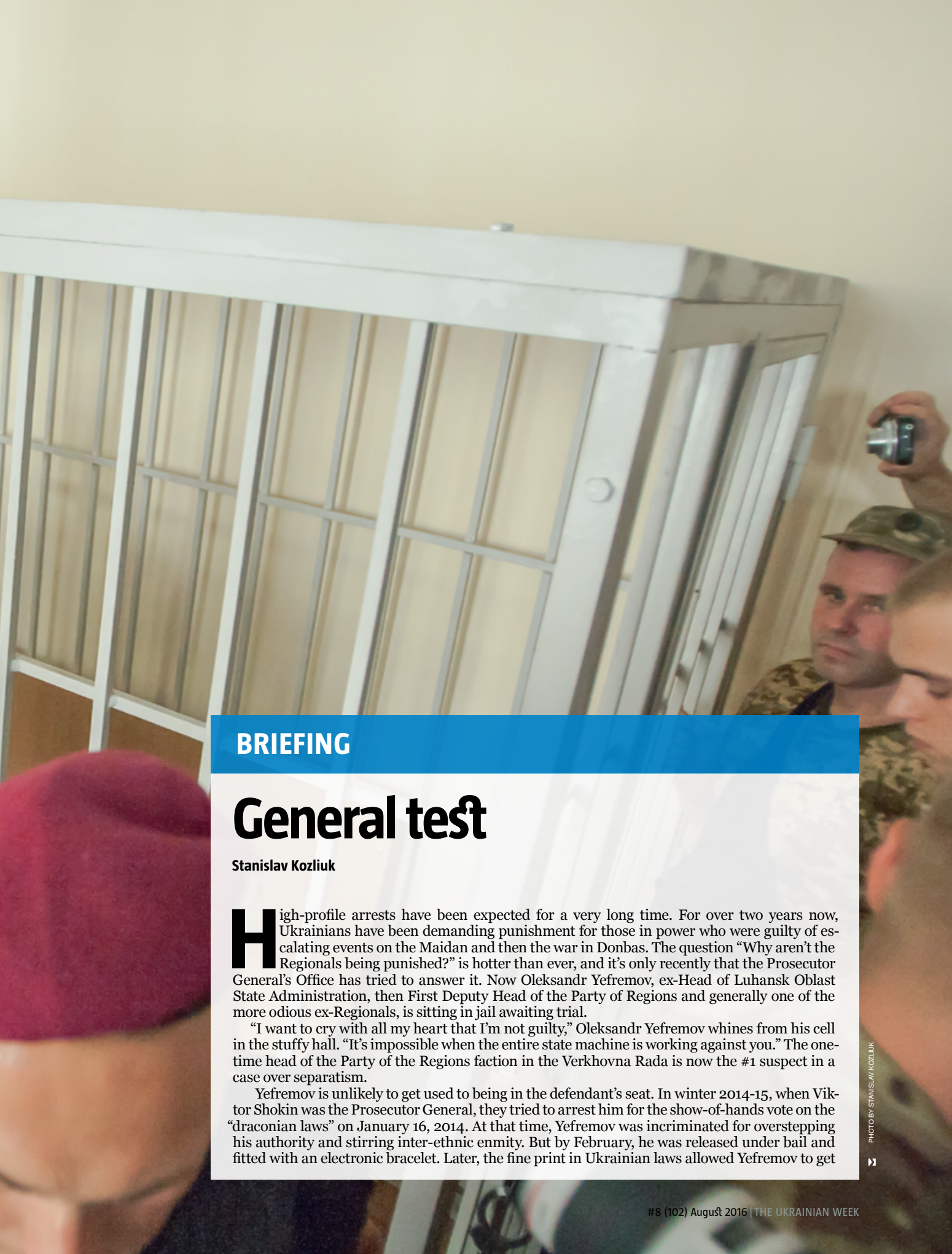
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BRIEFING

General test

Stanislav Kozliuk

High-profile arrests have been expected for a very long time. For over two years now, Ukrainians have been demanding punishment for those in power who were guilty of escalating events on the Maidan and then the war in Donbas. The question “Why aren’t the Regionals being punished?” is hotter than ever, and it’s only recently that the Prosecutor General’s Office has tried to answer it. Now Oleksandr Yefremov, ex-Head of Luhansk Oblast State Administration, then First Deputy Head of the Party of Regions and generally one of the more odious ex-Regionals, is sitting in jail awaiting trial.

“I want to cry with all my heart that I’m not guilty,” Oleksandr Yefremov whines from his cell in the stuffy hall. “It’s impossible when the entire state machine is working against you.” The one-time head of the Party of the Regions faction in the Verkhovna Rada is now the #1 suspect in a case over separatism.

Yefremov is unlikely to get used to being in the defendant’s seat. In winter 2014-15, when Viktor Shokin was the Prosecutor General, they tried to arrest him for the show-of-hands vote on the “draconian laws” on January 16, 2014. At that time, Yefremov was incriminated for overstepping his authority and stirring inter-ethnic enmity. But by February, he was released under bail and fitted with an electronic bracelet. Later, the fine print in Ukrainian laws allowed Yefremov to get

PHOTO BY STANISLAV KOZLIUK



rid of even that, get back his passport and freely move around in Ukraine.

Later he was jailed once again. On July 30, 2016, at 07:28, he was removed from an Austrian Airlines flight enroute to Vienna and arrested right in Boryspil Airport. This time, he was accused by the Prosecutor General of far more serious crimes: acting in a way to change the territorial boundaries of Ukraine, providing organizational and other support at the time when LNR was emerging, and, for the icing on the cake, of stealing assets belonging to LuhanskVuhillia, the regional coal association.

Had the accusations been limited to just this last item, Mr. Yefremov might have easily expected that he would once again be released on bail and the familiar little bracelet on his arm. However, infringing on the territorial integrity of the country was a far more serious accusation. At this point, there was no alternative to detention in a pre-trial facility, known as SIZO in Ukrainian. The intriguing question at the court hearing this time was just one: Would the former PR leader walk free this time and how would he manage that? There were two possible options: violations of procedure during the arrest of the politician which would allow the infamous Pechersk Court to let the suspect go free, or a simple delay in the process. In the second case, the lawyers had to drag the court hearing out until the morning of August 2. That would pass the 72-hour time limit during which preventive measures with regard to the suspect needed to be decided and Yefremov would then be free as the wind in the Luhansk steppes.



THE EX-PR LEADER IN THE RADA HAS BEEN SENTENCED TO TWO MONTHS IN THE SIZO. HE HAS LITTLE REASON TO FEEL OPTIMISTIC BECAUSE HIS CASE IS INTENDED TO BE A DEMONSTRATION

For the PGO, this arrest was an all-or-nothing move. If it won, that is, if it got to arrest the odious Regional, the PGO could get to wear a big star for “downing a pilot” and show everyone who had accused it of doing nothing to investigate so many cases related to separatism, that it had put a blue-and-white politician behind bars. In other words, “We may be working slowly, but we’re working. Expect more arrests.”

But if the PGO lost and Yefremov was released, there would not have been enough fingers on the hands in all four sides of the courtroom to calculate the loss of reputation of the government in general and Yuriy Lutsenko as the new Prosecutor General in particular. What’s more, President Poroshenko’s opponents would have a great excuse to get into fights on television talk-shows. So the arrest and punishment of Yefremov is a matter of principle and a case that will boost all kinds of ratings.

His lawyers decided to drag things out. In the hearing hall, they confidently insisted that the Prosecutor’s request to arrest Yefremov was granted only the day before the court hearing, on July 31 in the evening. So, as they put it, they hadn’t had enough time to agree to a strategy for their defendant and to overcome this error they would need at least three hours just to familiarize themselves with the materials in the case. The court sustained this demand but limited the lawyers to just 40 minutes.

This was probably the first hint that “cutting a deal” with the justice system did not work this time. So it looks as though the PGO has actually managed to put together some more-or-less serious evidence of Yefremov’s guilt in events from two years ago. Here, there is his likely role in the takeover of Oblast State Administration and SBU buildings in Luhansk (see The surrender of Luhansk SBU at ukrainianweek.com for more details), and in organizing demonstrations in support of Donbas joining Russia.

Testimony about these events began to come from Tornado, the scandalous volunteer battalion, in particular Mykola Tsukur. They claim that their first testimony from 2014 mysteriously disappeared from the military prosecutor’s office. And now the GPO has to reconstruct them. The Tornado witnesses also claimed that Yefremov’s people tried to negotiate with them, but they refused to cooperate. Not long ago, another ex-PR deputy and Yefremov’s fellow homeboy, Volodymyr Landik, showed up again. In his recent comments to the press, Landik has openly accused Yefremov of being a principal in these crimes.

After the fiasco of their first delaying tactics, Yefremov’s lawyers decided to try another approach: they proposed examining the evidence presented to the PGO and, if possible, interrogating witnesses. This would have meant the court not only working until dawn but actually sitting without interruption in the courtroom for several days. The folks in the black gowns did not agree to this and remained implacable: the norms of the Criminal Procedural Code stated that when selecting preventive measures, there was no obligation to engage in a detailed review of the materials of the case. At this, the court withdrew to the deliberation chambers. It became clear that, unless Yefremov suddenly became sick and an ambulance appeared on the scene, by evening he would be in an SBU detention cell.

Perhaps the situation would have changed had there been any associates of the Luhansk Regional, but not one PR or Opposition Bloc deputy showed up. At previous hearings, Yefremov’s support group included Natalia Korolevska, Yuriy Voropayev, Tetiana Bakhteyeva, and Mykhailo Dobkin, but this time the “boss of Luhansk Country” was left pretty much on his own with the prosecutors. The overwhelming impression was that his former comrades had decided to write off their colleague. Instead, the room was filled with his opponents: Narodniy Front’s Andriy Levus and Yuriy Bereza, Samopomich’s Semen Semenchenko and Svoboda’s Yuriy Levchenko. There were also rank-and-file activists from Aidar and Dnipro-1 battalions. Were the court to rule in favor of Yefremov, they had simply threatened not let him out of the room.

So far, things have not turned violent. The ex-PR leader in the Rada has been sentenced to two months in the SIZO, which he will probably spend in an SBU cell. His lawyers are preparing an appeal, but have not named a specific date so far. They only said that they would be prepared to say something specific after August 5, when they see the entire text of the court ruling. However, the boss man of Luhansk has little reason to feel optimistic: because this case is intended to be a demonstration, the decisions of the lowest court will, of course, remain in force. As for Ukrainians, they can probably get ready to enjoy the showcase trial of a top-tier politician from Party of the Regions. ■

Oleksiy Donskiy:

“Sometimes lawyers defending a lower level official are actually protecting the interests of the kingpin”



In October 2012, Ukraine’s Prosecutor General launched a major building project in the courtyard of its own offices on vul. Riznytska in Kyiv. Local residents complained about the endless noise and sometimes even about huge cracks that were appearing in their walls, actually tearing their residences apart. After the odious Viktor Pshonka followed his “patron,” Viktor Yanukovich into exile, his subordinates began to look into the crimes of their boss and determined that, prior to fleeing abroad, Pshonka managed to make nearly UAH 70 million on his little skyscraper and on renovations to other offices of the PGO. In 2014, the agency that was once run by Pshonka finally began to investigate his crimes. *The Ukrainian Week* spoke to the PGO Senior Prosecutor Oleksiy Donskiy about the financial crimes of the one-time Prosecutor General, money-laundering centers, and the base of evidence collected in this case.

So how did the Pshonka case start?

In summer 2014, materials came to the PGO from the National Security and Defense Council with accusations of crime. It was not just about the embezzlement of UAH 69 million during PGO con-

Interviewed
by **Stanislav
Kozliuk**

struction (the skyscraper on vul. Riznytska - **Ed.**), but also about abuse of power, bribery and so on. The trouble was that most of the claims were either not supported by evidence or were overly generalized. For instance, someone wrote that Pshonka was appointed for money. Who looked into it... nothing was specific. Or, say, someone mentioned a bribe to have a case closed and states which one. We interrogated the people involved and they all deny it. So as it stands, we’ve only been able to accuse him of embezzlement. You have to understand that in bringing someone to justice, there have to be established and confirmed facts and evidence. Even suspicion has to be justified and be based on documents, witness testimonies and so on, according to law.

Did the materials presented state who was getting bribes? Is it possible to bring those individuals to justice?

The problem is lack of evidence even at the level of confirming suspicions, never mind the kind of evidence that is needed for this category of crime. The classic approach is to record the transfer of a bribe as it happens. In this case, there was obviously no such recording. And those who are ac- ➤

Born in Kyiv on March 20, 1978, **Oleksiy Donskiy** graduated from the Yaroslav Mudryi National Legal Academy of Ukraine in Kharkiv and the Institute for Prosecutorial Personnel in 2000. He has worked in the Prosecutor's Offices in investigative posts since March 2000, starting as the investigator in the PO of the Podilskiy District of Kyiv.

Since April 2008, Donskiy has been working in the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. In June 2016, he became the assistant director of the management of the procedural administration for criminal cases investigated by the administration of special investigations in the Department of Special Investigations under the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

cused of being involved obviously deny everything. There is nobody who will either admit to the Prosecutor General that they gave a bribe or, if they did not pay, will state for the record that someone demanded one from them.

It's very hard to say what exactly the NSC information was based on.

So far, how many people have been sued for the embezzlement of the UAH 69mn? Who's wanted in this case?

So far, five people have been convicted. They are the ones who made it possible to embezzle this amount of money. Four of them have already been sentenced. In the fifth case, Pshonka's lawyers are working on an appeal. They are also trying to file suit in the cassation courts against two of the sentences that are already in effect. These sentences involve those who cooperated with the investigation, pleaded guilty, and actively exposed other accomplices in the crime. So it's hardly surprising that these sentences don't suit Pshonka's own lawyers.

Two more individuals are in custody right now, including Borys Kruk, the son of Yuriy Kruk, who was a deputy from Batkivshchyna and then Party of the Regions. These two suspects have been taken into custody as a preventive measure. Unfortunately, our criminal procedural law and judges themselves are sometimes overly humane towards individuals who are suspected for good reason in especially serious crimes involving corruption. Ukrainian law requires that, in those cases where custody is chosen as a preventive measure for such crimes, the alternative of bail has to also be available.

In short, the key figure in this particular case is the director of one of the Odesa branches of a bank, without whom the UAH 69mn could not have been embezzled. He made it possible for the money that Pshonka stole to be withdrawn using documents involving straw man counterparts. This individual refused to carry out his procedural obligations prior to the preventive measure being applied: he failed to appear in Kyiv supposedly because he couldn't afford the travel costs. Now, he's out on bail, since the court offered the alternative of UAH 97,000 bail (about US \$4,000 - **Ed.**), which is the lowest possible bail. The prosecutors had asked for bail of UAH 5mn. But neither the investigating judge in the district court nor the appeals judge listened to us and so this guy, who "didn't have" UAH 400 to come in for questioning, immediately "found" UAH 97,000 in order not to sit in the SIZO.

The court then demonstrated its humaneness once again regarding this banker, who has categorically refused to cooperate with the investigation, and withdrew his ban on leaving the place of his permanent residency. Now he can freely move anywhere in the country.

Another suspect is the joint organizer and accountant of the conversion center (conversion centers are equivalents of centers laundering money and legitimizing illegally gained cash into acceptably legitimate sums – **Ed.**). Thanks to her, money was acquired and converted to cash using forged documents. The appeals court reduced her bail from UAH 5mn to UAH 1mn, which someone paid for her and so she's also been released.

Incidentally, for this particular group of "converters," helping Pshonka embezzle UAH 69mn is hardly the first such episode. According to evidence in the investigation, they have been breaking the law for at least 15 years now. We found quite a few criminal cases tied to such commercial crimes, in particular, the laundering of dirty money. You're talking about tens of millions of hryvnias. However, in every one of these cases, there was a point when the investigation was blocked in one way or another. For instance, one of the cases was "coincidentally" dropped just as these same UAH 69mn were actively being converted to cash. Obviously, that was no coincidence.

How many people are currently on the wanted list?

Right now, we're looking for two people: Viktor Pshonka and his son and former deputy, Artem Pshonka. We're pretty certain, though, that there are many more accomplices in this crime. It couldn't have been done without the cooperation of PGO officials. But proving their guilt is a different matter, as there is the basic principle of reasonable suspicion.

We're continuing to collect evidence and the important point here is not to allow potential suspects any opportunity to avoid justice, which happens all too often when the individuals are informed that they are under suspicion prior to sufficient conclusive evidence of their guilt being collected.

In March this year, you were removed from the case. Why was that? Did you run into a conflict with someone?

On March 18, the investigating judge of the Pechersk District Court, Khrystyna Tarasiuk, sustained an application by one defendant's lawyer to remove me from the case. This particular lawyer had violated the principles of ethical behavior on the part of an advocate in representing, not the interests of his client, but those of Borys Kruk, whose main objective came down to preventing his client from testifying—which was against her own interests. There weren't any conflicts on my part, only Kruk's desire to remove me from the case, although at that point he hadn't been accused of any crime. He clearly thought that this was the way to solve his problems with the law, because changing investigators, prosecutors and investigative offices in order to block a case from moving forward is standard practice, as I mentioned earlier. In this case, as we can see, it didn't help him.

The decision to remove me was made by a judge whose illegal actions I had mentioned in the past. She had violated the reasonable terms for launching a case over the shootings on the Maidan. At that time, MP Serhiy Leshchenko had filed a complaint against her with the Higher Qualification Commission of Judges about violating her oath of office, but for some strange reason, it has not been reviewed to this day, more than 18 months later.

What constituted the violation then?

Failure to review a petition within a reasonable amount of time. At the end of 2014, we were supposed to have been granted access to information about connections to Russian mobile operators whose subscribers were in direct contact with Viktor Yanukovich during the shooting of demonstrators on Institutaska on February 20. The Criminal Procedural Code does not specify a timeframe within which such petitions should be handled. However, Art. 28 of the Code says that every procedural action of procedural decision should be executed within the “acceptable timeframes” necessary to carry them out. Access to phones we typically get within two or three days. In this case, it was really critical for us to get it within the shortest time possible. Right from the start, Judge Tarasiuk scheduled this petition to be reviewed only in 11 days, and then, without any grounds, delayed it for another 8 days. How can anyone talk about a swift investigation under these conditions?

I asked Tarasiuk through her assistance to review the petition in the shortest possible time after she failed to review it in the initial 11-day term she had set! Of course, she was offended by this, because the next day I received a baseless refusal to sustain the petition. Of course, a few days later a different investigating judge sustained our petitions. Still, I decided to publicly mention interference in the investigation of the murders on the Maidan. I’m sure she did not forget about that.

What were the grounds for the judge to remove you from the case?

To keep it short, we had a suspect—he’s been convicted at this point—who, against his own interests as a defendant, refused to provide any testimony for six months. Then he admitted openly in court that his lawyers, at the request of another accomplice in the case, were pressuring him, trying to force him to remain silent. After this, the suspect began to fully cooperate with the investigation, exposing other participants, and so a plea bargain was signed with him.

The situation with the suspect whose lawyers asked me to be removed was the same. This suspect was informed in the presence of his attorney—who has since been proven to be Kruk’s trustee—about the plans of the investigative team. She declared herself prepared to provide testimony in court regarding the allegations against her. But just a few hours later, her lawyer called after a confidential meeting with his client, and informed us that his client would not be testifying.

Obviously, in a situation where a similar precedent had taken place with another suspect in the

case, this sudden change of behavior required some explanation. We at least needed to determine whether she had made this decision voluntarily. When a suspect says that she wants to testify but changes her mind after her lawyer talks to her, this reminds you of the mafia movies of the 1990s.

As the prosecutor, I was supposed to meet with the suspect, primarily to make sure that she wasn’t under any pressure. In addition, we had to determine how she might be protected, tell her about her right to provide testimony that might lead to a lighter sentence for her. Prosecutors are obligated, not just empowered, to meet with suspects who are in custody, including one-on-one, without the presence of their lawyers.

Just when I was planning such a visit, Judge Tarasiuk sustained the petition of the lawyer to have me removed. Moreover, this was done without even bringing the suspect into court. In any case, the suspect ended up agreeing to cooperate with the investigation and confirmed that Kruk himself had been trying to prevent her from providing testimony and actively defending herself.



THE PROBLEM IN A BRIBE CRIME IS LACK OF EVIDENCE EVEN AT THE LEVEL OF CONFIRMING SUSPICIONS. THOSE WHO ARE ACCUSED OF BEING INVOLVED OBVIOUSLY DENY EVERYTHING

There is one fundamental aspect that we too often see in cases involving particularly serious crimes carried out by a group of individuals, including crimes involving corruption. The lawyers who are supposed to be defending the middle or lower echelon accomplices are, in fact, defending the interests of the kingpins in the crime, which is against all the principles of the lawyer-client relationship and ethics. In this kind of situation, the lawyer’s main purpose is not to allow the suspect to say anything, to simply shut them up by promising them something. The goal is to break the incriminating links at the lowest possible level so that only those who carried out the orders get blamed, preferably secondary players.

And if these underlings only received verbal orders when carrying out their part in the crime, the evidence can only come from their verbal testimony. So how can anyone talk to a defendant and persuade them to testify, if the only person who has the inviolable right to talk to them confidentially is their lawyer—which effectively means whoever organized the crime—, while the prosecutor has no such right? If the lawyer functions as a channel to the organizer of the crime, while the suspect is afraid to say something in his presence, what then? Where is the two-sidedness and balance?

The mechanisms that are currently in the Criminal Procedural Code are basically sufficient for the investigator and prosecutor to be able to communicate with suspects one-on-one, preferably at the express wish of said suspect, of course. The right of a lawyer to engage in such communication is unconditional and unlimited. ■

Just not yet

Lyubomyr Shavalyuk

Why the auction to sell Odesa Port Plant failed

The tender for the privatization of Odesa Port Plant (OPP) was much-anticipated. The preparations took nearly a year. It was supposed to become the first in a series of large enterprises denationalized after the Maidan, to provide proof of the new government's loyalty to the principles of market economy, transparency and efficiency, and to demonstrate to international investors that the transformations taking place in the country are irreversible and are being implemented steadily. Unfortunately, this did not happen. When the deadline for submitting the bids expired, it turned out that there were none. The answer to why this happened is simple: OPP was not ready for privatization.

First of all, the plant did not have adequate managers. The arrest of the head of OPP's Supervisory Board Serhiy Pereloma and of the First Deputy Chairman of the Board Mykola Schurikov accused of embezzling its assets worth hundreds of millions of hryvnias is a sign that this state-owned company, as in many similar cases, has most likely bred too many parasites. Solving this problem, a typical one for the country, had to be an indispensable part of preparing OPP for privatization. Ihor Bilous, Head of the State Property Fund, said that the arrest of the plant's managers could not disrupt the tender. However, embezzlement means that the company's actual financial performance is understated, decreasing its real value and making the plant less attractive to investors.

Second, the problem of the company's debt remains unsolved. In mid-2013, entities owned by oligarch Dmytro Firtash supplied natural gas to OPP. This created a debt of \$193 million. This amount is still on the company's books as liabilities. Together with \$53 million in penalties for delay in payment, this amounts to almost \$250 million of financial claims, which Firtash's entities took to the arbitration in Stockholm.

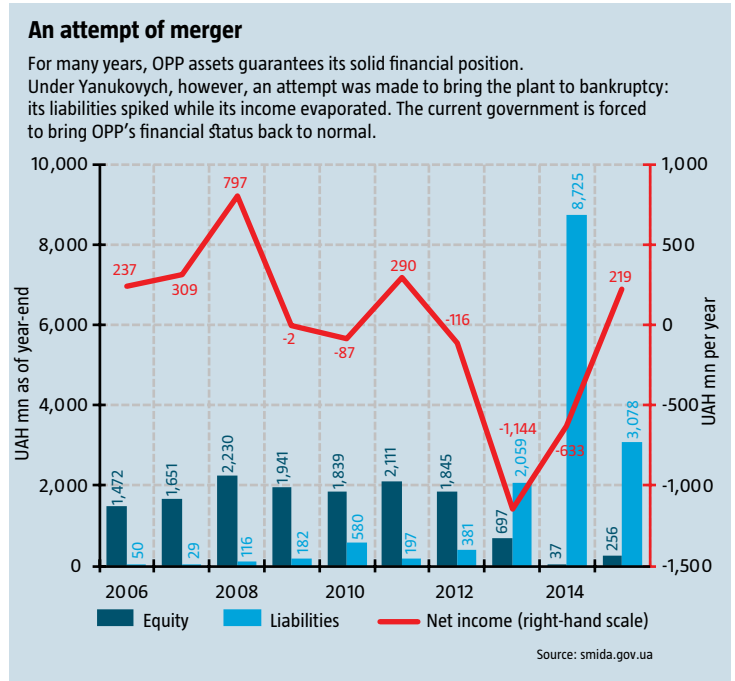
Another side of the coin which no one discusses is why the OPP didn't take a simple bank loan to buy the gas back in 2013, instead of working directly with the entities owned by Firtash? The company's financial situation has always been strong, so getting a loan could not be a problem. Why did the plant show surprising losses that same year? Why did the net worth of a powerful plant with a solid list of strategic advantages (including ammonia pipeline, location next to the port, and fertilizers handling capacity), which ensured its consistent financial stability, fell almost to zero over just two years? The answer to all these questions is quite obvious: the plant was deliberately being bankrupted and prepared for the forced sale to Firtash in compensation for the artificially imposed debt. This scheme was generated under Yanukovich.

As a result, the company formally owes Firtash money and currently has nowhere to find it to pay off

its debt. The SPFU should have dealt with this situation before listing OPP for privatization. There were several possible solutions to the problem: selling these liabilities to other entities, so that the state could gradually deal with them, or taking a loan, for instance, from the Savings Bank (such loan appeared on the OPP books in 2014, but disappeared from there last year). None of these options have been implemented, and the problem remained. According to rough estimates, the real value of the plant is now about \$250 million lower than it could be, because the new owner will have to pay off the debts.

Third, there is a much longer information trail also associated with OPP. It starts with the unsuccessful attempt of selling it in 2009, when Nortima LLC controlled by oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky won the privatization tender and was ready to pay UAH 5 billion for the company (over \$600 million at the time). However, the tender results were canceled because, as they say, the then Prime Minister Tymoshenko had other plans for it.

At the first glance, back then the state was wrong to adopt an unprecedented and a very dubious decision. So, Kolomoisky has every reason to expect to win in court. The oligarch is now exercising information pressure on the potential investors by stating his firm intention to challenge the results of this previous tender. It is clear that investors will be reluctant to



buy an asset that they could lose only because someone once wanted to buy it. However, one question remains: Why has Kolomoisky not started the proceedings concerning the cancellation of OPP privatization in 2009 to this day? The answer seems to be simple. Under Yanukovich, he had no chances of winning. After the Maidan, OPP received a new management connected to Kolomoisky, owing in no small measure to then-premier Arseniy Yatsenyuk's efforts. It is quite possible that the Kolomoisky managed to siphon off part of the company's cash flows without any privatization, and had no special reasons to struggle to own it officially.

Of all the SPFU failures, the starting price definitely wins the garland. On May 18, 2016, a Cabinet meeting approved that the state-owned stake of 99.6% OPP shares would be sold at the price starting from UAH 13,175 million, or \$523 million.

In 2009, when OPP was put up for sale, its starting price was about \$500 million. A year earlier, the company earned a record profit of UAH 797 million, which then equaled \$151 million. This became possible thanks to the super-high global prices for fertilizers, combined, however, with the high prices for natural gas). If the plant were sold before the crisis, then, given this level of profits, it could easily be sold for \$1 billion, or even for \$1.5-1.8 billion. But in 2009, when the crisis was in full swing, and the prices for fertilizers and natural gas declined significantly, the value of the plant naturally decreased. Therefore, the starting price determined by the SPFU was more or less fair. The sum of over \$600 million that Kolomoisky was willing to pay at that time was slightly lower than the maximum that the government could expect to receive at that time, but given the global situation and the lack of buyers, the price was reasonable (the price was right, but the timing was wrong).

Today, the price for gas and fertilizer is 1.5-2 times lower than the lowest for 2009, and 4 times lower than the highest for 2008. It is clear that the profits earned by OPP in 2008 divided by 4 would today be the limit of expectations, but last year the company did not earn as much (probably due to embezzlement). How could the starting price under such conditions be set at the level of 2009, considering also that seven years ago the plant had no debts, and now it has plenty of them on its books?

According to experts, Swiss investment bank UBS, which advised the SPFU, recommended the starting price of \$300 million, a figure that is adequate to the current situation and which, in case of a real competition among the buyers, could increase quite noticeably in the bidding process. But eventually either the Fund or the Government decided for some reason to heed the advice of some "independent appraisers."

The Ukrainian Week already wrote that the enterprises still remaining in state ownership (**see Issue #7 at ukrainianweek.com**) have numerous unsolved problems and difficulties in management. No one is in a hurry to clean this all up, forget about any systematic work. OPP is not an exception. Its problems are further aggravated by the lack of the guarantees of uninterrupted gas supply (which was mentioned as if unintentionally in his comments by the managing director of Firtash's Group DF Boris Krasnyansky, as well as by Bilous). Recently, Ukrtransgaz announced its in-

tention to turn off gas supplies to the plant, but then the problem was allegedly solved. But this is again a typical example for Ukraine, when the oligarchs, acting through officials controlled by them, use infrastructure to pull the plug on other businesses that they don't like. The owners of ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih (former Kryvorizhstal) who have been working in Ukraine for 10 years now can cite numerous everyday examples: every now and then Ukrainian Railways would run short of cars to transport their products, or have some problems with railroad tracks, or some difficulties in ports would arise.

Such superficiality of the Ukrainian officials has repeatedly negatively affected the entire country. However, this is not an isolated problem. At the other extreme, it has another huge flaw: literalism and excessive and unbelievable number of formalities. The deep understanding and thorough study of each issue takes time.

 **OPP WAS DELIBERATELY BEING BANKRUPTED AND PREPARED FOR THE FORCED SALE TO DMYTRO FIRTAH IN COMPENSATION FOR THE ARTIFICIALLY CREATED DEBT TO HIS ENTITIES. THIS SCHEME WAS GENERATED UNDER YANUKOVYCH**

The third flaw is the inadequate perception of the situation. We can assume that the starting price of \$523 million is a political decision motivated by the active cooperation with the West and the hopes that the very fact of this interaction would help find investors. But for nearly a year now, Ukraine has been unable to resume its cooperation with the IMF, although the demands of the latter are very specific, and the action plan is incredibly detailed. Foreign investors look at the situation more realistically. Meanwhile, no country's officials showed such adequate perception of the situation, at least not in the public information space, until the failure of the OPP privatization tender.

Summarizing the above, Ukraine's officials should talk (or promise) less, curb their appetites and start working more efficiently, instead of giving the appearance of working. Then, probably, the fourth flaw — lack of communication — could be withdrawn from the agenda. Why the lack of bids for the OPP privatization tender was a disappointment to many? Because the expectations, even those of the insiders, were exaggerated, while the outsiders believed the tall tales that they were being told.

In summary, in order to overcome the chronic problems of the state machine leading to failures such as the OPP privatization, people who have the will for that would have to deal with the law, with corrupt officials, with the poor culture of the civil service, with the oligarchs and their money and, eventually, with time. Is this an adequate task? In general, yes. But not today, because the alignment of forces in the society does not encourage change (for the lack of intellect, energy, and the people aspiring to make a difference). The situation with the OPP privatization once again proves that the oligarchs are too strong, the state is too weak, and the officials are too inadequate. ■

We can't—or we won't?

Oleksandr Kramar

Ukraine imports many simple consumer items that could be domestically manufactured at a time when a large swath of Ukrainians is either jobless or does not have a steady source of income

Ukrainians spend close to UAH 1 trillion on imports every year. Last year, officially US \$37.5bn was bought, although a good portion of imports is brought in on fixed contracts with artificially low prices or are simply contraband. What's more official figures from Derzhstat show that the proportion of imports to Ukrainian-made consumer goods in retail networks has tended to grow over the last 10 years. Where in 2005, the share of all imported goods sold by Ukrainian retailers was 29.5%, by 2013, it was up to 42.8%, nearly half again as much.

In the last two years, domestic products have won back a tiny share of the market, inching up from 57.2% to 58.1%. But when we consider that this tiny drop in imported goods took place at a time when the hryvnia plunged to a third of its former value, meaning that foreign-made goods tripled in value, it's clear that this represents a serious threat, not just to a rapid recovery, but to real growth in the share of Ukrainian-made goods in the foreseeable future.

Curiously enough, the share of critical imports—energy and raw materials—has been shrinking year after year, as has spending on imported machinery and equipment necessary to modernize the country's economy, while foreign-made consumer goods have steadily strengthened their positions on Ukraine's domestic market. Replacing these goods with Ukrainian-made ones would have a major positive impact on the country's economy, which has continued to decline—the volume of goods and services produced per capita remains well below both 1991 and 2008 levels. It would also provide jobs for millions of Ukrainians who are unemployed today.

THE LOGIC OF IMPORT SUBSTITUTION, UKRAINIAN-STYLE

The need for import substitution in Ukraine has no relationship with the idea of autarchy or self-sufficiency, which is common of totalitarian regimes that want to isolate themselves and oppose the world around them. It should be based on common sense and on a need to mitigate the excessive dependence of the domestic market on imports of an enormous range of consumer goods.

In 2015, Ukraine's workforce, not including the occupied territories, amounted to 19.9mn people of working age—excluding those who are studying or cannot work for health reasons—, and 0.7mn people of pensionable age who were still working (**see Employment**). The rest, one way or another, is simply

hidden unemployment, which can currently be estimated at about 10mn of able-bodied Ukrainians. The fact that they somehow manage to find part-time, temporary or irregular work for pay, which Derzhstat, the statistics agency, categorizes as “self-employed” does not really change the reality.

In the current economic situation, setting up a greenfield export-oriented business is hard for small businesses, and even for a good chunk of medium ones. This is especially true if it involves entering markets that are distant and not traditional for the particular sector. This process needs to be linked to getting Ukraine plugged into the global chains of transnational corporations and to the



THE SHARE OF CRITICAL IMPORTS—ENERGY AND RAW MATERIALS—HAS BEEN SHRINKING YEAR AFTER YEAR, WHILE FOREIGN-MADE CONSUMER GOODS HAVE STEADILY STRENGTHENED THEIR POSITIONS ON UKRAINE'S DOMESTIC MARKET

individual success of big domestic business, and a portion of medium ones as well.

But historically, the success of Ukrainian SMEs, especially those that are start-ups, has the best chances when started precisely with winning a share of the domestic market. This generally includes both setting up new greenfield manufacturing and transferring part of a partner's technology and manufacturing facilities to Ukraine under various forms of collaboration, be it on a cooperative or a license basis. Once a business is successful on the domestic market and has developed some “muscle,” such domestic firms can also try entering foreign markets.

This kind of strategy should go hand in hand with the process of European and global corporations setting up subsidiaries in Ukraine and should play the key role in providing a new, populous layer

Employment

Of 20.6 million able-bodied Ukrainians:

- 8.8mn are employed in the public and private sectors. As of 2015, 760,000 were either put on shorter hours or forced to take leave without pay.
- 2.5mn were registered as sole entrepreneurs (FOP), a large proportion of whom exist on paper because of red tape related to stopping their activities.

of independent local businesses. Betting exclusively on the production capacities, especially export oriented ones, of transnational corporations or on tolling schemes is dangerous in the long run: since such corporations are not tied to Ukraine in any way except for reliable flows of profits from their facilities here, they will be the first to move those facilities to another country the minute the global situation changes.

PROMISING NICHES

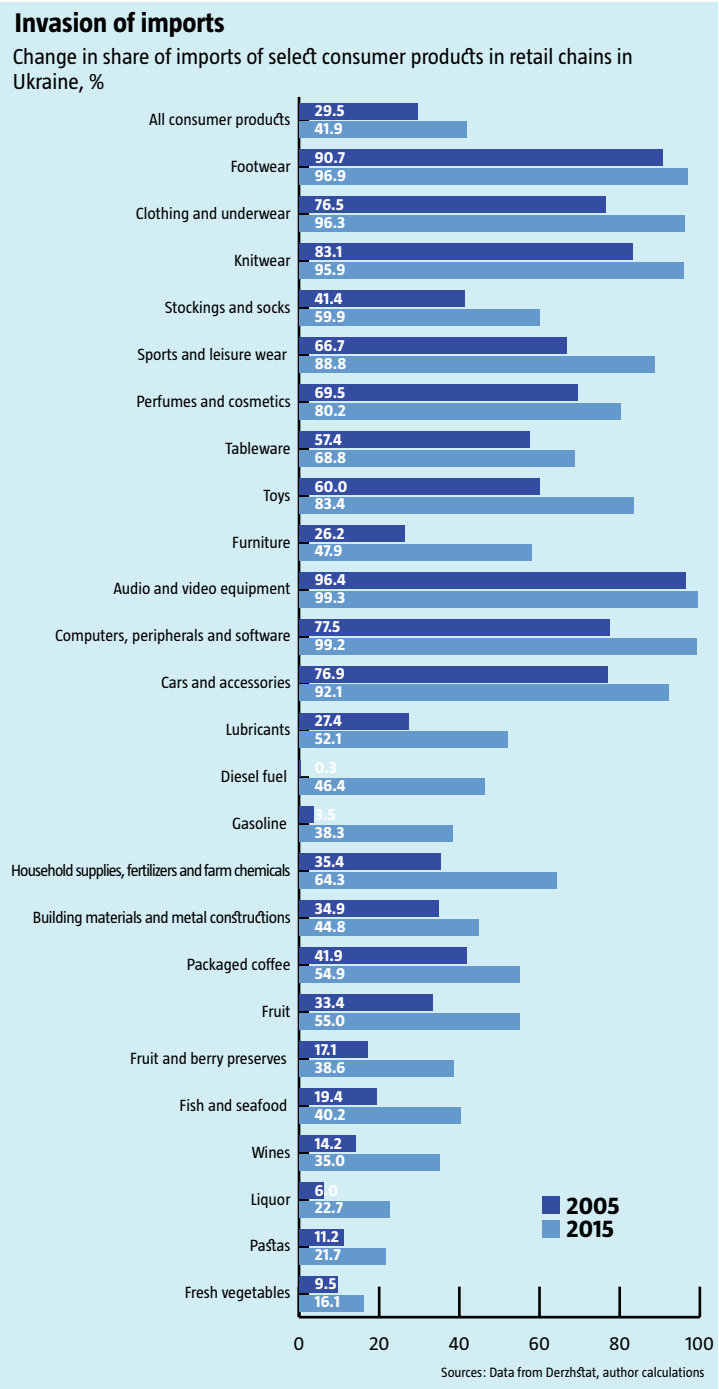
Ukraine continues to be a major exporter of semi-finished casting products that it is having an ever-harder time selling, at the same time as finished steel products with a much higher added value are being imported in growing volumes. What's more, these suppliers are from countries where the cost of labor in the steel industry is far higher than in Ukraine (**see Imported metalware**). Meanwhile, the country's steel magnates, aka oligarchs, are in no hurry to expand the scale of processing in their facilities, which has led to growing unemployment in the industrial belt of Ukraine's southeast.

More recently, Ukraine has been increasing its exports of light industrial goods and furniture to European markets on the basis of toll manufacturing. Clothing sold abroad in 2015 alone reached nearly US \$500mn, and a few hundred more million in furniture, toys and sports equipment was shipped out. Stable demand for these Ukrainian-made goods testifies to the highly competitive capacities of domestic enterprises in filling orders. Nevertheless, the share of imports of light industrial products remains dominant on the domestic market.

Indeed, the share of Ukrainian-made clothing out of cloth has collapsed from 23.3% to 5.7% in the last 10 years, the share of knits has plunged from 16.9% to 4.1%, and the share of footwear has dropped from 9.3% to 1.1%. Even the market for stockings and socks, where domestic manufacturers remain among the strongest in light industry, the share of imports has jumped from 41% to 60% in the same period. Based on their officially declared value, which is typically artificially reduced to cut down on import duty, clothing and accessories alone worth US \$340mn were imported in 2015, plus another US \$193mn in footwear.

Ukrainian makers of cosmetics and perfumes are also sharply losing market share, losing 33% over the last 10 years, down to 30.5% and 19.8% of the total market for these goods. And yet, the volume of imports of cosmetics, perfumes, personal care products like soap, shampoo and toothpaste was over US \$470mn, even at the height of the economic crisis in 2015.

There is also tremendous potential for import substitution in the fuel and energy complex (FEC). This year, Ukraine will likely spend US \$6-7bn on this. The process of substituting natural gas has been going on for several years now and has been given a real boost by increasing the price for domestically extracted gas to import levels. Meanwhile, to increase the share of domestic refining, this is the best time to take advantage of the situ-



ation as the world market for black gold undergoes a major redistribution. The idea would be to offer one or more oil-producing countries that would like to push Russia out of the European market to partner in an oil refinery project with considerable depth of refining in Ukraine.

FLOURISHING WITH THE FARM SECTOR

Even as Ukraine has justified claims to status as an "agricultural superpower," it remains a major importer of a slew of foodstuffs with significant added value. Fully 16% of its fresh vegetables, »

nearly 25% of its canned vegetables, 40% of its fruit preserves, and 55% of the fresh fruit sold in supermarket chains all come from abroad. Similarly, 55% of packaged coffees and 30% of teas are imported, along with 23% of spirits and 35% of wines, shares that have doubled and tripled over the last 10 years.

This massive trend towards more and more imports of food is in the face of considerably higher prices compared to domestic products and is again a reflection of how Ukrainian producers are ignoring specific segments of this market. Ukraine is thus a major importer in the food business: extracts and essences of coffee and tea worth US \$134.4mn; pure ethanol worth US \$122.8mn, beers and wines worth US \$85mn, chocolate worth US \$70.5mn, processed vegetables worth US \$46.6mn, ready-made sauces and spices worth US \$45.5mn, and feed for livestock worth US \$144mn. At the same time, a significant share of imported fresh vegetables, worth US \$48.8mn, is in part due to a domestic greenhouse business that is underdeveloped, while imports of apples and pears worth over US \$23mn is related to underdeveloped infrastructure for keeping such produce in Ukraine.

With energy conservation on the rise, new opportunities for import substitution are becoming available, increasing demand for energy-saving equipment over traditional versions substantially. For instance, in 2015, central heating furnaces worth US \$37.9mn were imported to Ukraine, as well as US \$31.4mn worth of radiators, and US \$23.6mn worth of high-efficiency light bulbs. This growing market offers opportunities to set up local manufacturing, which is good for both existing manufacturers and new ones, specifically to set up cooperation with foreign companies. Nor is much being done to take advantage of the potential to set up local production of durable consumer goods, such as household appliances, computers, telephones and smartphones, and passenger cars.

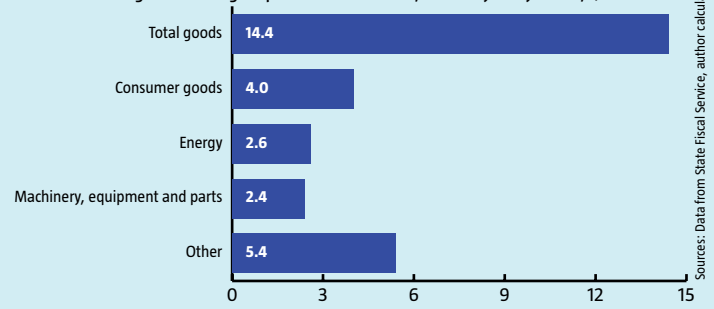
At the same time as the sector for outsourced IT services has been booming for the last 10 years, the share of computer technology, peripherals and software being produced domestically collapsed almost entirely, going from 22.5% in 2005 to a marginal 0.8% in 2015. Even at the officially declared prices in import contracts, foreign computers, mobile phones and spare parts were worth US \$1bn in 2015. An additional US \$660mn worth of electronics were imported. In the last decade, the share of automobiles assembled in Ukraine has plunged from 23% to 8%, with US \$824mn worth being imported in 2015 alone. Rubber tires and tire casings worth over US \$250mn are brought into Ukraine from abroad every year.

Domestic SMEs are more than capable of substituting with their own products in these markets by working with foreign manufacturers of equipment under license, which would establish an area of potential operations for hundreds of new SMEs and generate tens if not hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's farm sector is currently developing based on the widespread import of technology, equipment, fertilizers, seed, and plant

A disastrous breakdown

Breakdown of goods being imported to Ukraine, January-May 2015, \$ bn



protection means. Even in crisis-ridden 2015, over US \$2bn of this kind of goods was imported according to official data. In fact, some segments are nearly entirely dependent on imports, which not only suggests that the domestic market is being completely ignored, but also represents serious risks to stable growth in Ukraine's AIC, although it is the largest and one of the most promising sectors in the domestic economy. In the fertilizer market, which is worth US \$708mn, there is a Russian-Belarusian monopoly on a slew of positions, especially potassium, phosphates and potash-phosphate compounds. Yet, as the domestic farm sector continues to grow, it will need this kind of product in greater volumes.

What's even more promising is the modernization and replacement of depreciated farm equipment and machinery, without which the sector's potential will never be reached. In 2015, farm

THERE NEEDS TO BE A WELL-THOUGHT-OUT, HIGH QUALITY POLICY FOR KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED AND FOR TRAINING POTENTIAL ENTREPRENEURS, MANAGERS AND PRODUCTION WORKERS FOR FUTURE IMPORT SUBSTITUTION PROJECTS

equipment worth some US \$600mn was imported, including US \$229.3mn in tractors, US \$106.6mn in grain harvesters, US \$70.4mn in seeders and mowers, and US \$22.4mn in plows and harrows. Today, the market for this equipment is already highly competitive. For instance, Belarus and the US are jockeying for top place in supplying tractors, with each of them boasting around 25% market share, followed by suppliers from several EU countries—the Netherlands, Germany, France and Poland—and China. The Ukrainian market is clearly a good one to invest in, as its potential for dynamic growth is already evident. Clearly, some of these manufacturers might be prepared to set up production lines in Ukraine and to gradually expand their market share of locally-made parts.

GET OVER YOUR COMPLEXES

There is a widespread and dangerous maximalism in Ukraine today, where import substitution is being rejected because domestic producers are not

able to offer either exclusive or innovative products that are better than the best analogs elsewhere in the world or at least at their level. This kind of attitude has already caused Ukraine considerable harm as it treads water industrially. Meanwhile, a slew of Asian countries that just 10-20 years ago were in worse shape than Ukraine managed to get their hands on licenses and technologies to produce items that were devised in developed countries and are not the latest any more. This ensured them rapid expansion of manufacturing capacities, more jobs and higher incomes for their citizens, which in turn stimulated a wealthier consumer market and more muscular business. In a country where effectively every second adult has no official job, localizing just about any kind of manufacturing that can substitute for imports would be a great boon.

Here, we also have to consider another “complex” that is common among Ukrainians, and that is prejudice against goods made in their own country as being ipso facto worse than any imports. This creates an illusion that Ukrainians themselves are unable to produce anything of substance and therefore have no right to a decent living standard and lifestyle. Those who actually buy “Made in Ukraine” products vehemently disagree with this position.

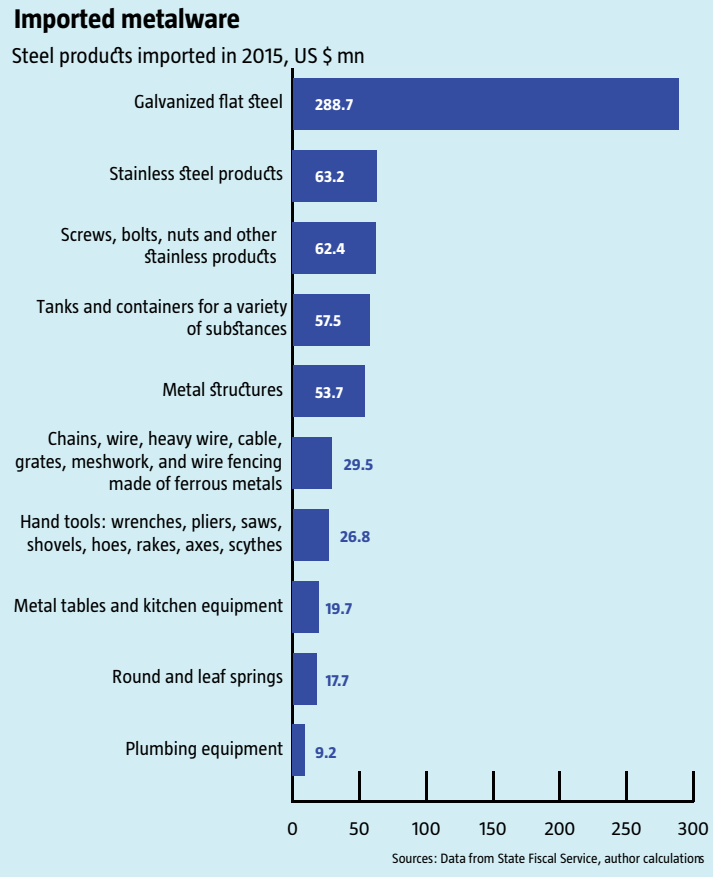
THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The bottom line is that import substitution cannot possibly take place using traditional measures such as protectionism based on discrimination or prohibitive import duties. Ukraine’s international commitments and its enormous dependence on exports mean that the country’s domestic suppliers would run into serious problems. Artificial protection would also have a long-term negative impact on the overall competitiveness of the domestic economy.

On the other hand, the government can provide incentives for import substitution by supporting companies in those sectors where they can quite easily compete on the domestic market with foreign suppliers. It can also influence outside suppliers by incentivizing the establishment of local production facilities, starting with simply assembling final goods and eventually increasing the level of local manufacturing.

For instance, the government can offer leasing and crediting programs to its citizens and companies registered in Ukraine that only cover the assembly or production of goods in country. It can also offer hryvnia-denominated loans on the same terms and conditions that foreign competitors get them. Tax holidays for new businesses or for new projects by existing firms are popular form of incentive. Finally, red tape needs to be minimized so that issues related to permits, land allocation, utility hook-ups for new production facilities and so on are handled quickly and effectively.

Last but not least, there needs to be a well-thought-out, high quality policy for keeping people informed and for training potential entrepreneurs, managers and production workers for future import substitution projects. All too often, potential



entrepreneurs and employees alike have no idea how to make things happen for themselves without emigrating. At a certain stage, it makes sense for the state and international foundations and organizations that have resources for this purpose to provide funds to invite managers and other specialists from abroad to consult and share knowledge for the necessary production facilities to be launched and established in Ukraine.

And there’s more that can be done: the government can also build greenfield facilities, manage them until they are profitable, and then sell shares on the stock market or auction off entire complexes. Any money earned can be reinvested in repeating the same scheme to develop import-substituting manufacturing. In the end, all these measures and others that have not been mentioned should be used alone and in combination for the maximum possible impact.

Domestic production of many products to replace simpler imports or imported goods that are in serious and growing demand—through developing the farm sector and energy conservation, modernizing infrastructure, and so on. By providing jobs and adding consumers with cash to spend will increase demand internally and expand the domestic market considerably, which will, in turn, increase GDP and tax revenues in the budgets of various levels of government, and generate more jobs in the service industries. The multiplier effect is potentially enormous for Ukraine. ■

What they're saying and showing

Bohdan Butkevych and Denys Kazanskiy

The Ukrainian Week looks at the editorial policies and ideological positions of Ukrainian media outlets

Tell me what you watch or read and I will tell you who you are. As the internet spreads across Ukraine, so many virtual media outlets have sprung up along with it that it's all-too easy to get confused. This is especially true of those who have little understanding of the ways that the domestic media market works. Still, within this enormous variety, a number of trends can be identified that internet media belonging to different owners have in common.

Just as in other European countries, Ukraine's media does not always have as its goal to match the standards set by the BBC; often they have a noticeable ideological bias. This division among media is not so much left and right as pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian—although this last group often also try to position themselves as leftist or antifascist when, in fact, they are neither. Indeed, there is little really left-liberal media in Ukraine, other than, perhaps, Hromadske TV, which emerged in the last few years. This position has already managed to become the basis for any number of major scandals.

If we look at the most popular Ukrainian internet media, then the nominally pro-Russian outlets include Korrespondent.net, Strana.ua, Vesti, 2000.ua, AiF.ua, and Komsomolskaya Pravda. Why “nominally”? Mainly because none of them openly promote friendship with Putin and the abdication of sovereignty in favor of Moscow.

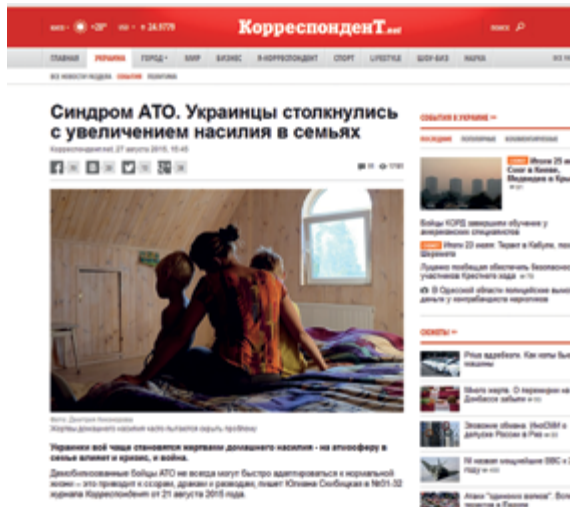
Such pro-Russian publications tend to belong to politicians connected to the Kremlin and are fairly cautious in their rhetoric, but there is a clear tone to them. As a rule, they regularly play on a standard set of messages: Ukraine is in the midst of a civil war, the Revolution of 2014 has failed and was a pointless, nobody in Europe needs Ukraine, the gov-

ernment is completely corrupt, the army is being betrayed, utility rates are inappropriate, the economy is only getting worse, and so on. Every once in a while, they also publish, in contrast, articles about Russia's successes and those of Belarus, about the EU as an ill-fated project, and the need to decentralize to remedy the situation in Ukraine. Russian-oriented publications also promote politicians with the same views. They often quote pundits and experts on Moscow's payroll.

These media resources present the war in Eastern Ukraine in a variety of ways. They generally write with restraint about the Russian militants. But journalists in Korrespondent.net refer to them as “militia.” For a while, the journal Vesti.Reporter, which is part of the Vesti holding, even published the field notes of a DNR fighter called Ghenadiy Duboviy, who was in the unit of the infamous filed commander known as Motorola and vowed to kill Ukrainian journalists.

Pro-Ukrainian media are distinguished by the fact that their ideological territory is highly diverse. Among them are moderate conservative, nationalist and liberal media.

To the right end of the spectrum is one of the most popular Ukrainian media sources, Censor.net, a play on the words “No Censor,” which is famous for its open hawkish editorial policy. Censor's journalists devote considerable attention to the progress of military action on the front, often write about the Russian military presence, and publish interviews with people involved in military operations. Gazeta.ua can also be categorized as right-liberal. The more liberal end of the spectrum is most strongly represented by Livi Bereh, Gordon.ua, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, *Novoye Vremya*, Focus, and Radio Svoboda (RFE/RL). Like their counterparts on the right, the



“The Right Accents.” Korrespondent.net emphasizes the dark side of war, while Inter carefully introduces the markers of “common history from the days of World War II

liberal outlets openly supported the Euromaidan and are unambiguously on the side of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the conflict in Donbas. They refer to the Russian proxies as militants, terrorists and separatists. The most classically liberal, with some tendencies towards leftist is one of the most reputable sources, *Ukrainska Pravda*.

Hromadske TV, Ukraine's first initiative as a public television channel, is more noticeably leftist in its positions. After a split in the editorial team and several scandals, all the people who did not share liberal values were let go. The journalists at this media outlet more often than others talk about the need to maintain standards and about equal representation of all sides in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Hromadske also often strongly criticizes Ukraine military and reports on war crimes perpetrated by men in the Armed Forces. Because some of the site's reports echo elements of Russian propaganda, Hromadske is regularly criticized by the right for being not sufficiently patriotic.

When it comes to Ukrainian television, the split between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian editorial policy is much more influenced by directly by the owner's own position. If the oligarch has pro-Ukrainian views, the resource will follow suit. It should remember that not one television channel is profitable in Ukraine, so absolutely all of them completely dependent on their owners for funding. This means that there is no point in even discussing the notion of independent channels. To this can be added that, statistically, the typical Ukrainian viewer is a housewife of 40 with a relatively low level of education and income both.

The three most popular domestic channels have for years been the same: Inter, which currently belongs to Serhiy Liovochkin and Dmytro Firtash, 1+1, which now belongs to Ihor Kolomoyskiy; and Ukraina, which has always belonged to Donetsk billionaire Rinat Akhmetov. Two of them, Ukraina and Inter, have only a nominal pro-Ukrainian policy that quite often in fact echoes both covert and overt Russian propaganda. Ukraina differs in that it boringly promotes its owner all the time, or at least his supposed charitable work in ORDiLO. News programs on this channel often sound like little blobs of information inserted simply so that his name doesn't echo endlessly.

As to Inter, it has long and openly manipulated public opinion in a pro-Russian key. Its criticism of the government is mild as there are no open squabbles between Poroshenko and Liovochkin or Poroshenko and Akhmetov. But Russian fighters in Donbas are never called terrorists on Inter and once in a while the word "militia" is used. Just recently, the correspondence of former Inter journalists with representatives of "security bodies of DNR" was published, where the journalists effectively reported to the latter about how to portray the activities of the separatists and also wrote that a reporter from the channel who called them "terrorists" in one of his reports was severely punished.

1+1 has traditionally been pro-Ukrainian although it occasionally expressed itself in a very grotesque and even hysterical form. The channel favors teary stories, cheap humor and talent shows. After Kolomoyskiy resolved his conflicts with President Poroshenko, even if only temporarily, criticism of the Administration virtually disappeared.

The next large pool of channels is the news channels, of which there are six. For a long time 112 was pretty well the main irritant for patriotic Ukrainians because it often served as a platform for pro-Russian speakers. In the last nearly year, however, it has become noticeably more neutral. This is tied to the fact that the Yanukovych "Family" sold it and is no longer the owner. The question of who is its new owner

remains open, although lately Petro Poroshenko's name comes up in certain circles, that he supposedly decided to buy himself yet another channel. Whether this is true or not, 112 does not have a very strongly state position now, preferring to offer a platform to just about anybody. This, of course, can be seen in affects the quality of the programming, because there are clearly not enough experts and talking heads to go around. However, thanks to tremendous investment and unselective approach, it is turning into the leader among the news channels today.

NewsOne has confidently taken its place in the pro-Russian gallery. Nominally owned by the odious Kharkiv Regional Yevhen Murayev, in fact, it is financed by ex-Yanukovych PM Mykola Azarov. The channel is unabashedly "vatnik lite" in its policies, as epitomized by its Russian "primo ballerino," Matvei Ganapolsky. Nor is Murayev particularly covert, appearing on the channel nearly every day to speechify about "let's stop the civil war in the East." After his joint statement with Vadym Rabinovych about launching a new political project called "Zhyttia/Life," which was clearly intended to pick up the electoral remains of Party of the Regions, it's pretty clear that this channel intends to be the main disseminator of pro-Russian propaganda in Ukraine.

The once-legendary Channel 5 that still, despite many promises, belongs to President Poroshenko, has lost position significantly. Despite its production quality, it has long lost its place as "the first news channel." Nor is its popularity helped by the understandable, if not too overbearing pro-Administration censorship that rules it. In short, the president is the main figure in every news program. In principle, this is quite logical, but it has its consequences. One of the positive sides of Channel 5 remains its very active reporting on events at the front with a clearly Ukrainian worldview.

Espresso, a channel that rose on the Maidan wave and is owned to Narodniy Front Deputy Mykola Kniazhytskiy displays a fairly independent information policy, except that viewers might not hear that much criticism of Narodniy Front and, earlier, PM Arseniy Yatseniuk. However, it truly honors pluralism of opinion and maintains a pronounced pro-Ukrainian position, even to the point of accenting that it provides a "Ukrainian view of the world." Espresso's main problem and biggest weakness is its poor resource base, so the "coffee channel" has a hard time competing with 112 and NewsOne, at whom the owners have thrown tens of millions of dollars from the very start.

Channel 24 belongs to Lviv Mayor and founder of Samopomich Andriy Sadoviy, but has not managed so far to go beyond the bounds of its regional identity. It has a pro-Ukrainian editorial policy, but the channel is not competing effectively with the big four news channels. Interestingly, Sadoviy himself makes little use of this channel to promote himself, which in itself merits considerable respect.

ICTV, STB and Novy Kanal are the trio of entertainment channels that belong to Viktor Pinchuk. Like their owner, they all try to stay out of politics as much as possible. And they avoid criticizing the president, with whom Leonid Kuchma's son-in-law has a normal working relationship.

UA:Pershiy has not changed much since it switched to its new team lead by Zubar Alasania, although credit is due to the new management that the channel no longer is such a fawning supporter of the government as it was in the past. There is even a kind of "Fronde" in the form of the program "Schemes," which allows itself to criticize the president. In other aspects, the state channel has not changed. ■

The new era of crime

Bohdan Butkevych

In the past two years, crime rates have grown in Ukraine. Factors contributing to the general criminalization of society include economic decline and war

According to the consolidated data of the General Prosecutor's Office, in 2013 police recorded 13,776 major crimes. In 2015, this figure was around 21,500. In the first six months of 2016, it amounted to almost 12,000. If the trend continues, this number will be even greater. Specifically, in the last two years the number of murders, robberies, especially with the use of firearms, burglaries and carjacks has increased dramatically. While in 2013 17,000 cases of burglary were recorded, in 2015 this figure reached almost 22,000. Carjacking is the second most popular crime. Over the past two years, the number of carjacks increased from 3,800 to 6,900. The number of homicides also grew, from 5,900 to 8,200.

"The overall crime rate is growing, I agree. Unfortunately, there are objective reasons for this," says Khatia Dekanoidze, Head of the National Police. "First of all, the economic situation in the country has been deteriorating since 2012, and this is always accompanied by an increase in crime. Once the living standards start declining, crime rates start rising, especially as far as property crimes are concerned. Secondly, the war has been going on since 2014, contributing to the spread of organized crime and an increase in illegal arms trafficking. Thirdly, the number of crimes should not be concealed to improve statistics, and we are now taking the appropriate measures to that end."

The latter argument was taken on board by the officials stating that previously many crimes were concealed, while now they are being honest and open. That creates an impression that there was a sharp spike. "In 2016, half the number of cases was finalized compared to 2015. My priority is not to show good statistics. It is important to show people that there is a problem, a case has been filed and the police are taking care of it. Of course, the crime clearance rate has also decreased, but this is due to many factors," Dekanoidze said. At the same time, she mentioned the successful work of the police to curb illicit arms trafficking and combat organized crime.

The reasons of such dynamics are obvious: the war in Donbas and economic crisis. However, the crisis began to manifest itself long before the Maidan events, and was accompanied by a rise in crime. "The crime rate started growing in 2013, not now, in the last six months, not after the National Police was established. In fact, crime rate has been on the rise since 2012. It's just that in the last year and a half it became more obvious," Dekanoidze reiterated.

The level of crime detection has declined, according to the Interior Ministry, after the agency gave up on improving statistics on paper. Nevertheless, over the past two turbulent years, the war played a decisive role in the rise of crime. First of all, it supplied a huge number of weapons to the black market, making it easy for most criminals to procure firearms. As *The Ukrainian Week* found out, today a standard Makarov gun can easily be bought in Kyiv for \$300–400. And the closer you are to the ATO area, the cheaper and easier it is to get weapons, not only guns, but also assault rifles, grenades, grenade launchers, and machine guns. All these weapons have already started to "speak." According to both the Interior Ministry and the independent experts, today 3–4 million illegal weapon pieces are circulating in the country.



THE RETURN TO CRIMINAL BEHAVIORS PUSHES THE DISADVANTAGED SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION TO THE PATH OF CRIME AND CREATES PUBLIC DISTRUST IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO PROTECT ORDINARY CITIZENS

The second factor, according to criminologist Anna Malyar, which is not discussed publicly for the sake of political correctness, is the forced migrants from Donbas, of whom there are now more than 1.5 million across the Ukrainian territory, according to the most conservative estimates. Obviously, not all these people were successful in starting a new life, especially in the circumstances where the state almost abandoned them to their own fate, providing a rather conventional assistance. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them willingly or unwillingly chose the path of crime and started to earn money by committing offenses.

Another issue, which the MIA does not like to discuss, is the professional competency of its employees. For the past two years, this agency has been undergoing constant lustrations, certifications, reforms, etc. Of course, they are necessary, but all of this has a very negative impact on the ability of the law enforcement officers to perform their functions. *The Ukrainian Week* has already written more than once that the smoke-screen of the new patrol police is simply hiding the unreformed investigative and operational staff, which is arguably the most important part of the

MIA apparatus. Roughly speaking, these are those who are supposed to find out about a crime, to investigate it, to apprehend criminals, and to prove their guilt in court.

Today we have a situation where the investigative and operational units have for the most part avoided the lustration and re-certification processes. However, many professionals who still worked for the agency have left without waiting for the checks, also because on the wave of hatred towards the police after the Maidan events, all their financial bonuses and awards were cut down, leaving them with their modest salaries. This caused the outflow of a considerable number of law enforcement employees.

Yet another factor that should not be forgotten is the controversial "Savchenko's bill," whereby one day spent by a defendant in SIZO, the pre-trial detention center, equals two days in prison. The law was sponsored by Batkivshchyna, initiated by Nadia Savchenko and supported by many human rights activists as a tool to speed up pre-trial consideration of cases. It came into force on December 24, 2015, and has since been applied to about 40,000 people. Now, police, lawyers, Justice Ministry and many human rights activists are unanimous in stating that many people convicted for grave offenses walk free as a result of it.

The effect of the economic crisis is self-explanatory: over the last two years, Ukrainians have become noticeably poorer. The unemployment rate grew significantly, many people have been thrown idle and know no other ways of earning their bread beside crime. Add to this the workforce clusters in major cities, which further increase the risk of offenses.

Experts say that Ukrainian society is now approaching the crime levels of the 1990s. The problem here is not so much the crime rate, as the return to criminal behaviors which, on the one hand, pushes the disadvantaged segments of the population to the path of crime and, on the other, creates public distrust in the government's ability to protect ordinary citizens. Such things create lasting negative results that we all had a chance to witness in Donbas, which was the heart of the so-called black demographic zone, that is, the region with consistently high rates of crime, mortality and diseases like HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis C. Now, the entire territory of the country could become such a zone.

The situation in Ukraine is very typical of all countries that enter such turbulence – such as Croatia in the 1990s. It also faced an orgy of lawlessness and criminalization of society in the country. Solutions to this are trivial and obvious: increased efficiency of law enforcement agencies through reform, staff turnover, and wage hike; stabilization of the economic situation, which allows an increasingly large part of the population to earn daily bread with normal, legitimate work.

Another way to normalize the situation is to solve the issue of the huge number of illegal weapons in circulation. Many experts suggest using the Moldovan experience, where the same problem arose 20 years ago following the military conflict in Transnistria. The solution was to adopt the law allowing civilian firearm possession. It was supposed to encourage respectable citizens who had bought weapons for self-defense to register them with the police, because criminals have them anyway. ■



A spinoff of war

Stanislav Kozliuk

In addition to separatism with its referenda and Russian humanitarian convoys, the war in Ukraine begot a stratum of criminals consisting of war veterans, both real and fake

In the winter 2015-2016, border guards in Zakarpattia, on Ukraine's western border with Slovakia, tried to block the illegal traffic of counterfeit cigarettes to Europe. As it turned out, the trucks contained not only the products of Lviv Tobacco Factory involved in a series of scandals, but also the cigarettes of Khamadey Tobacco Plant from Donetsk. How tobacco from the occupied territories crossed the contact line remains an open question.

The list of crimes that became wide-spread after the war broke out includes extortion, kidnapping, torture, racket and even murder, in addition to smuggling of goods. Complicating the situation is the fact that, when servicemen or volunteers are involved, they tend to justify their actions with arguments about separatism of the local residents, and claim that, in time of armed hostilities, there is no time to investigate and confirm whether the affected locals do cooperate with the "LNR" and "DNR" militants. Moreover, the charges against the military wrongdoers are often based on allegations of open separatists. This is the case with the recent proceedings against one of the commanders of Aidar battalion, Valentyn Lykholit (known by his nom de guerre, Batya), and his subordinate Ihor Radchenko (nom de guerre Rubyezsh). They were charged with stealing a camcorder, a camera and alcohol from the current Mayor of Severodonetsk Valentyn Kazakov. Kazakov himself is widely suspected, not without ground, of collaboration with terrorists: he is credited with promoting the establishment of the so-called self-defence militias, helping organize the fake referendum, and more.

The figure of Batya is not as straightforwardly evil as the police are trying to show. Most Aidar fighters speak of him only positively and cannot remember any openly criminal activities of their commander. As for Rubyezsh, all those interviewed by *The Ukrainian Week* admitted off-record that he is a rogue, who was doing his own business rather than fighting. However, they refused to provide any details out of fear for their lives.

The case of Rubyezsh is not unique. In the early 2016, Center for Civil Liberties, a human rights watchdog NGO, under the auspices of the "Justice for Peace in Donbas" Coalition of NGOs and initiatives, as well as in cooperation with lawyers and human rights activists, prepared a report entitled "In Search of Justice." It focused on the breaches of law in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) area. Members of monitoring groups collected over a dozen facts demonstrating that since 2014, war veterans have become active players of the criminal world.

One such case comes from the town of Bilokurakine, Luhansk Oblast. It happened in the summer-



PHOTO BY ROMAN MALIKO

Members of volunteer battalions in court. The scandalous Tornado brigade fighters have been under trial in Kyiv for six months upon allegations of looting and kidnapping people

winter of 2014. Oleksandr Hladchenko, a private farmer, borrowed money for sowing from a local attorney. Shortly, he was paid several visits by unknown armed men who presented themselves first as the members of Ukrainian Armed Forces, then as Aidar, and then as the Right Sector. After a few visits, the anonyms wearing military fatigues moved from words to deeds. According to Hladchenko, he was beaten and threatened in order to extort money. Only the intervention of Aidar helped resolve the situation. The battalion volunteers helped detain three extortionists, who were handed over to the law enforcers. The victim knows nothing about the further investigation. According to his lawyer, as of April this year, his offenders were not even under suspicion for committing the crimes. Pre-trial detention is not in question, apparently.

Another story took place far from the front line. Oleksiy Petrovsky left Donetsk in 2014 for the Ukrainian-controlled territory. After crossing one of the checkpoints on the border of Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts, he was beaten up. About a dozen armed men blocked the road with their jeep, accusing Petrovsky of being a separatist and of stealing the car

he was driving (even though he had all the necessary documents to prove he owned it). He was taken to the basement of a residential building, with a bag on his head. He spent three days there, whereupon he got back his car and personal belongings. However, his netbook, mobile phone and UAH 3,000 in cash were missing. According to him, one of his guards was a man with nom de guerre Dwarf, who later was himself captured by the Right Sector. Petrovsky suspects that he was held at one of the recreation facilities of Vodokanal municipal enterprise, where the Right Sector was stationed. The National Police classified the offense as unlawful imprisonment or kidnapping for mercenary motives concerning two or more persons by prior agreement under Art. 146.2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

However, not all the victims got off so cheap. Human rights activists have recorded some cases when the fight against separatism took the form of murders. That was the case of the Dorohinsky family, Zinaida and Hanna, in Luhansk Oblast. The two women lived in the village of Luhanske in Bakhmut County. In June 2015, two Armed Forces servicemen broke into their home "to search for members of illegal armed groups." The police and the military prosecutor's office could not reach a unanimous conclusion on who exactly shot the family. However, the incident was classified as premeditated murder and violent home invasion under Art. 115 and Art. 162.2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

In other cases, servicemen themselves became victims of crime. The case of Serhiy Kostakov (nom de guerre Maestro) is quite well-known. He had conflicts with senior officers and repeatedly warned of his intention to disclose the information about their illegal activities. Kostakov went missing in late November 2014, following his transfer from the 72nd to the 81st brigade. He was seen alive for the last time at a checkpoint near Volnovakha (on Sloviansk–Donetsk highway), which at that time was guarded by the soldiers of Kyiv-2 Patrol Police Battalion. According to witnesses, Serhiy was beaten up and handcuffed to a radiator. The reasons that led to this are a mystery to this day. Six months later, in June 2015, his body was found near the village of Prokhorovka in Volnovakha County. His hands were handcuffed, and there were 20 bullet wounds in his head. The investigation was started by the Prosecutor's Office in Donetsk Oblast, and later taken over by the General Prosecutor's Office. The crime was classified as premeditated murder under Art. 115.

The "suicide" of Dmytro Shabratsky (nom de guerre Poet), soldier of the 24th Assault Battalion, better known as Aidar, is less famous, but no less heinous. The man was associated with the aforementioned Radchenko (they served in the same unit). As we found out, he often criticized his commander, accusing Rubyezsh of using his soldiers for illegal activities, such as the kidnapping of a pro-Ukrainian activist and the former Mayor of Pryvillya Valery Beshenko. Following the liberation of Lysychansk, a city in Luhansk Oblast, from the militants, public hearings on the cooperation of local businesses and industrial groups with the separatists were to be held at a City Council session. Beshenko was supposed to speak there. However, on the same day he

was kidnapped by Radchenko's group and taken to Polovynkyne, where Aidar was stationed at that time. After the session of the City Council was over, the activist was released. However, there was an issue: Shabratsky, a resident of Pryvillya, was in the group of kidnapers. He recognized Beshenko, and later went to Radchenko with his claims. There is every reason to believe that Poet also took part in a number of other illegal activities of Rubyezsh's group, or at least was aware of them. He was even supposed to give testimony to the State Security Service representatives. Shortly before his death, he warned his parents that his life was at risk. On the day of his death, March 26, 2015, he called his friends asking them to collect him from Lysychansk. However, no one came to help. Shabratsky committed a "suicide" at the battalion's base by shooting himself from his Kalashnikov and blowing himself up with a grenade at the same time. The death of Poet, strangely enough, was reported by Rubyezsh himself, who happened to be at the same floor at that time. The case was classified as premeditated murder and incitement to suicide under Art. 115 and Art. 120. No internal investigation into the death was carried out. Moreover, the investigators did not check whether the bullets were fired from Shabratsky's gun. Radchenko, the key witness/suspect, was not interrogated. The criminal investigation into the murder was closed for some reason. Through the lawyers' efforts the investigation has now been resumed, and the story continues.

The above examples are not exhaustive, but at least can give a rough picture of how the war affects the criminal situation. We haven't mentioned the murder of the group led by Serhiy Halushchenko, nom de guerre Andrew, that was investigating and reporting illegal smuggling in Luhansk Oblast. We did not talk about the racket of local Luhansk farmers, which is also associated with Rubyezsh, according to local activists. The affected businessmen simply refused to talk to the journalist of *The Ukrainian Week* out of fear for their safety and lives. We have not mentioned the cases that have not been registered, because local residents have not reported them to the police, since they don't trust law enforcers.



THE LIST OF CRIMES THAT BECAME WIDE-SPREAD AFTER THE WAR BROKE OUT INCLUDES EXTORTION, KIDNAPPING, TORTURE, RACKET AND MURDER, IN ADDITION TO SMUGGLING OF GOODS. SUCCESSFUL INVESTIGATION INTO THOSE CRIMES COULD HELP RESOLVE THE SITUATION

The military make the situation more complicated by accusing locals of separatism. While the case of Mayor Kazakov is more or less clear, the situation with the murdered Dorohinsky family or with Petrovsky who was beaten up is more obscure. Successful investigation into those crimes by the law enforcement agencies could help resolve the situation. However, unfortunately, in most cases they just create a semblance of activity. And while criminal records collect dust in their archives, contraband traffic through the line of demarcation continues. ■



PHOTO BY VLADYSLAV SOBEL

Ditte Marcher:

“When a soldier returns home, it doesn't mean that he is at home already”

Interviewed
by Roman
Malko

The *Ukrainian Week* spoke to the legendary Ditte Marcher, director of Bodydynamic International and the founder of a rehabilitation program for the military, which has helped thousands of people return to normal life after the war. Today, she's helping Ukrainian soldiers. Apart from rehabilitation and Bodydynamic, we also spoke about forgiveness, understanding, the war, and about ways to learn to cope with this all.

Hidden dangers. Today you have a common enemy. The only thing that unites you is the desire to protect your borders. But when this is all over, there will be just lots of people with their various ideologies and disappointments...

You have some units that are not subordinated to the army command, and they are very disappointed with the state. There are many people at the frontline who are now fighting in the Armed Forces, but who were against the revolution. Suppose, all Russians suddenly duck out, and the war is over. Can you imagine how all these hidden things will explode? I saw this happen within a week in the former Yugoslavia. Everyone seemed to go nuts, friends started killing each other, and the whole nation went crazy.

Of course, there is another scenario, and I strongly hope for it. There are people who are working hard to make a difference. Unfortunately, they are a minority.

What's next? War crimes are committed by both sides. It has always been like that. Today the authorities are trying to crack down on volunteer battalions. This is a dangerous practice that only aggravates tensions. Sooner or later, you will have to deal with the separatists, who are not Russians, but just some spoilt Ukrainians. And sooner

or later you will have to decide what to do with them, to seek compromise. If Ukraine could establish the kind of the Truth Commissions that were set up in South Africa, then it would be not about punishment, but about healing. This concerns the Berkut members who fired at the Maidan. I have been to South Africa, and I saw those commissions. There were lots of challenges there, there were many policemen who had kidnapped, tortured, killed, and raped people. But one of the reasons why the Civil War did not break out after the collapse of the apartheid was the TC that existed in every village.

How it worked. The whole village would come and listen, and a man would talk, appealing to his victims and telling his own sins: we killed such and such people and buried them at such and such places. Victims in their turn could tell what they had to experience and how angry they were. These commissions were comprised of conflict resolution specialists, psychotherapists, psychologists, and priests. Village residents were witnesses, and criminals had to apologize to their victims. Some did it with shame, some were not sincere, but this had a healing effect, and victims could speak truth. It was also important because many people were considered missing, and their relatives could only guess what had happened to them...

In Rwanda, though, they did it differently. It has a tribal society, with two large tribes. If you killed the son of another family, you had to follow a certain ritual and, figuratively, give your life to it. You drink special herbs and become a son of this family. In this way they get many mixed families. It is their spiritual and tribal tradition.

What Ukraine should do. A Danish center was established in the former Yugoslavia after the war. In Sarajevo, Croats, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims had to work together in such centers. My stepfather was there, I was there. We taught them what it means to develop democracy. Because this is something that Eastern Europeans know little about. You didn't have that either. Because democracy is not just about voting rights. The main thing is my responsibility to the society.

Many people now fighting in the East come from the western part of the country. They fight out of solidarity. But if it is only the solidarity with the country, with the land, and not with the people, then you have a problem. I have no solidarity with any piece of land in my Denmark. I don't care, but I do care about my people. I am loyal to the people, not to the land.

All wars are the same. On the one hand, they are all slightly different. On the other hand, if you step back and have a look from above, after the WWII most of them are about money. But people somehow need to be convinced to go to war, therefore, a lot of emotions are created around it. What you need to ask is: who is making money on that war? Who is benefiting? Definitely not those who fight in it, come home with no arms and no legs, and cannot even procure a pension. We have to teach people to be free, not to be slaves. Free people have a choice and make it. But, most importantly, they have to deal with the consequences of that choice. Not to complain about others, but to take the responsibility for their choices. Denmark is not fighting any war, but our soldiers are dying daily. Same as here. No one really knows what you have. Everyone knows you have a problem, but what's its name? Because you are, in a way, not at war with Russia, you can't even say it, or it will invade. You don't want to call this a civil war. So what do you have then? In Denmark, we have the same thing: we are not at war, but our soldiers get killed. In Afghanistan, in Iraq. They are always at the front line. Over the past 25 years, we got 36,000 veterans, out of the entire population of 5.5 million. It is a bit too much for a country that is not at war.

What makes people go to war? There are many reasons. I have met those who went because their life was traumatic, and the war for them was a holiday. Some have romantic illusions, some have ideas, some have fear of Russia, some have hopes for a better future, and some do it for the right to speak their own language. And I think that you have a deeply rooted desire for freedom, which you have never had. But it would be good to try to understand what kind of freedom you really want. Because people seem to fight in the name of freedom, but in reality they have very different ideas of it. Many are focused not on the future, but on the past...

And this is where, I think, my country might help you. We are a very ancient democratic state, which has been developing its democracy over hundreds of years. We were never occupied, except by the Nazis. We have the mentality of the free people. A long time ago we somehow contributed to the rise of Kyiv, and maybe it's time we came back, not as Vikings any more, but in another capacity. I think Scandinavia has something to offer Ukraine. I'm talking not just about Denmark, but also about Norway and Sweden. In fact, we have lots of similarities, we don't have purely capitalist lifestyles. We have very many things that could help build a secure future for Ukraine.

Helping Ukrainian soldiers. I was here when the Maidan started. It was a strange feeling. You could sit and eat a pizza, as just 20 meters away from you bullets were flying. As if the doors to another world were open. I have similar experience from Lebanon. I was taking a walk with my son in the beautiful Roman ruins when the shooting started. I bended down my son's head immediately, and we began our descent from the mountain top to the valley. As it turned out, the Israelis were fighting Hezbollah. You could sit, eat a sandwich and watch the war... When I left Ukraine, the situation here got worse: the annexation of Crimea, the war, it all happened too quickly, and there are many people here to whom I am attached. I got a call from Roman Torgovitsky, who had also been to Maidan. He had heard that I was doing something, and two months later we started a training session. It was rather chaotic, but we coped. Many people really benefited from that first session. We acquired several powerful veteran co-trainers. Then we had the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth sessions. The teams of Pobratymy and Wounded Warrior Ukraine work with the veterans. Over a thousand people are involved in our projects now, and it will grow bigger. Today we have teams who have experienced veterans, psychologists and psychotherapists, who also got certain training and know what to take care of in the process.

To recover from war. The biggest challenge is that the military don't want to talk to psychologists. And they absolutely don't want to talk to military psychologists, out of fear of ruining their careers. This is what the idea of my program was based on. It came to my mind in Japan, where I supervised drug addicts and alcoholics, and where I learned a lot about the Alcoholics Anonymous organization. I thought that some of its principles could be implemented in some other social systems, when people know each other, peer-to-peer.

By that time many veterans had taken their lives, and the newspapers wrote: "We have so many programs, why don't veterans take advantage of them?" I talked to the veterans from the Balkans and I heard: "We don't want to talk to psychologists! What do they know? They think they can save us!" Veterans were very acutely aware that they were being treated like kids, with pity. And I thought that we could take soldiers who also had PTSD, but had a better internal structure, help them cope with this, and at the same time give them some skills so that they could help others in the future.

Those who failed to open are not that many. I know the way to everyone's heart, I have certain advantages, and I have developed an entire system. Since the age of 22 I have been working in war-stricken places, I have been imprisoned, shot, cut, and tortured. So there are very few things that I cannot deal with in soldiers using this principle: peer to peer.

How does it work? First of all, when working with a soldier, you have to speak his language, you have to forget the language of psychology. Second, for me it is essential to teach people dignity and interrelations. And thirdly, the main message is, you are not sick. You have a normal reaction to an abnormal situation, it reduces the level of fear, and you are sharing this. For example, having flashbacks is very scary, but having the fear of flashbacks is even worse. And if you can tell about it so that people can understand, it is unpleasant, but it shows that you're not crazy. This is a normal, healthy reaction. Already by doing this you re- ▶

Ditte Marcher is director of Bodydynamic International. Born in 1959 in Denmark, she is the daughter of Bodydynamic founder Lisbeth Marcher. Ms. Marcher is a community and human rights activist, body-oriented psychotherapist with years of experience, co-author of shock trauma and post-traumatic stress reaction treatment methods recommended by the UN for use in flash spots. She has collaborated as a psychologist and conflict resolution specialist with the UN peacekeeping forces and Doctors Without Borders in the Middle East, South America, countries of former Yugoslavia and Africa for 20 years. She is the founder of a rehabilitation program for soldiers suffering from the effects of psychological traumas sustained during armed hostilities.

duce the fear. At the beginning of the training session, we work to reduce the fear and acquire new resources. These include new resources of our bodies. Veterans learn how to be careful and aware of the signals sent by the body, how to monitor the information coming from it. In this way, we build up the contact between the brain region housing our bodily ego and the region, where our intelligence abides. I will explain this using a very simple model of the triune brain. The brain, of course, is much more complex, but when I train soldiers, I always think of how to explain to them the complicated things in the simplest way possible. So, the triune brain is made of the reptilian brain (reflexes and instincts needed for our survival), the apish brain (our bodily sensations and emotions that are very useful to animals living in flocks and allow for communicating and living with each other) and the human brain (our ability to create and develop). It is important that all sections of the brain, especially the apish and the human brains, interact and collaborate, because they are all part of your personality. However, the brain where your instincts lie is not part of your personality, it's part of your survival. It does not communicate with your personality too much, and it can do things you would never do. This region of your brain doesn't care about what your personality thinks. The only thing it cares about is how to save your life. Your personality may or may not accept it, but this is how it is.

My apish brain has the emotion of fear, but I can learn how to use my body and breath. Especially breath, because it's not the lungs that are breathing, it's the muscles that are stretching. If your breath is shallow, you cannot withstand a lot of fear. And then it can turn into terror, and no one can withstand terror, because it is at the deep, instinctive level. I tell people that there is a difference between simply being afraid, being scared and being terrified. The trick is not to run away from fear or to get rid of it, it is impossible and even bad, but to be able to retain, suppress, and contain it in contact with another person. And here you need your body to help you with this. Otherwise, you will get either terror or the denial of fear. And if you really deny your fear in a frightful situation, this means that you are stuck in your instincts, you are too much in your instincts. And people who are 100% frightened don't even know it, they can't feel it. The only person who cannot see that something is not right with you is yourself. What we really need to train is this apish brain, the emotional intelligence that is very attached to the body; then you can normalize your body's chemistry.

For those who cannot attend training. When we have post traumatic stress, we need help! We cannot cope with it on our own! Period! You may be a Doctor of Psychology, but when you have PTSD, you need help! You will

never tell a doctor who has acute appendicitis to operate himself. When we have PTSD, we exclude ourselves from the society, and the society excludes us. It is mutual exclusion. Some say: "The society doesn't want us." Wrong! You don't want it either! It's like you exclude yourself from the flock. But we are all social animals. Anyone living outside the flock dies. If not physically, then psychologically. If you look at the cases of suicides among Danish veterans, these are people who exclude themselves from the flock: first, "I don't want to talk about it," then their family pulls away from them, they don't want to be together, then they die in their mind, and ultimately kill themselves. Therefore, it is important to explain to people that when a soldier returns home, it doesn't mean that he is at home already. The real return might take many years. People often ask: "What can I do at home alone to cope with this?" It's impossible.

Many years ago I came home from Somalia, where there was a war and a horrible famine, where hundreds of women and children were dying every day. The air was always full with the sweetish smell of death. It was awful to see how children died, expired their last breath, and their mothers died with them, holding them in their arms. You don't even need a war... I spent almost three months in all this. Then I returned to Denmark and landed at the airport, where food is everywhere, clothes, and all sorts of junk. I had to meet some friends at a restaurant, and then a friend of mine started complaining that the government decided to raise some taxes. And I just had a fit of hysteria. Thanks God I didn't beat her up, but I threw a chair at her with curses! I just came from a place where people are dying to one of the richest countries in the world, and you dare complaining! But she has not been there. She came from her own house, with her own concerns. Then I began to distance myself from my friends, to criticize them for being stupid. But this is certainly not so. They live with their own problems, but I came from another part of the world and could not stand this. At this point, you already start to lose, because you only see your own part of the world, you don't see your friends any more. This is the moment when you can become a fanatic: now all have to see the children starving in Africa, and no one is allowed to talk about anything else. This is a part of my trauma. And this is a way to get isolated in my own country. This is what happened to many soldiers who came back from war. How can you sit here, eat your pizza and jabber when people are dying there? This is absolutely the same. It was the same on Maidan: we sit and have a breakfast here, and we die there.

We have to remember that the families of those fighting in a war live in the constant fear for them. They watch TV every day, and it seems to them that their loved ones may die any moment. So, they also need help. After living through something that is far from the norm, and the war is exactly such thing, you will never be the same. You will change. Instead of downplaying and depreciating yourself, you have to accept that part of your history and your personality, you have to grow due to your post-traumatic stress, rather than diminishing yourself. This also means that your environment will have to get to know you anew. "Hi! I'm your new girlfriend! I look the same, but I'm not the same. Nice to meet you! Let's have a date. Because you are not the same after the Maidan and the war, I'm sure about it." What I have to live through is so unusual that I have to redefine my whole mode of existence in this world. And my father, mother, girlfriend or brother — all of them have to redefine themselves for me. This takes time and help. We need someone to support us and to help us get back to the flock. ■

Old faultlines

As tensions rise in Turkey, they spill over into Germany



PHOTO: REUTERS

The arm of Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "must not reach into Germany", says Cem Ozdemir, one of 11 members of Germany's parliament with Turkish roots. Yet Turkish politics have erupted onto the streets of Germany. On July 31st almost 40,000 people gathered at a pro-Erdogan rally in Cologne organised by an international lobby for Mr. Erdogan's Justice and Development party. The demonstration hinted at the scale of support for Mr. Erdogan—and the difficulty German politicians will face when speaking out against him.

About 3m people of Turkish descent live in Germany. Half of them retain Turkish citizenship, making Germany in effect Turkey's fourth-largest electoral district. Of the roughly 570,000 German Turks who voted in 2015, 60% chose Mr. Erdogan's party, giving him a higher share in Germany than at home. Some 2,000 of the country's 3,000 mosques are Turkish, and 900 of those are financed by DITIB, an arm of the Turkish government, which sends the imams from Turkey. Other political groups are present too, including the movement founded by the exiled Islamist cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Mr. Erdogan blames for the attempted coup in Turkey on July 15th. (Mr. Gulen denies this.)

Relations between the two countries have been deteriorating for months. Since the German parliament voted in June to call the Turkish massacre of Armenians a century ago a "genocide", Mr. Erdogan has given Germany's ambassador in Ankara the cold shoulder. He has harassed members of the Bundestag with Turkish roots such as Mr. Ozdemir. And he has barred

all German parliamentarians from visiting their troops stationed in Turkey (as part of a NATO force fighting Islamic State). This may lead to Germany withdrawing.

But since the coup attempt three weeks ago things have got much worse. Mr. Erdogan's German supporters have become more vocal. Several Gulen supporters have had death threats. The Turkish government is demanding the extradition of many of them. Winfried Kretschmann, premier of Baden-Württemberg in the south-west, says the Turkish government has asked his state to close schools considered to have ties to the Gulen movement, requests that he thinks outrageous.

This could not come at a trickier time for Angela Merkel, Germany's chancellor. In March she negotiated a deal whereby Turkey promised to stop refugees from crossing the Aegean Sea in return for money, visa-free travel for Turks in the European Union and new talks about the (very remote) possibility of Turkey joining the EU. But progress has slowed as Turkey still does not meet all of the conditions for visa-free travel. Turkish politicians are threatening to scupper the whole deal.

Many German politicians now doubt the loyalty of their country's largest minority. "Citizens have to pledge allegiance to the state in which they live," demands Volker Kauder, the majority whip in the Bundestag. But many Turks blame German politics. For decades after Turkey started sending "guest workers" to man German factories, politicians maintained the fiction that these Turks would one day go home, doing nothing to integrate them. Their divided loyalties today are the blowback of that bad policy. ■

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What are we fighting for?

Philippe de Lara, Paris

In the face of multiple challenges, the focus goes on security. The nature of political response, however, is at least equally important



In need of leadership. In a time of ubiquitous dangers, statesmen have to lead the nation and appear trustworthy

Since January 2015, France has been struck by a series of terrorist attacks. More attacks have been avoided thanks to police work. The government declares that France is “at war with terrorism”. France is living under a “state of emergency” since November 2015. But when a country is targeted, there is no zero risk, and French authorities are well aware and declared repeatedly that France would suffer other painful attacks, whatever the precautions.

So we are at war. What kind of war is it? Who is the enemy? And are France and other Western countries able to control and defeat this enemy? These complex questions are both strategic and political, they depend both on domestic and foreign politics.

Although bewildering, the security stake is actually not the most difficult one. Since the 1970s, with domestic red terrorism in Germany and Italy, and the rise of “international terrorism”, western democracies have been destabilized several times by new kinds of terror. Until the collapse of USSR, terrorist groups were very often sponsored if not controlled by the KGB or its East German, Bulgarian, etc. cousins. In each case, the police and special forces had to adapt. Governments had to find the best course of reactions.

You don’t deal with militarized groups trained and sponsored by Soviet Union the same way you deal with a globalized network with autonomous cells like Al Qaida.

Recently, under the guise of the “Islamic State”, the fragmentation of the terrorist mode of action reached a new step: it is now a matter of *individual* radicalization coached by internet sites or Muslim communities influenced by fundamentalists. Terrorists use a wide range of tactics and weapons, able to be served by either experienced veterans, or mad bigots, or young manipulated activists. The debates we once had on the distinctions to be made between organized international terrorism and isolated insane perpetrators, on the duty to avoid absolutely “amalgamation” between religious, political, and social motives, etc. are idle wheels, to say the least: against the unprecedented diffuse and polymorphic modes of terror, these are not alternate scenarios but intertwined factors. The Nice’s killer, may be both an insane and ideologically motivated person, both an isolated lone wolf and a pawn of ISIS.

To see what happens and to cope with it is a difficult task. We are more or less back to the same situation as on the day after the Munich Olympics massacre in 1972, or after the first airplane hijackings in the Middle East. Then, special forces in each country studied the new warfare of terrorists and devised new defence tactics. But the art of “asymmetrical war” as it is labelled now finds every day new tools and devices, thanks to globalization of media and economy, technologies, internet and, last but not least, new motivation profiles. Yet the main tough challenge for governments is not security. Security is not a matter of muscles and/or of law, it is a matter of politics. Politics means giving sense to the situation: first, statesmen have to inform the people and explain the events so that they can cope with the threat in the long run and behave properly. Second, they have to lead the nation and appear trustworthy in a time of ubiquitous dangers. Again, this leadership and trustworthiness are not a matter of “verticality” as too many little Putins are barking (including our Sarkozy), nor are they based only on efficiency and success in the protection of the population. They depend properly on the ability (and willingness) to make sense of the threats and disorders of the world, of the situation of *our* country, and to articulate the project sets to the nation and to the world. The duty of governments is not only to take all the technical steps to achieve security, but to put the civil society in the material and moral condition to understand and cope with these steps, to picture the meaning and horizon of the ordeal (what we stand and fight for). In the French case, these issues are intricate

because the State has been and is still, so to speak, our civil society: since the monarchy and through Republicanism, State in France is the founder of the nation and the main object of our patriotic pride, the shield protecting citizens from any danger, the source of any collective action, the heart of what French culture and way of life mean for us and for the world.

First challenge: to behave properly. It does not mean to become a nation of heroes. Proper behaviour involves small things: common decency, control of panic, good will compliance to security regulations even when they are boring, and, last but not least, resistance to scapegoating: “it is the fault of the Arabs, of EU, of weakness of democratic powers, of refugees”. Other scapegoat hunters will mention “islamophobia, xenophobia, poverty, capitalism, US imperialism”: the leftists are not less silly than the “populists” ones.

Now, resilience against panic and scapegoating, care for others, civic discipline, are not given once and for all in individuals and societies, they are shaped by circumstances, by national culture and by politics. Let us think of the unbelievable resources of dedication, courage, and civic morality revealed by the Maidan in a people, the Ukrainians, supposed to be depressed, selfish, divided, prone to mental slavery after centuries of foreign domination and decades of Soviet brain-washing. Or let us look at the dignity of French people reactions after the attacks of November 2015 in Paris: the awareness of the values at stake, the concern for unity and even friendship, the civic piety of the rituals in memory of the victims (maybe an echo of Maidan...).

Here comes the ultimate pitfall: French leaders, French government are doing rather well in their daily decisions, they find more or less the right words at the good time (admittedly better in November than in July). But they don't provide what a society, a nation needs in such a situation: a clear *identification* and understanding of the threats and dangers we are facing, a sound and meaningful *narrative* about where we stand in such a complex and dreadful world, and a *perspective* of action we set to ourselves and propose to our allies and partners. Such were in the past wars (at least justified and accepted ones). So should be the European “construction”, or NATO, or WTO, provided they have sound purposes and the skill to make these purposes intelligible and legitimate to the citizens. Alas, whatever their merits, the best European leaders (let me include president Hollande among them, despite the general Hollande bashing in France) don't have, or don't dare to articulate for themselves and for their people this understanding, narrative, and project. The word “War” which should point to a definite undertaking has become an empty shell. People are getting frustrated and angry by a belligerent speech which cannot name the enemy, nor the possible allies, nor the means and theatre of combats, not to mention the scope of the war, that is which order it is meant to foster after the current chaos, at least regarding the balance of powers and stability of international order, if not higher objectives, like freedom, just and peaceful cooperation schemes, or saving the planet.

What are the issues our political narrative (rather, our lack of political narrative!) fails to answer, in France and in Europe? Analysis could be made at a broad and abstract level: crisis of democratic gover-

nance, unbound individualism, challenge of sustainable habitation of the planet, shift of the world from Europe to Asia, renewed plausibility of authoritarian regimes, etc. I find more illuminating to focus on three key issues, on which Western statesmen should and could be accountable and are not: the failure of the revolution of global economy since 2008, the rise of Islamic madness, the neo-totalitarian turn of Russia. The average political understanding since the end of Cold War has been unable to grasp and forecast these situations. At best, it focuses on the first and the second, but it ignores the third and cannot address any of them because it does not grasp the whole picture.

The underestimation of Russia's power of nuisance has its deepest root in this lack of global understanding. Western leaders (who are still the leaders of the world) are bewildered by economic and security challenges. They take them one at a time as they stumble on them. They hate the idea of facing many different enemies and threats, they long for a package deal which would solve all problems with a single blow, be it the pacified and unrestrained globalization of populations and markets, the annihilation of fundamentalist Islam, the battle against social injustice on a world scale, or the restoration of national closed societies, ruled by authoritarian governments, or digital economy, or whatever. Putin's game, fiery and blinded by revenge (or rather by a fantasy of revenge), is a fact many leaders choose to ignore because they cannot stand a third front on the continent and prefer to flirt with the illusion that Putin's regime could be a reliable partner and even a recourse. That's why so many decent conservatives fall under Putin's spell: some are angry against the destruction of local cultures and of democratic nations by globalization, others unhappy with the dismantling of welfare state by the new economy, others despaired by the decay of democratic politics which no longer offer community values, historical meaning, and decency of leadership.

That's why we overstate our common interest with Russia (against Islamic terror, in Syria, for the security of Europe at large and, why not, against Turkey and NATO), and that's why we misconstrue Putin's action as a rational great power policy. Since 1989, Western consciousness is still under the spell of “the end of history” and cannot contemplate history in the making, that is genuine chaos strategies which are at the bottom of both Russia and Islamism policy. It makes little difference whether this chaos strategy is driven by some cunning expectations or by blind resentment. The civil war in Europe that Islamic terrorists are trying to put on fire on one side, the collapse of EU and reshuffling of European order Putin is pushing forward on the other, are two very different and independent perils, but the same disability prevent Europeans from understanding and reacting properly to these perils.

My conjecture is that the deep misunderstanding of what happened in 1989 is the mother of subsequent mistakes and blindness: on the flaws of global economy revolution and their political consequences on legitimacy in democratic countries, and on the nature of earthquakes in the Islamic world (since the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Sunnite-Shi'ite war, and the Soviet war in Afghanistan). Unfortunately, such thoughts may be shared in Ukraine, they are nearly inaudible in the rest of Europe. ■



Calm after the storm

Interviewed by **Anna Korbut**

Georgia's domestic political scene in the run-up to parliamentary elections

Georgia will hold its parliamentary elections on 8 October. At the previous ones in 2012, Mikheil Saakashvili's incumbent party lost by over 10% to the recently formed Georgian Dream (GD), founded by billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. Its support has recently plummeted, although Georgian voters are in no hurry to bring back its predecessors either. An April 2016 poll conducted by the International Republican Institute showed that 20% of respondents would vote for Georgian Dream and 19% for the previous party of government – the United National Movement (UNM). In 2014, according to various estimates, the GD-led coalition government was supported by about 50% of voters, whereas about 22% would have voted for UNM.

What is the balance of power in Georgian politics today? How is Saakashvili the politician different from Ivanishvili the politician? How have the Georgian state and society changed over the years when they and their political parties were in power? Ghia Nodia, Chairman of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, speaks to *The Ukrainian Week*.

On the Saakashvili phenomenon and the Ivanishvili phenomenon. The Saakashvili phenomenon is a radical transformation. He is a transformational, revolutionary politician. Mikheil came to power in the wake of the Rose Revolution, when people wanted something new and fundamentally different – they were disappointed by the complete ineffectiveness of the previous government and its inability to achieve any results. It would be safe to say that Saakashvili created modern Georgian statehood, a new type of country. In this respect, he is a historical figure for Georgia. But these transformations were obviously painful for many people. In addition, he made several mistakes and miscalculations. All this put together eventually led to his defeat in 2012.

Bidzina Ivanishvili rode the wave of weariness and hatred towards Saakashvili. Plus, being a super-rich man, he inspired in his countrymen hope for manna from heaven, i.e. a solution to all social problems. This, of course, did not happen. In economic terms, people do not feel any progress, and many rather see regression. The sense of perspective that the country is going somewhere has been lost. Society is largely disappointed in the government, believing that it has no concrete achievements and is unable to solve their problems.



However, this dissatisfaction has not yet reached a critical point. People are dissatisfied, but you can't say that they're outraged. The idea of returning to the rule of Saakashvili or the United National Movement is also unpopular. One possible explanation: life is calmer under Ivanishvili. While Saakashvili constantly stirred up society, Ivanishvili comforts it. Many people associate Mikheil's return with potential upheavals, but it's sure that no one wants another revolution. The government uses this fear, and does so with quite some success.

If we talk about foreign policy, all Georgian governments since late years of Eduard Shevardnadze's rule have declared commitment to the European and Euro-Atlantic line. But if it was a lynchpin, statement of faith, and frame of reference for the value system of Saakashvili's government, then the current government continues this course more due to inertia. The majority of the population supports the focus on Europe, so the authorities have to act accordingly, and they do. »

But if you look at many leading personalities and active supporters of Georgian Dream, they can hardly be called pro-European figures.

Pro-European and pro-Russian sentiments in politics. GD, unlike UNM, does not have a positive unifying idea. It involves some people committed to the European choice. But many in the party are nostalgic for the Soviet past. What unites them is, on the one hand, hatred for the UNM, and on the other hand – the aura of Ivanishvili's money.

On the whole, there are many people who have simply not found their place in a Georgia moving towards Europe. They are doomed to play second fiddle in that sort of country, so they need something else. Though they understand that life in general is better in Europe, its norms and institutions are alien and incomprehensible to them. However, it is difficult for them to articulate what the alternative is. That's why they talk about national traditions or Orthodoxy, which Saakashvili allegedly fought against. There are many people like this, including among the younger generation. Some of them support GD, others – the openly anti-Western, pro-Russian parties that sprung up relatively recently.

There are those who see Georgia as a European-type state, but for whom Saakashvili and the UNM are fundamentally unacceptable for various reasons. Some of them are also part of GD, but most call themselves "shuashists" in Georgian or the "in-betweeners" – they could support a third force like Free Democrats¹ or not vote at all.

On the pre-election balance of power in Georgian politics. Overall, in the country there is a certain apathy towards the political class. About half of the electorate say they are going to go to the polls, but do not know who to vote for. In other words, they don't like anyone. Given such high percentages of undecided voters, any predictions made now will be highly unreliable. But at this stage we have no information apart from polls that give roughly equal numbers.

GD and UNM are leaders among those who have made their minds up, with around 18-22% each. GM has 1-2% more, but there is approximate parity between them. Next are two other parties that are leading the race to become the third force: the new State for the People Movement created by opera singer Paata Burchuladze and Irakli Alasania's Free Democrats. They distance themselves from both GD and the UNM. These forces are geared towards the "shuashists". Generally, they support a pro-European Georgia, at least rhetorically, but we have more reason to believe Alasania's commitment given his political biography.

Then there are three more parties that have a chance of overcoming the 5% threshold and getting into parliament, but this isn't guaranteed. They are the populist left-wing Labour Party and two openly anti-Western, pro-Russian forces – David Tarkhan-Mouravi's Alliance of Patriots of Georgia and Nino Burjanadze's Democratic Movement².

Ghia Nodia is Chairman of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD), and director of the International School of Caucasus Studies at Ilia State University. Mr. Nodia graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at Tbilisi State University in 1976 and received his PhD there in 1982. From 1980-1995 – researcher, academic secretary, head of the Department for Political Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy, Georgian National Academy of Sciences. 2001-2005 – professor and dean of the Political Science Faculty at Ilia State University. February-December 2008 – Minister of Education and Science of Georgia. Mr. Nodia is currently on Editorial Boards of international academic publications *Journal of Democracy* and *Comparative Strategy*. He writes and comments extensively on issues of democratisation, institution building and nationalism in post-communist countries, as well as the specific problems of political development in Georgia and the Caucasus region as a whole.



So if we look at the current data, no party will get more than 50% of seats in parliament. But GD is still banking on a majority thanks to the advantages of incumbency, which are most visible in first-past-the-post constituencies, and could end up with almost half of seats. It is quite likely that will be the case.

WHILE SAKASHVILI CONSTANTLY STIRRED UP SOCIETY, IVANISHVILI COMFORTS IT. MANY PEOPLE ASSOCIATE MIKHEIL'S RETURN WITH POTENTIAL UPHEAVALS, BUT NO ONE WANTS ANOTHER REVOLUTION

If it is not, then we can expect difficult coalition talks after the election. I think Plan B for Bidzina Ivanishvili is as follows: if he isn't able to buy the population, he can buy some of the parties that pass the threshold to make a ruling coalition with them. Conversely, the UNM hope that GD will not win the elections, which could swing the momentum and make an opposition coalition headed by the UNM the more legitimate option.

On the political evolution of Georgian society. Saakashvili largely managed to overcome large-scale corruption. Nobody wants it back. But fighting this negative phenomenon involves weakening personal connections that are based on exchanging various benefits in circumvention of the law. When Saakashvili's reforms had just started (I'm giving an example of changes in the university system), students came out against the education minister because he wanted to stamp out the "institution of cousins". If everything is done according to the law and connections are not necessary, then why do you even need relatives, many people think? The traditional structure of society

¹Free Democrats is a liberal pro-European party founded in 2009 by Irakli Alasania, Georgia's UN Ambassador under Saakashvili and Defense Minister under Ivanishvili. The party was formed in opposition to Saakashvili, entered parliament in 2012 as part of the Georgian Dream coalition but left it in 2014 after Alasania was dismissed from MoD.

²Democratic Movement – United Georgia is a center-right party led by Nino Burjanadze, founded in 2008. It ran in the 2012 elections in opposition to Saakashvili but not in coalition with the Georgian Dream. It failed to cross the threshold to get into current parliament but already announced intentions to run in October.

that Georgians are used to can be summed up by the principle "I scratch your back, you scratch mine – we're all friends and help each other". But this happens to the detriment of the law, state and formal rules. So Saakashvili's reforms were often perceived as cultural violence against the established beliefs and traditions of society. In part, this is what created the impression of his authoritarianism, although those accusations also have some real grounds.

On the point of no return on the path towards a modern state. To some extent, Georgian society might have already passed this point. For example, Saakashvili predicted that without him we would return to Shevardnadze-era corruption. Indeed, one could argue that some elements of nepotism have reared their heads. Appointments in many regions or state institutions are often based on personal, family or friendly ties. But we haven't seen massive corruption. No matter how tough GD's rhetoric is against the previous government, in practice they recognise Saakashvili's reforms and try to preserve his achievements. The party members know that if, for example, the police start to take bribes again, a lot more people will demand the return of Mikheil. So for now it is possible to talk about the stability of the reforms undertaken while the UNM were in power.

On the emergence of Ivanishvili in politics. He returned to Georgia at the beginning of the 2000s, before the Rose Revolution. He has not been back to Russia since then. Perhaps he had problems with Putin, when Russia started to put pressure on the oligarchs, so he thought life at home would be calmer.

Ivanishvili is a very private, non-public person. He never appeared at crowded meetings, but quietly carried out charity work, primarily in two areas: supporting intellectuals and the church. The biggest church in Tbilisi was built thanks to him. His arrival in politics was a complete surprise.

Despite his great aloofness, it turned out that Ivanishvili has some quite serious intellectual ambitions. Now he has got a taste for public debates, so constantly stresses that his "capacity for analysis" is particularly well developed. Obviously, at one point, when Saakashvili started to lose his popularity, but no figure had emerged to counter-balance him, Ivanishvili decided that he could do this with his billions. He was right: he promised that would become prime minister and did it, then resigned a year later (which he also promised, though somewhat earlier).

But why does he need power? Why did he leave as soon as he got it? What is the essence of his political project? This is the subject of speculation. Ivanishvili clearly does not like to manage the daily operations of the government and be responsible for specific policy decisions. But he wants the government to be loyal to him. According to various estimates, his personal wealth is about \$7 billion, and in Georgia no one else even has one billion. So why not translate economic power into political power? He needed to find a formula: no

matter who is in government, they should be his people.

Obviously, in this case Ivanishvili calculated everything like a businessman: he purchased Georgia as a political enterprise and wants to keep a figurative 51% stake in its leadership. The prime ministers who followed him are just managers, appointed to lead his new company. While delegating some powers to them, he can intervene in anything whenever he sees fit. This allows Bidzina to live comfortably in a country that basically belongs to him, so he hopes to maintain this situation for a long time.

On the balance between the influence of individuals and institutions in Georgian politics and the state. A standard mature society should depend on institutions. But until now we have been more dependent on personalities and great men such as Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, Saakashvili... The latter attempted to cre-

SOCIETY IS LARGELY DISAPPOINTED IN THE GOVERNMENT, BELIEVING THAT IT HAS NO CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENTS AND IS UNABLE TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, THE IDEA OF RETURNING TO THE RULE OF SAKASHVILI IS ALSO UNPOPULAR

ate institutions and was reasonably successful. But while he was in power, it was thought that their stability rested on his personal qualities. So far, we have not reached the point where the country is more dependent on institutions than a single person.

Perhaps Ivanishvili also thinks that he is assisting the development of institutions. But he must continue to personally guarantee that the processes are occurring correctly. For him, the reference point is 2030: he constantly repeats that everything will be how it should be then... It's hard to escape the conclusion that he hopes to keep a controlling stake in "Georgia Inc." until at least that time. But then he will just be turning 74 and he leads a very healthy lifestyle, so we can only guess what he will want to do in the future.

On the future of Georgia in the next 5-10 years. Much depends on the results of the elections in October, so it's difficult to predict. Even if Ivanishvili does keep power now, it is unlikely that he will retain his stable existence: the dissatisfaction in society will not go anywhere. But if there is another government that is not subordinate to him, we shouldn't expect peace and quiet either. So it is difficult to make any predictions for the next 5-10 years, although they could define many aspects of the country's long-term development. We must remember the instability around us: in Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan with its oil, Russia, Ukraine, Europe... When everything is so uncertain within the country and around us, it is difficult to imagine Georgia as an island of stability. ■

In search of a Suliko

Interviewed by Anna Korbut

What shapes Georgia's foreign policy and perceptions of its course domestically?



Sandwiched between the West and Russia, Europe and Asia, Christian and Muslim worlds, how do Georgian politicians and voters see their place in the world? *The Ukrainian Week* speaks about this to Kornely Kakachia, Professor of Political Sciences at the Tbilisi State University and Director of the Georgian Institute of Politics.

Pro-European orientation. In the past 25 years Georgia's political elites (who often speak on behalf of people in this respect) have been carrying on the pro-Western policy. It was historically the practice of Georgian establishment, especially during the First Republic between 1918 and 1921. And even before that, Georgian intellectuals always tried to associate the country with the European way and Europe. That's why the current Georgian elite always talk about a "return to Europe" as did many eastern European countries after collapse of Communism. Although this is may seem a pretty strange concept in many ways for some: a look at Georgia's history may give you a different understanding of whether it was part of Europe at all.

Europe-oriented discourses mostly come from the 18-19th century. The argument they stem from is that

Georgia was always a part of the Byzantine (Christian) world. After the Byzantine Empire collapsed, it created problems for Georgia as the country found itself encircled by non-Christian empires. That pushed Georgians into the search of ways to preserve its nation, religion and independence. Ever since, the country has been trying to first of all find a sort of soul mate nation, *Suliko*. At some point, after the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, they were thinking that this nation would be Russia. It was the orthodox country and a better choice than, say, Iran or the Ottoman Empire. However, after Russian empire abolished Georgian sovereignty it didn't prove to be the country that would be helping us. Quite on the contrary. Ever since Georgia got back its independence (and was a very fragile country at that point), we've been having problems with Russia. That's why Georgia started looking around to find fellow country in neighbourhood.

It had a number of difficulties in finding "soulmates". One was that Georgia is not a Slavic nation like Ukraine and its neighbors, nor a Muslim society, like Azerbaijan and Turkey, for instance. Eventually, however, it started establishing good links with Ukraine - under Shevarnadze, Kuchma. Even if Ukraine does not share a direct border with Georgia, it's Christian, Orthodox, bigger than Georgia. Both were Black Sea nations with heavy Soviet legacies, both had troublesome relations with Russia, which tried to hold them in check, with ambiguous prospects for their European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, and painful reformation agendas. Both countries have had democratic revolutions, which clearly created ideological unity between two nations. Georgia's and Ukraine's relations became particularly close under the presidencies of Mikhail Saakashvili and Viktor Yushchenko. Both states' political leaders and elite enjoyed strong personal ties. Based on personal contacts and revolutionary solidarity, the government under Mikheil Saakashvili had unprecedented access to Ukrainian politics.

Another important point: if you look at Georgia's foreign policy of the past 25 years, it is trying to somehow "escape" from its region – South Caucasus. It's impossible geographically. But the Georgians really wanted to be part of the European and Euro-Atlantic clubs since the 1990s (many think that this aspiration started only after Saakashvili – that's not true). Just to give you an example: when Georgia declared independence, there was a discussion at the Council of Europe – whether to take it in or leave it out, whether it's Europe or Asia. The arguments were about geography, culture, religion and many such things. Then the decision was taken to take in Georgia, as well as Azerbaijan and Armenia. As the latter two are in permanent conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, plus Georgia has its own conflict zones and poisonous relations with Russia, hopes for

regional cooperation seemed bleak. South Caucasus looks more like failed region. So Georgia kept pushing the EU to treat it separately not put Georgia only in South Caucasus Basket. Until recently the EU has been very reluctant to do so: for the past twenty years it was pushing Tbilisi towards regional cooperation framework. But Tbilisi tried to break away from it, and pull closer to Ukraine and Moldova instead especially after the Rose revolution enhancing its Black Sea identity.

To sum it up, Georgia wants the EU to find a way to provide it with alternatives for its transition – not to put it in its geographic South Caucasus context, but in a triangle with Georgia, Moldova, especially after three countries signed association agreement with EU.

European reluctance and pro-Western sentiments in Georgia. Most people in Georgia still support the EU and NATO. But western leaders should understand that it cannot be taken for granted permanently. In the recent years Georgia has been doing many painful reforms aimed towards Europeanization of the country. However, it is important for the West to understand that Georgia, like Ukraine, is under the permanent pressure from Russia, including from its propaganda campaign as it wants it Tbilisi accommodate its geopolitical interest and to change its pro western security and foreign policy orientation. Today, Georgia is one of the biggest contributors among non-NATO nations in Afghanistan, one of the frontrunner in EaP in regards of reforms, etc. which is maximum what a small country can do at present circumstances., but all this so far didn't translated in NATO or EU membership. As a result given NATO members' skepticism of Georgian membership, the perpetual promises to incorporate Georgia into Western structures are starting to ring hollow. Some part of the society poses legitimate question: if they don't want us, why should we do so much? So in general these sorts of attitudes have brought challenges, including democracy fatigue.

In Georgia, there is an understanding that the country can't be an EU member today or tomorrow. But it wants to have some sort of European perspective now. The Association Agreement was a step in the right direction. Visa liberalization will be good too. But Georgia has been long waiting for the NATO membership prospect, but so far The failure to give Georgia some sort of upgrade in its status in the near future may result in a serious blow for those domestic forces that support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration. And meanwhile, frustration is building in some parts of society, especially the older generation who don't speak English and don't know the West. People start having different opinions about this. And this is reflected in opinion polls: the number of those who would like to join the Eurasian Union is slightly rising, which was absolutely impossible to think few years ago.

Fortunately, this is not a major trend: young people support Georgia's current foreign and security policy focused on European integration. But with Russia willing to change reality on the ground – militarily or otherwise - Georgia already has a security dilemma: Russian tanks are 40km from Tbilisi. Georgians understand that the West, especially Europe, doesn't want to antagonize Russia. Although Georgians realize that their country's contribution to the ISAF mission is not a means of buying entry into NATO, they do expect that NATO will

make reciprocal steps to demonstrate that an integration process is occurring. At the end of the day, they also understand that Russia is more important for the German or French business and political elites than Georgia. But there should be also some place for value-based approach. That was one of the main drives of successful process of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Basis for pro-Russian sentiments. Understanding this reality, the Kremlin tries to exploit any weaknesses in Tbilisi to gain influence over Georgian politics. Moscow realizes that it can't change Georgia's foreign policy orientation by force, so it is now trying to use soft power to change Georgia's foreign policy orientation. It also uses to religion as a tool, portraying the West as decadent, anti-Christian, and declined in values. It uses sentiments of old people who have nostalgia for the soviet past. It also tries to change the mentality of Georgians in many other ways – particularly after the change of government. The Russians are trying to promote the Eurasian Union, support NGOs, political parties, and have at least some say in public opinion. They are offering education initiatives, especially to the young people who no longer speak or understand Russian: one of the motivations they use is that many tourists speak Russian, so the Georgians need to know it too. In general, various ways are used to manipulate public opinion.



MOST PEOPLE IN GEORGIA STILL SUPPORT THE EU AND NATO. BUT WESTERN LEADERS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT IT CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED PERMANENTLY

They have not managed to change Georgia's course because we have strong support for Europeanization. But what they are trying to do is to bring back the debate – about what's better: joining the EU or the Eurasian Union. Fortunately that's not issue on discussion table.

This is important for Ukrainians to watch – many Ukrainians are shocked and can't understand how Georgia is even thinking of a possibility of changing orientation after the war. But after five-six years you will probably see the flood of Russian soft power trying to change your country's orientation too.

How successful this is? It does not work the way Russia would like it to. But it is working. I would describe the pattern as “priliv” and “otliv”, the tide. Under Saakashvili there was a “priliv” for a long time, with rapid reforms. Now there is “otliv” – people have grown tired of his reforms, particularly those aged above 40-45, because country during his presidency was moving very fast. These people were saying that the country's moving rapidly, they didn't know where it was going, and there wasn't a place for them in that country. Saakashvili was talking about a bright future, but many people wanted to live in the present as well – that's partly what caused the reform fatigue, in addition to the arguments on authoritarianism, etc.

Overall, though, I believe that in four-five years you may hear once again that Georgia can't afford to move slowly, that it has to once again transform quickly and strengthen its Europeanization and democratization. ■

The once and future kings of Georgia

Oleksiy Bobrovnikov

A short history of attempts to restore the Georgian monarchy



An old courtyard with a palm and a small cellar that has been converted into a bedroom resembling a monk's cell. The history of this building is linked to several names that are sacred to Georgians. For a foreigner to talk about them, whether they are alive or dead, is only allowed if the most canonic piety is displayed.

This is where I live when I come to Tbilisi for my job. And this cell is where my voyage in this country, which is about the size of Kyiv Oblast, began. It's a trip that has already lasted two years and will probably never end, for I am now tied to it, not only through my memories, but through family relations.

The place smells of freshly-ground coffee, dust and eau de cologne. It is the scent of a woman. I used to love to remain here in order to be able to converse with the owners; now, it's for the atmosphere.

19th century drawings from the private album of a Georgian noble family

The history of this courtyard is as strange as the entire history of Georgia, for the same building is today home to the descendants of an ancient royal family and the family of NKVD operators that moved in against the wishes of the owners. But the very fact that the owners, descendants of a once nearly all-powerful noble family, were left even a part of their holdings was unheard-of for the residents of other republics in the "Brotherhood of Nations."

What generosity! After shooting all the men in this family, the soviets left the children and widows with an entire story in the building that their ancestors had built in their glory days. And that's how they live to this day: one group of residents ignores the other, and everybody knows exactly why.

At first glance, it looks like any old building with a single palm and the aroma of Turkish coffee typical of

all Tbilisi courtyards. But under the floors of the rooms in their wing, the family that was forced to show hospitality to murderers and thieves hid the portraits of its ancestors. Old daguerreotypes of the Georgian king and his princesses now hang on the walls once again.

In some sense, historical justice has won out. The personalities of the present and the past no longer need to hide their faces and can observe with dignity the tricks fate plays around them.

The story that I want to tell is mainly about modern times. This is a page out of the life of a princess to whose hospitality I owe a good deal. This woman could have become a Georgian Empress if the monarchy were to return. In the run-up to every new election of the parliament or president, the opposition brings up the idea of restoration again. Even the church gets involved in the controversy.

AN UNDERCOVER PRINCE

But first let's go back to a love story that was fated not to happen.

It is the beginning of the 1990s. She is a beauty, 30 years old and unmarried. She is also the heir of Erekle or Heraclius II, the last Georgian king. The only thing left that she can call her own is the first story of her ancestral home.

He is a young prince of a royal family who has come from Europe, where his family emigrated after the Bolshevik Revolution. He has a villa somewhere on the Mediterranean shore and is hoping to start life over again, before it is rusted to bits.

And so the young prince came to Tbilisi, fell in love—or perhaps only said he was in love—and asked for her hand.

“Something wasn't quite right,” the mistress of the courtyard recalls, “but I couldn't quite figure out what. He was very pleasant and courtly, and had a perfect sense of humor. He was a real European, as we imagined them to be back then. But something didn't fit, something wasn't quite right.”

This is one of those open secrets in Tbilisi, but no one will ever tell you the tale on camera or into a microphone. That's why I won't name names. I don't want to sacrifice the trust of this home, whose hospitality has been offered to me, for the sake of revealing the secrets of others' lives.

These are the secrets, of course, that everyone knows about. And that's what Tbilisi and all of Georgia are about: reverence for their own and strangers' secrets, where everyone knows everything about everybody, yet always hold their tongues in the presence of strangers. Where people wear their masks of nobility to avoid tarnishing old family shields, darkened with age but filled with pride and grandeur, though not one witness to those secrets remains among the living.

A friend of mine was once telling me about 19th century love triangles when he would suddenly drop his voice to a whisper, although he was only talking about dramas from the times of Chavchavadze or Lermontov.

Often, though, the aristocracy ends abruptly in the churchyard, where parish-

ioners on their way out begin to whisper all the dirtiest details in the lives of anyone whom their eye has caught.

“Look at her... she's doing everything wrong. Do you see who she's walking with? She's married. I know for sure that she's married. She lives in the building next door...” My companion Elene, a young painter from the church studios, says this as she turns her gaze away, hiding her face in my shoulder, although we are hardly so close and I haven't had time to get used to her suddenly displays of affection.

The girl is hiding her face so as not to meet the gaze of a woman who is walking down the street and hasn't yet seen her. Everything is done so as not to look discourteous when one faces someone who he or she does not want to greet. Because afterwards, at a casual meeting, a direct look will be seen as a challenge. And that's quite unacceptable.

I asked Elene about this and she looked at me in surprise: “Of course! How can you imagine that I might look her in the face?”

“*Kdemo-mosileba*”— in the old local dialect, this is the Georgian word for the dignity of a young woman. This is not about virginity, but about strict adherence to the rules of etiquette while maintaining an image of innocence and passivity that hides an iron will—all of this expressed with endless grace. A purely Georgian concept that cannot be found in any other language. Purely Georgian style.

Of course, the younger generation won't understand you. *Kdemo-mosileba* a compliment intended for their aunts and grannies. But the word does exist and it can be seen as an illustration of the complexity of relations there and a prime example of a purely Georgian way of behaving.

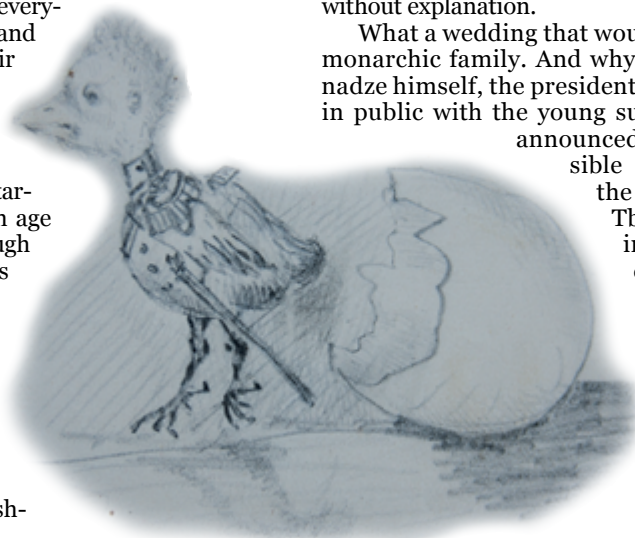
But I've distracted us from the tale of the royal union that never took place.

The mistress of our house had noticed something strange in the behavior and responses of her noble suitor. He was exactly what he should have been. Yet there was a sense of foreboding in her, so that the natural determinant of “yes” and “no” that is turned on before the brain is even engaged, that offers the final consent or takes the last chance away from the admirer, did not work in favor of the handsome noble.

And so, the offer of hand and heart was rejected without explanation.

What a wedding that would have been! The first monarchic family. And why not? Eduard Shevardnadze himself, the president at that time, appeared in public with the young suitor as this guest and announced the news of a possible engagement between the foreign prince and the Tbilisi beauty. After all, in the early 1990s, talk of a return to monarchy was popular in Georgia. Of course, it would be symbolic and constitutional, but still...

A monarch. Whatever Georgians might say, that word really suits them. ▶



“KGB?” the princess who did not become queen says with an ironic smile. “Who else if not the KGB?”

Georgia—the country of noble flirting that often ends in blood and drama.

But this time, the ending was different, and for that reason this story has no names: the myth must be forgotten. The very idea of a constitutional monarchy will turn to stone and become just another topic for neighborhood gossips in Tbilisi.

Shevardnadze knew this very well, when the sly old fox first decided to flirt with aristocracy in post-soviet Georgia and raised the old myth about the king.

A few months after the failed courtship, tales began circulating in the city with spicy details of the foreign prince’s life. A drug rehabilitation clinic somewhere in the Alpine foothills. Nervous breakdowns. Remissions. An opium addiction.

The prince disappeared from my acquaintance’s horizons, just as local chatter about the restoration of a monarchy did. For a time.

“Of course it was the KGB,” the princess smiles. She’s no longer young but unbelievably beautiful still, if you ignore the aging apron and the streak of grey. The first attempt at a reunion of noble families never took place—fortunately for the feminine half of this union.

THE HAND OF THE PATRIARCH

Twenty years later, history repeated itself. This time, though, the heroes of this worldly chronicle were Georgian Patriarch Ilya II and members of two branches of the Bagrationi dynasty.

The Georgian opposition immediately grabbed the initiative. Any excuse to jeer at the President was their motive, especially when such jeers had the blessing of the All-Georgian Patriarch himself. But this threatened to turn into a holy war.

To a certain extent, the collapse of the reformist forces during the Saakashvili years after this is partly rooted in the fact that their leader at one point decided that he could break with any tradition, even ecclesiastic ones. Perhaps he saw himself as some kind of Henry the Eighth, the Englishman who beat the Church of Rome.

Whether under pressure from the West, or in order to weaken the power of the not-very-friendly Georgian Church, the Georgian president decided to carry out one particular reform that caused a real break between him and the country’s Patriarch.

This reform allowed all key confessions to establish their temples on a general basis. Until that point, even the Catholic Church was operating in Georgia on a semi-legal basis only. This project outraged Ilya II, who had unlimited moral authority in a society where self-righteous traditionalists and natural rebels against any secular authority were in the majority. In fact, this 50/50 mix was a cocktail that stirred in many folks.

The Patriarch’s word could change, if not the course of history, then at least significantly strengthen or weaken any movement in it. Indeed, with a single blessing, Ilya did, at one time change the entire culture of alcohol consumption in Georgia.

There are a number of traditions related to drinking that have remained inviolable from father to son in Georgia. For instance, you never held a goblet in your left hand if you want to toast the health of a friend. And you never raised a toast to a distinguished person hold-



ing a mug of beer. This was considered shameful and a sign of ignorance. Beer was used to toast only low-grade politicians or worthless government officials in Georgia—or just to mock rude or arrogant neighbors.

So one time when I came back to Tbilisi, I heard my friend lift his mug of beer... in honor of my arrival! I was furious: “Hey, buddy, what are you permitting yourself? What have I done to you to deserve this?”

My friend suddenly realized what was going on. “Sorry man, I forgot that you’ve been gone for a year. Last year, the Patriarch issued a decree that allowed everybody to drink beer ‘to good folks.’ So all drinks are now considered equal,” he laughed.

And so, the beer industry had found itself the best possible lobbyist that could be imagined. Beer sales began to grow and have continued to grow ever since. A single statement by the Patriarch was worth more than miles and miles of billboards.

TROLLING THE MONARCHS

At about that time, the Patriarch’s trolls invented probably the most unpleasant legend possible for a Georgian: that Saakashvili was not Georgian! And that’s how they got even with him for his desire to legalize other churches in Georgia, including the Church of Armenia, with whom Georgia’s relationship has at times been quite troubled. From then on, certain circles began calling him Saakian, using the traditional Armenian ending, and every time he

found himself in an odd, one-down or comic situation, which he did regularly, it was accompanied by tales about his “ungeorgian roots.”

“Let’s have a real constitutional monarch, and not this not-quite-Georgian Saakian,” opposition trolls would cackle, baiting him.

As the trust gap grew, the reformist president who once had the support of the vast majority of Georgian voters ended his career at home ingloriously. Any confrontation between the leader of the secular government and the leader of the spiritual one in Georgia is invariably the worst kind of trap for the former.

Back then, five years before Saakashvili was essentially chased out, one of the toys, an old doll from the great-grandmother’s chest of monarchy legends, once more took the stage.

It is 2009. Patriarch Ilya II blesses the young aristocratic couple. The wedding is taking place in a church built by Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Georgian billionaire who will soon announce his candidacy as “regent” of the Georgian body politic. The Patriarch promises to support the young marriage in every way possible so that they might raise the son of this great dynasty, the first heir born in independent Georgia and raised in the bosom of the Church, as the next monarch for a country whose last king died 200 years ago.

So many words spoken, so much fervor in every movement...

Five years after these events, just as I was preparing this article, I called a friend of mine, an activist for one of the local parties that has been in opposition all this time.

“How are your aristocrats doing? Anything new from them?”

“Which ones? What are you on about?”

“The Bagrationi couple. The ones who were supposed to produce an heir who would become King of Georgia... Remember?”

“I have no idea. I have to ask our priest. How soon do you need an answer?” was his response.

Skeletons in the closet or simply harmless dusty portraits?

THE GEORGIAN DREAM OF A PERFECT KING

These days, ordinary Georgians hear about monarchy on television only occasionally, when there’s an election campaign going on. Or from a guide who is explaining about monuments from the times of Queen Tamara or showing the architectural works from any era. Like the young hero of Rafael Sabatini’s teen novel, any political actor in Georgia “talks about his Catholic life only when it’s convenient to him,” only here, it’s about the constitutional monarchy.

A figure walking in a field with a pastiche crown or a person out of phantom memories is interesting to a foreign publicist, or for a local political technologist... or a church spin doctor, for that matter. Whatever anyone might say, the one-time president saw himself as king of this country, a mythical figure. Yet this

myth is so deeply embedded in the subconscious that separating it from later civilizational layers is nigh impossible.

Every ruler in Georgia should exhibit all the possible criteria of royalty that we can even imagine. Kdemo-mosileba of Queen Tamara and the courageous dedication and sacrifice of Shota Rustaveli’s heroes. That’s how it was with Saakashvili, who lost, not because he was a bad reformer, but because he tried to make himself out to be both a literary hero and a military genius.

This God-gifted self-promoter failed to show the stamina and courage in the battlefield and tried instead to get television channels that were in his pocket to portray him as a kind of Georgian Oliver Cromwell, while his relations with the church were like Henry VIII’s. He forgot that Georgia is not an island and from the presidential palace to the residence of the powerful local “pope” is only a few steps.



THE LARGER-THAN-LIFE DIGNITY AND GENEROSITY EXPECTED OF A RULER BY EVEN THE MOST CONSCIOUS VOTERS ARE IMAGINARY, EXAGGERATED, AND LEAD TO CATHARSIS—AFTER WHICH USUALLY COMES COMPLETE DISENCHANTMENT

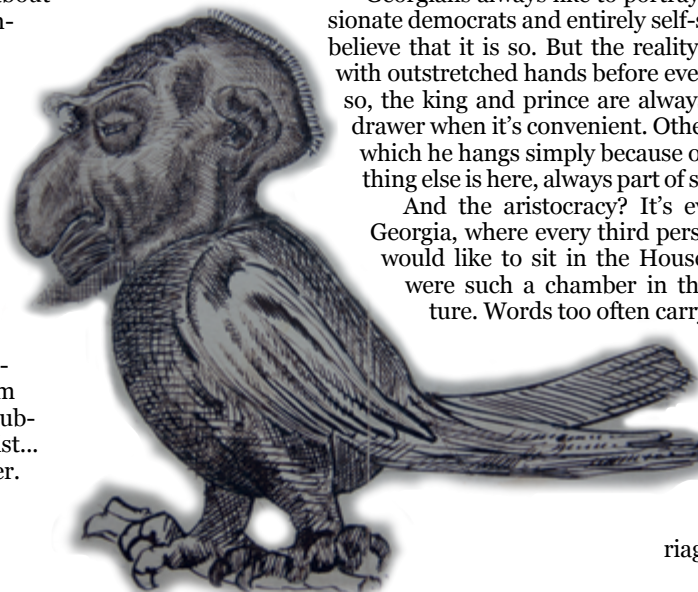
But who became hostage to this fairytale about the “Good King” was his successor, Ivanishvili—who succeeded him, no so much in the actual role of president but in his role as a dream-weaver for Georgian society. The promised clouds of golden rain never did fall on Georgian soil and as the unrealistic promises of his party were clearly revealed for what they were, the Georgian Dream also lost voters.

The larger-than-life dignity and generosity that are frequently expected of a ruler by even the most conscious voters are often imaginary, exaggerated, and lead to catharsis—after which what we almost always have is complete disenchantment. And that is what the Georgian dream of the president, king or politician—or anyone who runs the country—looks like.

Georgians always like to portray themselves as passionate democrats and entirely self-sufficient—and will believe that it is so. But the reality is that they stand with outstretched hands before every new leader. And so, the king and prince are always pulled out of the drawer when it’s convenient. Other than the walls on which he hangs simply because of his lineage, everything else is here, always part of some political game.

And the aristocracy? It’s everywhere here in Georgia, where every third person is a prince who would like to sit in the House of Lords if there were such a chamber in the Georgian legislature. Words too often carry little weight. Like

the promise to be faithful and generous during the first flirtation, a promise that is worthless unless recorded in a marriage certificate. ■



Handmade tourism

Taras Harmash

Where to go for authentic and unusual experiences in Ukraine



An old new cabin. Time would have killed this Hutsul house. But a group of activists turned it into a hostel

Khata-Maysternya, a workshop cottage, is an old Hutsul house turned into a modern hostel in the Carpathian Kosiv County, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast. Anyone can go there to live and work, or participate in the various training sessions that are regularly held. All this activity started in Rivne, an inconspicuous city in north-eastern Ukraine, where most founders of the Social Initiatives Workshop come from. The organisation arranged informal educational events for seven years, until two years ago its members had the idea of creating their own "seminar house". They were joined by a Belarusian man, as well as girls from Donetsk, Crimea and Poland.

"We went on several expeditions around the Carpathians, because we wanted to find the exact right place," says Taras Kovalchuk, one of the 20 founders. "This house was half-ruined and had sunk into the ground following flooding – nobody lived here. We made a long-term agreement with the owner to rent it free of charge in exchange for tidying it up."

The group has made the Workshop Cottage into a real masterpiece, though from the outside it looks just like it did a century ago. Inside there are com-

fortable shower rooms with hot water, a projection screen, Wi-Fi, spacious rooms with the smell of fresh wood and a fireplace, a separate kitchen, some rooms for classes. The organizers plan to make a bar upstairs, although the first floor is caved in at the moment. But the most important thing is the place where the Workshop Cottage is located. Only mountains and the tops of hills can be seen from the window and there are no paved roads – it is a half-hour walk uphill from the village. Wonderful people who run their own farms and are happy to help with advice live nearby. There are no fences around the houses; no one shields themselves from their neighbours. Small groups of tourists have flocked to the area in the wake of the young people who unexpectedly settled there, which brings some income for the local Hutsuls too. Every day, the visitors buy homemade milk, sour cream, cheese and meat from the locals. A few old ladies that knit socks and gloves live nearby, and the guests of the Cottage Workshop Cottage are now among their main customers. That is how 20 young people made themselves a country residence and gave the village a second wind.

"Communication with the village is very important for us. We take some things from them, but have to give back too. Locals are always invited when we organise events. We want to set up a summer camp that kids from the area will be able to come to. We seem to be hidden away from civilisation here, but people that we consider our neighbours live just a few kilometres away. This is our common home, our meeting point. Each of us is supposed to stay here at least a few weeks a year for maintenance."

The 20 founders chipped in about \$2,000 each, invested a huge amount of physical and creative work into the house, and in the space of one year turned an old hut into an incredible modern and energetic place that you cannot wait to hurry back to.

It has its own incredibly interesting story that was unearthed by Taras Hrytsiuk, a historian from Rivne who was one of the first to come up with the idea of restoring the house. It was built in the 1930s by Vasyl Paliychuk on land owned by his wife. Vasyl was from a poor family and could not afford what was at the time such an expensive plot of land. But he fell in love with Yelena, from a wealthy family. They might never have married, but the girl had a serious injury: she was blind in one eye. So her parents doubted whether they could give their daughter away to a man as respectable as themselves, and the poor Vasyl was lucky enough to marry wealthy Yelena. The wedding must have looked absurd: the groom walked to the church on foot, while his bride was on horseback.

Vasyl was a carpenter and builder. Despite his manual work and humble background, he was recognised as an intellectual, having many connections with local bohemians. In 1935, he laid down the foundations for this house on one of the best pieces of land belonging to Yelena's parents. Incidentally, in the very next year, 1936, Paliychuk worked on a construction project that was extremely important for Poland – the observatory on Pip Ivan mountain.

Vasyl was a "blogger" of his time and wrote about it in his diary: "When I got onto Pip Ivan, there was no observatory. Two large stones were standing there with branches on top of them, covered by tarpaulin. I went inside this hut, which was lit by an oil lamp... When I worked there, I spent the night in that hut. It was freezing, winter had already started. We made a fire in the hut, but the wind put it out. I dressed up warm, nailed a board to the floor, put down some moss and slept there."

The very same Vasyl Paliychuk, builder of the observatory, lived until 1999, and his descendants remained in the cottage until 2008, when floodwaters washed away the soil and the building caved in. Vasyl was closely connected to the intelligentsia and held many open-air air festivals there. He opened his doors to the followers of repressed painter Mykhailo Boychuk and the Sixtiers. Priests and Ukrainian Insurgent Army partisans found secret shelter in his home. It had false walls that were used to hide food and books from the Communists.

At a time when historical sites in Ukrainian cities are being destroyed to make space for awful high-rise buildings, somewhere on the mountainside in the Carpathian village of Babyn, a good half-hour uphill from the nearest farmhouses, where there is

no public transport and access is even difficult on foot in bad weather, 20 young people have restored an ordinary rural cottage with an incredible history. And not only for themselves – they have not walled themselves off from the community, because that was never the way things were there. The house was restored not only as a nice piece of property – it now continues the legacy of the man that built it. What Taras and co. have put back on the map of Babyn is not just an old shabby hut, but an entire invigorating organism that interacts with the village, welcomes guests and tourists, and is an incredible role model.

ECOTOURISM

Michel has just turned 33. He comes from Kiel in northern Germany, between Hamburg and the Danish border. His parents are entrepreneurs and have their own companies, while his brother recently opened a factory. The young man went down another path: he studied to be a forest ecologist in Freiburg, but saw no sense in remaining in Germany.

"It seemed to me that in Ukraine I would be able to find the ecological conditions of our ancestors, because they do not exist anymore in Germany. People are supposed to live near nature. That is what I want to show by example."

In Ukraine, Michel took an interest in buffalo. He found out that at the beginning of the 20th century there were several thousand of them in just three villages of what is now Khust County in Zakarpattia Oblast: buffalo were kept in each yard just like cows were. But this tradition was almost completely lost after collectivisation. Buffalo are too sensitive to keep as pets and do not meet the production needs of a collective farm in the same way as cows, goats or sheep.

PHOTOS BY NATYA KOVAL, TARAS KOVALCHUK, DARIA SYMELNYKOVA



In search of a perfect environment. Michel left Germany to set up a buffalo farm in Zakarpattia

Michel now has two winter farms (in the villages of Steblivka and Chumalevo, Khust County) and one summer one (in the mountain valley near the village of Kvasy, Rakhiv County). His business partially relies on tourists and volunteers.

The farmer is always ready to take on those willing to work hard. He says this is an awfully tough job in itself. People are sometimes harder to handle than animals, whose behaviour is more predictable. Volunteers come for a short time, and have to go back home as soon as they really get into the process. He is often helped by foreigners: French, Germans and Americans. They try to live like real shepherds in the Ukrainian valley, milking the buffalo. Michel teaches everyone.

All of the buffalo have names. The calf is called Romko. Michel soothes them in Transcarpathian dialect. He tells guests about every female and introduces them to the bull, although he advises them not to get too close to him. Tourist groups visit again and again, bringing gifts to the German that looks after Ukrainian buffalo. Coffee and sugar are in short supply in the valley.

Michel is one of the first to take in volunteers and tourists in such slightly wild conditions. But there are more and more ecofarms, just like people wishing to get out of the city, who, if they do not have grandparents in the countryside, are happy to do a bit of work on someone else's farm. After all, Michel's occupation is not just work, but also has noble objective – the preservation of Carpathian buffalo.

BED&BIKE

Alisa Smyrna and her husband for some time organised cycling trips around the Carpathians, then realised that they could make their own place to host guests. They owned an old collective farm warehouse in the village of Dubrynychy near Perechyn (Zakarpattia Oblast). On the ground floor, they have made a huge hall for banquets, traditional weddings or a simple breakfast for those staying upstairs. A comfortable hostel with a massive room is located on the first floor. There is an outdoor shower in the yard. It is now known as Bed&Bike or Dobra Nuć, which comes from name of the village.



ALISA SMYRNA AND HER HUSBAND FOR SOME TIME ORGANISED CYCLING TRIPS AROUND THE CARPATHIANS, THEN REALISED THAT THEY COULD MAKE THEIR OWN PLACE TO HOST GUESTS

After a long day in the mountains, they are happy to welcome dirty and tired tourists, travellers and backpackers who are used to saving money on accommodation and are often uncomfortable in traditional hotels. The eco-friendly Bed&Bike preserves the traditions of Zakarpattia, fascinating foreigners and giving them the chance to celebrate a highland wedding with a proper Carpathian marriage certificate.



A two-wheel dream. The Bed&Bike hostel is a popular destination for foreigners, but few Ukrainians are familiar with it

Alisa has also made a small "insect hotel". For now, it is just a box, but it will soon be home to several ant families. One time, the hoteliers found a wounded owl and nursed it back to health until it returned to the forest. The wooden box, similar to a birdhouse, where it lived remains high up under the roof.

"We spent a long time renovating the premises," says Alisa. "We installed PVC windows in the attic. And then I realised that the bats had disappeared. I started to read about how to bring them back. I'm scared of these animals, but didn't want to disturb the ecosystem. I had to knock out a window in the attic and let them live there again."

The woman says that almost no Ukrainians stay there. She is, frankly, even a little afraid of domestic tourists. Everything at Bed&Bike is in several languages: they know English and German well. You can rent a motorbike and ride around the picturesque landscapes of Zakarpattia.

THE RIDER

Two girls, Halyna Tanai and Olha Honchar from Kryvyi Rih in south-eastern Ukraine, came up with the original excursions under the "Yizdets" brand. Their tours are mainly literary in nature, although the guides do not just talk about books: there is also music, obscure facts and history. Today, they have a few active routes: Kyiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk–Buchach, Ivano-Frankivsk–Kolomyia and Uzhhorod. The organisers consider the latter, led by well-known writer Bandy Sholtes, to be the most "in depth". New ones will be added in the autumn: Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Kramatorsk–Sloviansk.

Halyna and Olha at first had the idea of making a literary guide. Two in one: travel tips and a collection of short prose pieces by Ukrainian writers about interesting towns and villages. Then well-known writer Taras Prokhasko based in Western Ukraine's Ivano-Frankivsk became a Yizdets guide and the girls almost completely switched their focus onto the tours, leaving behind work on the guidebook. Now they want to go back and plan it again from scratch, guided by their newfound experience.

"The overall concept has not changed," says Halyna. "But now I realise that there should be more text and information about each region, because it is impossible to fit Kharkiv Oblast or Zakarpattia into one story by one writer. In addition, I see the end product a little differently: it should be a premium souvenir with certain extras, besides the texts and illustrations, and a mobile app."

Olha claims that introducing travellers to literature is the easiest thing to do, because this aspect of Ukrainian cultural history has probably been researched more than any other, and writers' houses and apartments are usually the best preserved.

The hardest thing that the organisers of these trips have to deal with is infrastructure and the quirks of Ukrainian Railways. They use public transport so that other travellers can follow in their footsteps.

"Tickets are an eternal headache for us, because some people are not ready to plan a two-day journey three weeks in advance, and are then faced with the



The murals worth checking. Yizdets takes people on "city rock art" tours to help them understand modern urban spirit

fact that there are none left. I won't say anything about coaches: they're more like a constant 'anthropological study'. It's not so hard when you go by yourself. But when you're in charge of a group, you see everything a little differently. For example, there are some great buses to Kolomyia, where you have to give everyone an earful, including the controller, because they all ignore the tickets: the first people to sit in the bus get to travel. Everyone buys them from the driver, only we get them from the ticket office. We were sort of lucky with hotels and hostels – the most striking was a hostel in Vinnytsia without a computer. The receptionists write everything down in a logbook, because only the boss has a computer. And when they mix something up, there's an ideal excuse: the other receptionist has bad handwriting.

Yizdets works with publishers too. For example, during a trip to Lviv a meeting was organised with the chief editor of Old Lion Publishing House, Maryana Savka. For publishers, this is an opportunity to sell books and communicate directly with their readers. The trips are also a good opportunity for Vasyl Karpyuk, writer and director of Discursus Publishers in Ivano-Frankivsk, to show the results of his work and meet his readership. The girls are planning to adopt another format – accompanying tourists to cultural events, and are developing a programme for the Zaporizhia Book Toloka festival. These joint efforts benefit everyone: tourists and publishers, as well as the initiators and visitors of cultural events.

The organisers say that in order to promote reading, people should be given more than just advertisements for books. Everyone wants to touch, feel and become part of the process. In the future, Yizdets plans to run educational trips for schoolchildren, so that their literary journeys can go beyond their textbooks. ■

Museums of enthusiasm

Bohdan Logvynenko

From a collector of pieces by Malevich and Repin that were worth less than bread during war to a representative of the soviet “hippy” and dissident culture – amateurs who could be museums themselves create noteworthy collections of art and artifacts in their hometowns

At a time when many museums are in decline or grow outdated, there are people who are swimming against the tide: rather than blaming the government or complaining about its inaction, they build entire museums on their own.

One of the best art museums in Ukraine can be found in the village of Parhomivka near Kharkiv, where in the 1950s farmer Panas Lunyov started collecting all sorts of oddities, which after the war were less valuable than bread. Panas Fedorovych managed to get hold of original paintings by the greatest masters, prized around the world: Picasso, Renoir, Benoit, Malevich, Kandinsky, Vereshchagin, Shishkin, Repin and Levitan. His collection also includes pencil drawings by the prominent Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko and sketches by the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky.

Panas Lunyov died in February 2004, and in March the gallery, along with the sugar refinery it was on the books of, was sold for a ridiculous amount of \$26,000. All the exhibits now belong to the Kharkiv Art Museum, but the premises where they are stored are owned by a private firm, and over the past 12 years there have been several attempts to plunder the collection. No one knows what will come of Parhomivka without Panas Lunyov whose name the museum now bears. More devotees who are building up their own museums live across Ukraine.

PRIVATE CASTLE IN CHYNADIYOVO

Fifteen years ago, painter Iosyp Bartosh rented the abandoned Saint-Miklos castle in Zakarpattia. Previously, the courtyard of the historical site was home to a group of garages.

He did not turn it into a restaurant, hotel or entertainment centre. "I never had the idea of doing anything here. You know, artists are not right in the head, so there is no way these thoughts could have reached me. I didn't choose this castle, it chose me and said 'Come here' – so I came."

Iosyp Bartosh moved to Ukraine in 1999 after spending a long time abroad, where he learned four languages. He envied the fact that in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Germany tiny villages could afford to hold annual open air festivals and welcome tourists from around the world, whereas in Ukraine there was only a few and in Zakarpattia just one, and even that was nothing special.

"When I got to the castle, there was a transport depot there. Trucks, loads of garages, it's just unthinkable... We got inside once, but we were kicked out and they wouldn't let us back in. And then I had this idea: what

about having our open-air festivals, which we used to hold at health resorts, here at the castle, putting up paintings on the walls, organising concerts and meetings with writers. No one had faith in this crazy idea, no one in the world. I didn't believe in it either. But the castle made a different decision and said 'It has to happen', and everything started. I don't know myself how it happened.

Our first steps were unimaginably ridiculous. The whole village laughed at me like they had never laughed at anyone before. I went to the village council and said that I would like to take this castle and make it into a cultural and artistic centre. They replied, "You want to do what, young man? Have you lost your mind? You an artist, do you have money? What can you do?" I say, 'Yes, we'll think of something.' But the people here are country folk and I'd just arrived from abroad: so I talked them into it and somehow they believed me, although they were still sure it was a lost cause. But the *rayon*, or county, had to approve it. The county council said, 'It will come to nothing,' but signed off on it. I don't know why."

By the time Iosyp Bartosh's documents with all the required signatures got to the County State Administration (at that time, castles belonged to UkrDerzhBud, the public construction regulator), the situation had changed. The Department of Architecture examined the case for a long time and could not decide what to



Master of the castle. Iosyp Bartosh rented the abandoned Saint-Miklos castle in Zakarpattia and created an original art platform in it

do with it. There were no such precedents in its history of a historical building – a whole castle – being rented out as a culture and arts centre. There was no law permitting or banning it. Ivan Mohytych, an Honoured Architect of Ukraine, stepped in. He was then the head of Ukraine West Restoration, an organisation based in Lviv. Other connections helped too. So Iosyp ended up with a contract.

It was a standard 15-year lease agreement with an option to extend. And in 2005, when then-president Viktor Yushchenko issued a decree on the protection of cultural heritage, it was restructured and a conservation agreement was signed for 49 years.

In fact, there have only been three such attempts in the history of Ukraine, two of which came to nothing. Only Iosyp Bartos managed to attract international funds for reconstruction and build a strong, stable flow of tourists to his Saint-Miklos. For a long time he did not even have a place to live, and occupied one of the rooms in the castle with his wife. But they recently moved into another building next-door and the castle will now have a new exhibition room. Iosyp Bartos is an indisputable authority in Zakarpattia. He has sacrificed his own art career and has not painted for the past 10 years – he says that the castle chose him and now there is no way out.

DOVBUSH MUSEUM

Mykhailo Yusypchuk is his real name. But in the village of Kosmach, Kosiv County in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, everyone calls him Didyshyn. He has preserved the house and stone near which Oleksa Dovbush, legendary outlaw and the “Ukrainian Robin Hood”, was allegedly killed.

He is 81, but is still joking, planning and calculating what he needs for new projects. Although perhaps not as energetically as before. A year ago, he cracked his skull on a rock in the mountains. The elderly man had to undergo several difficult operations and now a serious dent embellishes his bald head. “It’s been a year since I came back from the dead,” says Mykhailo. He jokes that Dovbush’s spirit saved him. And laughs.

“Fewer and fewer people come to visit,” he remarks sadly, though still trying to amuse us.

Alongside real historical facts and artefacts, Didyshyn demonstrates some completely unproven items: a meteorite, wooden sculptures of naked people apparently created by nature. He even has mammoth tusks and dinosaur bones.

“Before, a lot of MPs came to see me, but I never got a penny off them. Some left their contacts in case I needed help. And then I was robbed. They took weapons with Dovbush’s initials from the museum. I ran out of the house in my underwear to chase the thieves through the gardens, but couldn’t catch them. The police didn’t even look for them. I called the MPs. No help.”

“Ubezpieczono, 1931 rok,” says a sign on the house. This means that it was insured by a private company at the time when this area was still part of the Second Polish Republic.

The enthusiast made the first monument to Dovbush and thousands of people came to its opening. This was during Perestroika, but the KGB came to visit and asked why he was honouring a bandit and not his parents. They promised to throw him in the GULAG, but Mykhailo did not give up.



Guardian of myths. Mykhailo Yusypchuk, 81, is the caretaker of the museum for Oleksa Dovbush, a Carpathian version of Robin Hood

Didyshyn is a professional photographer. He even served as one in the Air Force. He was the only person in the area to have the most expensive cameras and lenses, including a 3-kilogram telephoto. In addition, he made videos on 8mm film, which is now lying around somewhere and there is no way to watch it.

“I got a quote of 10 hryvnias (\$0.40) to digitise one metre of film. I don’t know how many thousand metres I have. Am I supposed to sell my house to show this film? There aren’t even any projectors like that anymore.”

MYKHAILO YUSYPCHUK HAS PRESERVED THE HOUSE AND STONE NEAR WHICH OLEKSA DOVBUSH, LEGENDARY OUTLAW AND THE “UKRAINIAN ROBIN HOOD”, WAS ALLEGEDLY KILLED

He is 81 and has a hole in his head, but still dreams of digitising his films and publishing an album with his collection of embroidered designs from different areas where Hutsuls live.

RADIO MUSEUM IN SVITLOVODSK

Leonid Pasko recently celebrated his 66th birthday. He lives in an old cottage on the outskirts of this small district centre in Kirovohrad Oblast (Kirovohrad was recently renamed into Kropyvnytsky under the decommunisation law – Ed.). But everyone in the area knows him. Leonid’s house is immediately visible from afar: three tall antenna rise up from the roof. Inside is a real radio shack and exhibits from before World War II.

He repaired nuclear submarines near Vladivostok, a city in Russia, became a vegetarian 40 years ago, and now plans walking routes around the Carpathians. He ▶



"In the Soviet Union radio was the Facebook and Twitter of the time. It helped people unite and could have sparked a revolution," says Leonid Pasko, the founder of the Radio Museum in Svitlovodsk

has his own huge collection of samizdat, the largely underground crowdfunded publications from soviet times: photographed and reprinted books banned in the Soviet Union. During the Bolshevik era, he also became interested in Asian healing practices and was known as "yogi" in the town. Leonid worked near the bus station, where passengers were often forced to stay the night. He would take them home, which was considered crazy at the time. In the 1980s, he helped the Lithuanian dissident movement Sąjūdis.

"I was born under Stalin, but went to school when a different era started: Stalinism was criticised and certain freedoms appeared. Schoolchildren began to travel through radio waves. Young people reached out to new knowledge that was not previously permitted. The Beatles and Rolling Stones were banned, but they couldn't be forbidden on short wave radio. How did it usually happen? Someone (more often than not diplomats' children) would smuggle a new record to Moscow, put it on their high-quality player and turn on the radio station – it could be heard as far away as Belgorod and Tambov. In Tambov it was recorded and played back, then it would get as far as Kyiv, for example. From Kyiv to Dnipropetrovsk. And a new disc released in England in the morning could get around the entire Soviet Union by evening. Can you imagine the speed? It was a sort of subculture. I put my first set together in the eighth grade."

He is one of the people who developed the amateur radio movement in Ukraine, and one of the first to make an attachment for a radio receiver with a range of up to 100 km. At that time, the airwaves were full of schoolchildren and radio enthusiasts. The students played music for each other: "For Olenka in 8B – Girl by The Beatles". The soviet government did not control

this process and even encouraged it. Across the Union, there were clubs of young technicians – any schoolboy could save enough money to buy an elementary radio receiver kit. Everyone learned how to solder. This improved the level of technical education among the youth, and the process continued until the beginning of the Prague Spring, when the Czechs used short-wave radio during their uprising against the Soviet system.

"In the Soviet Union there was a realisation that radio was the Facebook and Twitter of the time. It helped people unite and could have sparked a revolution," says Leonid. Despite his age, he still finds time to keep track of modern technologies, feed the birds in his yard, solder new radio receivers, teach himself English, lead the local Plast troop (Ukrainian Scout Organisation – Ed.), ride a bike, read a lot of literature, Twitter and Facebook, and focus on spiritual development.

"In the 1990s, I founded Plast here: we had some serious Ukrainian enthusiasm, even the mayor was pro-Ukrainian back then. He supported us and some of our initiatives. Now in the city there is almost no interest in the radio club or Plast."

Leonid runs basically the only Scout radio station in the whole former Soviet Union, apart from the Baltic States. "Take the Netherlands – there are dozens of amateur radio stations in each city, but we have one for the whole of Ukraine. How do they do it? Children are actively involved. They are able to solder and assemble radios. Each year the international Scout movement holds meetings for all young radio enthusiasts on air and online. They are called JOTA-JOTI. There was such an active radio movement in the former USSR, and now there is only one station in Estonia and one in Ukraine, while there are so many in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany."

Leonid works as a school coordinator. With Plast he often works out new walking routes and takes children to the mountains. In parallel, he tries to get them interested in amateur radio. Leonid is a unique man living on the edge of a dying city. Nothing happens in Svitlovodsk, the factories have been embezzled and most local people are unemployed. However, there are beautiful views, a reservoir, hills on the banks of the Dnipro, abandoned industrial giants, bays and canals, but the local media do not report on any of this. It is



LEONID PASKO RUNS BASICALLY THE ONLY SCOUT RADIO STATION IN THE WHOLE FORMER SOVIET UNION, APART FROM THE BALTIC STATES

impossible to find any interviews with Leonid, despite his incredibly energetic and active life with many accomplishments. He is a terribly bright and joyful person – a true oasis of happiness and belief in a better future against the background of complete hopelessness in the area. At the age of 66, Pasko continues to solder new radio units, takes children on camping trips and happily greets simple guests. Although he does not have an official museum or even a sign (he does not call his house a museum himself), it is definitely worth a visit for anyone who loves history and radio communications. ■

The pain of changes

Bogdan Logvynenko

Komsomolsk in Poltava Oblast lived a dull quiet life on the map of Ukraine. Nobody could see it sparking a heated nationwide debate or welcoming hosts of tourists on weekends. Until one day the inconspicuous provincial town on the Dnipro bank did stir a storm of talks and jokes on social media, when its name was changed as part of the decommunisation campaign from Komsomolsk (after the abbreviation for All-Union Leninist Young Communist League) to Horishni Plavni, an authentic name stemming from one of the villages amalgamated into the city. The old name literally describes the river valley terrain where the city is located. But many, especially the locals, lamented that it was too “rural” for their taste.

Naming a settlement after its landscape is not unique for this case or region. Across the river, a town called Kamiani Potoky, or Stone Flows, stands. Its name, too, is after the river along which the first locals settled down. Another village that formed the now-Horishni Plavni is Keleberda, named after another local river (whose name translates as “a hill over the river” from Tatar).

“Sounds too provincial,” the locals lament about their new name, and don’t get it, why tourists suddenly started coming in flocks. But is it really?

Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, translates as a “Muddy estuary”. One of the most progressive cities in the world, it started out as a group of tin mines. All dirty water from the mines went into the river, hence the name.

And what about the unexpected tourist glory? Two years ago, a new train named Hutsulshchyna was launched from Kyiv to Rakhiv in Zakarpattia. This revolutionary accomplishment was made possible thanks to the pressure of the locals on the Ukrainian Railway Company. One other place the new train goes through is Zalishchyky, a small town in Ternopil Oblast, Western Ukraine. It had once been a Polish resort where Józef Piłsudski used to live, though most Poles no longer remember this. In Piłsudski’s lifetime, a direct train went from Warsaw to Zalishchyky. Today, it is no longer even connected with direct trains to Lviv, the closest major city in Western Ukraine. The rattling newly-launched train that now runs on the old railways and takes almost 24 hours to get from Kyiv to its final destination in Zakarpattia started bringing more and more tourists to both Rakhiv and Zalishchyky. It has reinvigorated local businesses. Does this mean that, in order to spark the renewal of tourist potential in a number of regions simultaneously, no major reconstructions were needed? All it took was to put old, worn-out train cars on shabby railways and launch the train at a safe, slow speed. Ironically, the first ticket was sold to a tourist from the Netherlands.



As to Rakhiv, it once hosted the Europe-Center festival (Rakhiv is considered to be one of Europe’s geographic centers) initiated by local private businesses, featuring well-known Ukrainian bands. But it never got the support of the city council; sometimes it even faced pressure, as its organizers reported publicly. Meanwhile, when the guests came for the festival, Rakhiv alone could not house all of them, so they would rent rooms and hotels all around Rakhiv County. Eventually, the festival was gone. The city council is now trying to shut down the only remaining nightclub in town.

What do Horishni Plavni, Rakhiv and Zalishchyky have in common? The pain of all these places is that they don’t understand or accept a different time. The time when the most important events are those that agitate the information space, rather than those happening quietly behind the scenes. The time when any interest from a journalist, any new train, even if slow and shabby, is an opportunity.



UKRAINE HAS MANY HISTORIC SITES. BUT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE AND THOSE WHOM THEY ELECT ARE DIGGING A GRAVE TO OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE THEIR HISTORY OR THEIR PLACE KNOWN

In Horishni Plavni, the community joined forces with the local authorities to resist any changes. No to history and tourism, they insist stubbornly. The closes hotels are in Kamiani Potoky. Horishni Plavni still has none. And yet, it is still too embarrassed to be like Kamiani Potoky?

In fact, Horishni Plavni is a snap story of Ukraine’s entire tourism industry – with its forgotten and underappreciated history. It has interesting things to show and discover to those who have seen enough of European globalization, civilization and asphalt. Journalists who flocked to Horishni Plavni along with the tourists could hardly have thought before how breathtaking the landscapes around this place are, and how underexplored its tourist potential is. How many more Horishni Plavni are there in Ukraine? The ones that weren’t lucky enough to catch media spotlight for a couple of days...

Ukraine has many historic sites long overgrown with weeds. The people who live there and those whom they elect are digging a grave to many opportunities to make their history or their place known to the wide audience, being afraid of information breakthroughs. The biggest problem with Ukraine’s tourist potential is little information, or the lack of it. ■

The rise and fall of Avant-garde

Yaryna Tsybal

The 1920s' Avant-garde school of artists was ultimately destroyed as class enemies—for hooliganism and pornography



Valerian Polishchuk in Kharkiv, late 1920s

In the fall of 1929, a huge rally gathered in the Kharkiv Central Club of Proletarian Students. Over 700 students were protesting against the “hooliganism” and “pornographic” performances of Valerian Polishchuk and were prepared to fight decisively against this advance of the class enemy in literature.

An official from the propaganda department of the district Party committee warned about the rabid opposition that class enemies were launching on the ideological front. Speakers from the student

bodies of Kharkiv post-secondary institutions—institutes of people’s education, people’s husbandry, technology, medicine and veterinary medicine—demanded that the activities of “polishchuks” be stopped. As one worker by the name of Volodchenko from the electro-mechanical factory declared that they did not need writers like Polishchuk.

How did the class enemy manage to show up in Ukrainian soviet literature? Hundreds of students were corralled into a demonstration against the magazine Avant-garde #3, in which Polishchuk addressed readers as the mouthpiece of class enemy forces on behalf of some mysterious “enemy.” Against a journal of a mere 110 pages with the cover, worth 1 karbovanets and 20 kopykas. And against the eponymous literary group that consisted of some 20 people.

The rally of proletarian students passed a resolution declaring a fight to the death with polishchukism, hooliganism, pornography and counter-revolutionary elements in literature, called for the further literary activity of Avant-garde to be stopped, to investigate who allowed such a pathetic journal to be published, and to demand from the literary union that it immediately fight against the class enemy

THE RIGHT TO BE

Back at the beginning of that year, Avant-garde still enjoyed the support of Education Commissar Mykola Skrypnyk. On February 21, 1929, Skrypnyk suddenly mentioned this small but colorful group in a famous speech on the pathways for Ukrainian literature to develop during a public debate at the Vasyl Blakytyniy Literary Building in Kharkiv.

“There’s one small literary group that is earning its right to be,” the Commissar began distantly. “This is Avant-garde. Many, many want to deny this group’s existence altogether, saying that there’s no such group. But my respected Comrades, this is what was done with the Ukrainian people: many denied that they even existed, but we do exist, after all.” The room laughed.

But Skrypnyk had not come to joke. “Let’s hear a little less laughter about an artistic symbol, and more esthetic art criticism of it,” he challenged. “This slogan, to my mind, should be the slogan of our daily artistic life.”

The conceptual inspiration, organization and management of Avant-garde came from Valerian Polishchuk, who never worried and never lost hope. At the end of 1925, he left the authoritative Hart Union of Proletarian Writers, which was falling apart before people’s eyes. Just before Polishchuk left, a huge group of writers had quit and im-



Avant-garde #3 (1929), cover by Vasyl Yermilov

mediately formed the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature. But with its conservative academicism and focus on classic models, VAPLITE (a Ukrainian abbreviation for the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature, a writers' association of the time — **Ed.**) did not suit him. He decided to form a separate organization that would promote and defend new, constructive art.

In 1926, a pamphlet called *The Backward-Looking Hart* came out, with a challenge from the Avant-garde group of artists. In an open letter to Hart's executive committee, Polishchuk explained in great detail why he had left the Union of Proletarian Writers—mostly because it was bureaucratized and encouraged creative stagnation. “Hart has constantly promoted and supported the deliberate hackery of so-called ‘agitliterature,’ built on old forms and aimed at outdated tastes, with absolutely no creative spark.”

This was followed by a challenge from the artists of the new group Avant-garde, who declared themselves against all that was outmoded, bourgeois, “enlightening” and isolationist in favor of breaking canons, the poetry of industrialism, expanding language diversity, precise formulations in poetry, and the rhythm of telegrams, aerograms and proclamations.

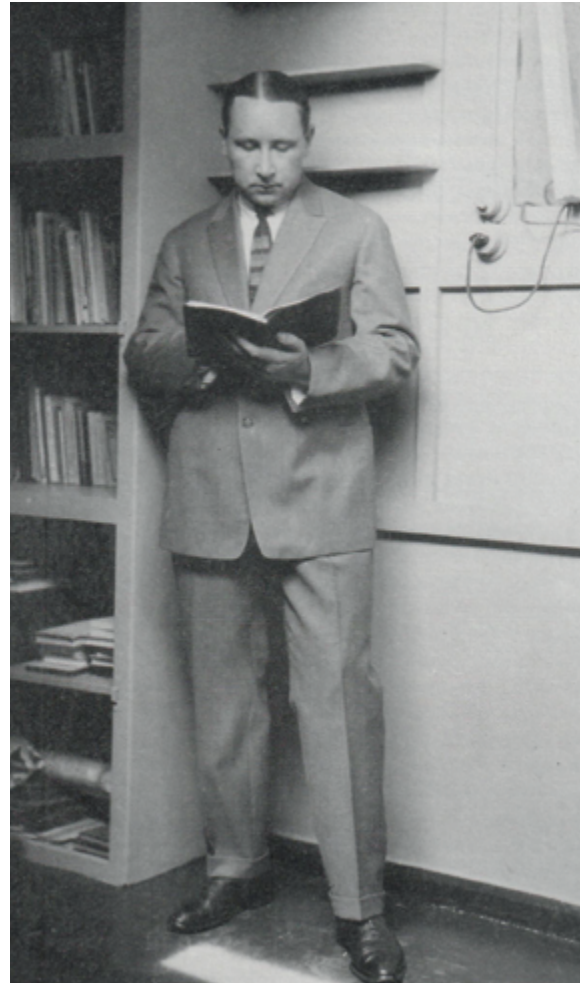
“We are raising the battle cry for true contemporary Europeanism in artistic technique, by exposing and eliminating the epigonism based on long past and now outmoded artistic and literary forms,” Valerian Polishchuk announced, together with four Kharkiv artists. Ahead of them was a hard fight, not only with the outmoded and conservatism, but for the very right to exist.

A PRIVATE INITIATIVE

The Avantgardists were wasting their time appealing to the Party and the public: “We appeal to the Communist Party and all of soviet society to meet us halfway in our creative first sheafing, to reinforce us both morally and materially, because this is in the interests of our common culture. So first all, we call on our new society to respond to us in your sensitive minority with an encouraging voice.”

Avant-garde had to wait three long years for state support and in the 1920s, that was an eternity. For instance, VAPLITE confirmed its statutes with the Communist Party Central Committee in Ukraine and a month later, it was allocated premises, 5,000 karbovantsi for its club and 50,000 kbv for its monthly journal. The secret might have been that among the *vaplites* were 10 Party members, whereas not one communist from the Party executive was in Avant-garde.

And so, Avant-garde began and continued to develop as a private initiative. The proclamations of the Avant-garde arts group were signed by Polishchuk and his fellow artists, Vasyl Yermilov, Georgiy Tsapok and Oleksandr Levada. At the bottom was the mailing address: Kharkiv, vul. Vilnoi Akademiyi 6-8, Artem Social Museum, Artists' studios. Or Kharkiv, Pushkinskiy vyzd 6, Apt. 9, V. Polishchuk. The quartet of Avantgardists printed up a book at their own expense. That same year, Polishchuk's work, *The Literary Avant-garde*, came out, also self-



Vasyl Yermilov in Kharkiv, 1928–1929

published. The next book, *The Pulse of an Epoch*, with the subtitle “Constructive dynamism or militant regression?” came out in 1927 as published by the State Publishing House of Ukraine. Interesting that the print run for both was the same: 3,000.

Polishchuk's books of poetry kept being published one after another as though there was nothing to it. But not everyone was so lucky, because not everyone managed to gain a reputation as the Homer of the Revolution by the mid-1920s, as one respected literary critic referred to him. Two younger fans of Avant-garde, Ivan Dorozhnyi and Mykailo Tuhan-Baranovskiy Jr., had to put their first joint collection, *Molodyk* or “New Moon,” out on their own, and the cover they printed something unusual: “Recommended by Val. Polishchuk.” “Two of my literary and artistic friends brought their works and begged me to provide the foreword,” the recommender explained, “because if you're going to self-publish today, it's better if someone promises to defend a particular work of art from our disputatious, politicized and predatory literary population.”

In 1928, the Russian section of the group also self-published a collection of poems, which they called *A Radius of Avantgardists*. ▶



Rayisa
Troyanker,
late 1920s



Mykhailo
Pankiv, early
1930s



Avant-garde members listen to the radio: Left to right: Filliped, Yermilov, Patoka, Pankiv, Troyanker, Polishchuk, Chernov, and Berman, Kharkiv, 1929

THE AVANT-GARDE JAZZ BAND

Only in October 1928, after a three-year “aging process,” was Avant-garde given some money to publish a periodical. And for this they owed thanks to their powerful mentor, Education Commissar Skrypnyk.

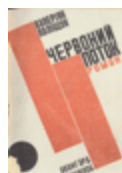
After the first proclamation in 1925, much time went by until October 4, 1927, when a group of artists gathered in the Academics’ House and approved the Avant-garde resolution:

“We want to jointly engage in artistic explorations, inventions and creations, so as not to be stuck at the level of contemporary petty little standards of artistic creativity. To present an independent, avant-garde artistic word, sound, color and construction, we need to put together a series of collections and a gazette journal. We appeal to Ukrainian soviet society, the Communist Party, and the government to assist us in this our endeavor.”

It was not the first time the artists had made this kind of plea and this time there were 15 signatures on the resolution: one artist, two musicians and 12 writers. In time, Polishchuk admitted that they “ended up having to print materials out of pocket and to engage people who were not quite ready for this kind of work.”

At this point the Avantgardists decided to take the bull by the horns: two months later, in winter 1928, they went with their platform to Skrypnyk’s office at the People’s Commissariat of Education. And he went and invited them in his introductory speech at a literary debate. The Avantgardists responded in writing that the presidium of the Vasyl Blakytyn House of Literature had not suggested that they take part in the debate, but had organized the event exclusively for members of the House and invited guests. Above all, the Avantgardists were simply not members of this organization.

Both the meeting and the letter had their consequences. Polishchuk and his Avantgardists did



Valerian Polishchuk, *Red Stream* (1926), cover by Vasyl Yermilov

In soviet times, the term “hooliganism” was applied, not to punks in the streets, but to political, artistic and cultural dissent.

manage to go to the debate and Skrypnyk both mentioned and supported them in his speech. The March Bulletin of the People’s Commissar for Education published a resolution by Skrypnyk about the declaration and appeal of the Avant-garde group: “to agree to possible assistance from the PCE to the literary workers of this group” and “to turn to the State Publishing House of Ukraine with a proposition to discuss the possible forms such assistance might take.”

In October, the Avant-garde Bulletin came out, containing a detailed proclamation from the literary group. But now there were fewer signatures under it, but those that were, were reliable individuals: Valerian Polishchuk, Vasyl Yermilov, Leonid Chernov, Rayisa Troyanker, Viktor Yaryna, Valentin Borysov, and Oleksandr Levada. Yaryna’s name was in a black border: the writer had been sick with tuberculosis and did not live to see the first issue of the Avant-garde journal.

Subsequent issues had a different name, but the numbering of the pages was continuous. By the time the issue called “Artistic Materials of the Avant-garde” came out in 1929, the editorial list had significantly expanded. Ukrainians like Mykhailo Pankiv and Oleksandr Soroka appeared, Germans like Johannes Becher and Kurt Kleber, Russian constructivists Illya Selvinskiy and Korniley Zelin-skiy, myth-maker Edvard Strikha, architects Ivan Nemolovakiy and Bruno Taut, composers Kost Bohuslavskiy and Yuliy Meitus, photographers Serhiy Kryha and Andriy Paniv, artist Oleksandr Dovhal, and designer-typesetter Yakiv Rudenskiy.

The journal wrote about literature and painting—and even about music. An article by Polishchuk appeared in the Bulletin entitled “In favor of jazz bands and foxtrots,” while in the last issue, the score of a Jazz Etude by Meitus was published. In soviet terms, this was already irreverence that bordered on hooliganism¹.

As before, the journal survived on sheer enthusiasm. “Avant-garde works without literary fees to authors,” Polishchuk admitted at one point. “Those who contribute to our literary publications have no material benefit from it whatsoever, other than additional costs and possible attacks on them by regressive elements. But they have moral satisfaction engaging in this cultural project.”

THE LITERARY PRICELIST

The section on red writing in the journal was called “Literary pricelist.” Some of the authors mentioned in the list of members never managed to get themselves published in the short-lived Avant-garde journal, but others were associated primarily with this publication and the group. Today, as then, people mostly knew of Valerian Polishchuk and Vasyl Yermilov. The painter Oleksandr Levada is persistently mixed up with a similarly named playwright in reference books and encyclopedias. Some of these individuals cannot even be found in Google, although the Avantgardists were unusually interesting people with adventurous biographies.

The real surname of Leonid Chernov was Maloshiychenko, a native of Oleksandria, Kiro-

vohrad Oblast. He studied and worked in the Surma Theater Troupe in the Franko Theater. He also organized his own theater, Makhudram, as a studio for artistic drama. Eventually he and his friends organized a mobile theater in Kremenchuk called *Verda Stelo*, meaning Green Star in Esperanto. Their ultimate goal was to translate the entire revolutionary repertoire into Esperanto and go on a world tour. But the nearby Kremenchuk workers wanted Russian soaps instead. To rescue the project, Chernov wrote and directed a detective play called “Sherlock Homes” and played the lead himself.

Verda Stelo died in a battle with famine, while Chernov wandered off all the way to Vladivostok. There, he worked in the press and even in the Chinese consulate, organizing literary evenings, scandalizing the bourgeoisie, imitating the imaginalists—a Russian offshoot of English imagists—, writing poetry and prose in Russian, and publishing a collection of poetry called “An Association of the Insane” in 1924.

His American girlfriend kept urging him to come to San Francisco, but instead Chernov sailed off to India on the Transbalt in 1924. The route went from Vladivostok to Odesa and led to the book “125 Days in the Tropics.” From Odesa, Chernov traveled to Leningrad, where his fiancée was waiting for him. While in India, however, he had caught pneumonia and living in the northern marshes brought on a serious case of tuberculosis. His friend kept urging him to move to Kyiv. At that point, Chernov broke with the Russian imaginalists, got on his motorbike, and returned home to Oleksandria. Starting in March 1927, he wrote only in Ukrainian.

Chernov began to publish actively and joined Avant-garde, and his stories began to be published. He also organized radio broadcasts in Ukrainian, and produced the first radio briefs and radio plays. He rode his motorbike and kept campaigning for Avtodor, the highways department. He wanted to name his fullest collection of poetry “Kobzar on a motorcycle,” but it came out posthumously under the name “At the Corner of Storms” instead, in 1933. At the writer’s graveside, Maksym Rylskiy said, “Chernov is dead, long live the Chernovs!”

Rayisa Troyanker was born to a poor family of Uman Jews and dreamed of getting away from the stetl from an early age. At 15, she fell in love with a tiger tamer and ran away with a traveling circus. Every evening, Raya would put her head into the tiger’s jaws and dedicated the poems published in Avant-garde to her fine-striped friends. Eventually, she married an Uman writer by the name of Onopriy Turhan and began to go to the local studio of the Pluh or Plow Union of Rural Writers. Rumors have it that the young family moved to Kharkiv, not because of the husband’s career but because his young wife’s passion for the handsome Volodymyr Sosiura, who had come to Uman on a literary tour.

Rai-ya, meaning “Paradise is me,” was the way she preferred to write her name. She gained fame among writers for loving many and among readers for writing erotic verse. In her first book, had been gifted to the literary critic Ivan Kapustians-



Mykhailo Pankiv, *Judge Reitan* (1931), cover by Vasyl Yermilov

kiy, a number of handwritten comments from the observant reader can be seen next to her love poems: Sosiura? Polishchuk? The Russian dissident Lev Kopelev once recalled: “All of us, yesterday’s school kids, undoubtedly were captivated by the Avant-garde poetess Rayisa T. Small, slender, very heavily made up, she read poems in which she told about the first time she surrendered.” At bachelor evenings, the most popular poems were the “off-the-cuff” verses of Troyanker and Sosiura.

When Avant-garde collapsed, Rai-ya married the Russian poet Illya Sadofiev and moved to Leningrad.

Journalist Mykhailo Pankiv was from Zakarpattia, from Sighetu Marmatiei. He began to be politically active early and was already a member of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers’ Party in 1909. During the liberation struggle, he went over to the Borotbists or “fighters”, a Ukrainian petty-bourgeois leftist-nationalist party, and edited the central party newspapers. When the Borotbists joined the Communists, the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party sent him to work in Lviv to shore up the Communist Party of Western Ukraine. There, he was arrested and sentenced to hard labor at the secretive Sviatoyursk process, where 39 Ukrainian and Polish communists were tried on October 30, 1921.

THE THIRD ISSUE OF AVANT-GARDE ENDED UP BEING THE LAST ONE. IT’S LEADER, VALERIAN POLISHCHUK, MADE THE MISTAKE OF ATTACKING SOMETHING SACRED—LENIN AND THE PHONY PRUDERY OF SOVIET SOCIETY

Pankiv was able to escape from prison. In time, the soviet government sent him west again, but this time as a member of the publishing business: he organized two expositions of soviet books in Prague and Vienna, and negotiated with Vinnychenko the publication of *Soniachna Mashyna* or *The Solar Car*. And it was thanks to his initiative that the State Publishing House of Ukraine finally bought the rights to publish the novel in the Ukrainian SSR. When he came back, Pankiv worked as the deputy director of the Radio and Telegraph Agency of Ukraine (RATAU), a news agency, at the Education Commissariat. There, he wrote reports, novels and screenplays. His novel *Judge Reitan*, about a two-faced judge and the flight of a Romanian underground revolutionary from Sighetu torture chambers was brought to the screen in 1929 and became a very successful movie across the Soviet Union.

Mykhailo Tuhan-Baranovskiy also led the secret life of an agent. He was the son of a well-known economist and Minister of Finance of the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR). Finding himself an émigré, the younger Tuhan-Baranovskiy became a social revolutionary and a maximalist, carrying out combat missions to liquidate White Guard émigrés for his organization. For these actions, he was sentenced to death in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In the late 1920s, he himself gladly told the adventure-



Ivan Dorozhnyi and Mykhailo Tuhan-Baranovskiy Jr, *Molodyk*, (1927), cover by Vasyl Yermilov



Leonid Chernov, 1927

some tale of his life to young fans of Avant-garde in Kharkiv. After that two books of Tuhan-Baranovskiy's were published: a collection of poetry joint with Ivan Dorozhnyi called *Molodyk* in 1927, and the prose work, "Tales without Names" in 1928. Nearly all his later works were about the lives of Ukrainians and Russians in exile in Czechia and France.

The heroic revolutionary disappeared from Kharkiv as suddenly as he had arrived. Some said he was arrested as a spy, others were certain that he was called to Moscow and sent abroad once again. Before WWII, people saw him in Moscow, alive and well. During the Second World War, Tuhan-Baranovskiy worked in soviet counterespionage for SMERSH. He lived out his days quietly in Saratov and was published under the pseudonym Svitiazkiy.

LENIN, PORN AND BETRAYAL

The third issue of Avant-garde ended up being the last one. It's leader, Valerian Polishchuk, made the mistake of attacking something sacred—Lenin and the phony prudery of soviet society.



Leonid Chernov-Maloshychenko, Sun under the Oars (1929), cover by Adolf Strakhov

Avant-garde #3 included an article entitled "Long live the public kiss on a naked breast!" and a series of Polishchuk's aphorisms under the title *Kaleidoscope*. Among them was a very seditious opinion: "I have been convinced for the umpteenth time that the class struggle is not the foundation of human nature, that class struggle is merely a forced human need when you accept that humanity is simply a particular species of highly-organized animal, but nevertheless an animal. What can you say about class struggle," Polishchuk asked, "when even a cat and a dog can live together peacefully?" As factory workers said at one public rally, with Polishchuk, Lenin became a nonentity."

Worse was yet to come. Polishchuk called on the soviets to take an example from the Japanese and not be prudish about the healthy and beautiful functions of the human body. Not invent ugly, taboo topics. He started with himself and the Avantgardists by talking about their own lives. The spiciest details came with Yermilov: "Given the lack of comfort in divans made by the Central Workers' Cooperative for coupling, Vasyl Yermilov is now making inexpensive, convenient and beautiful bench-bed to engage in these life-giving human functions. To assist our artist in his work, his wife is there to offer advice. And so we announce a new slogan: For cleanliness and openness, for healthy bodily functions, even in public. Long live the public, juicy kiss on a naked female breast."

The campaign to harass Polishchuk was organized quite quickly. In fact, he had been a pain in the neck from the very start, with his accusations of conservatism and outdatedness. As one commentator maliciously put it, "it seems that the only thing that's been organized is a jazz band, the foxtrot, and the Avant-garde Bulletin." Now the government paper, Central Committee News, published a letter from literary organizations that decried Avant-garde #3 for "hooliganism." The supplement to Literature and Arts began to publish the renunciations of members of Avant-garde in issue after issue. Some simply tendered their resignations from the organization; others claimed they had never even been members.

The "erotic poetess," Troyanker, vowed to "crystallize a clearly proletarian ideology and to work on herself with great determination to destroy all undesirable traits" that being in Avant-garde had brought out in her. Others who left included Serhiy Tasin, Lev Kvitko, Borysov and Meitus, Dashevskiy and Bohuslavskiy, Nemolovskiy, and Kryha. Only Leonid Chernov, Mykhailo Pankiv and Vasyl Yermilov refused to renounce their friend and leader.

Two weeks before the New Year, Valerian Polishchuk wrote a letter to the editor that was published in the Communist Gazette in which he admitted his mistakes and decadence and took all the guilt for Avant-garde on himself. However, he insisted that individual mistakes should not be mixed up with the entire constructivist school, which should continue to develop in Ukraine. If he could have, Polishchuk would probably have said: "The Avant-garde is dead, long live the Avant-garde!" ■

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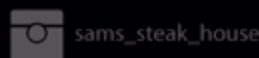
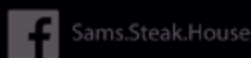
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