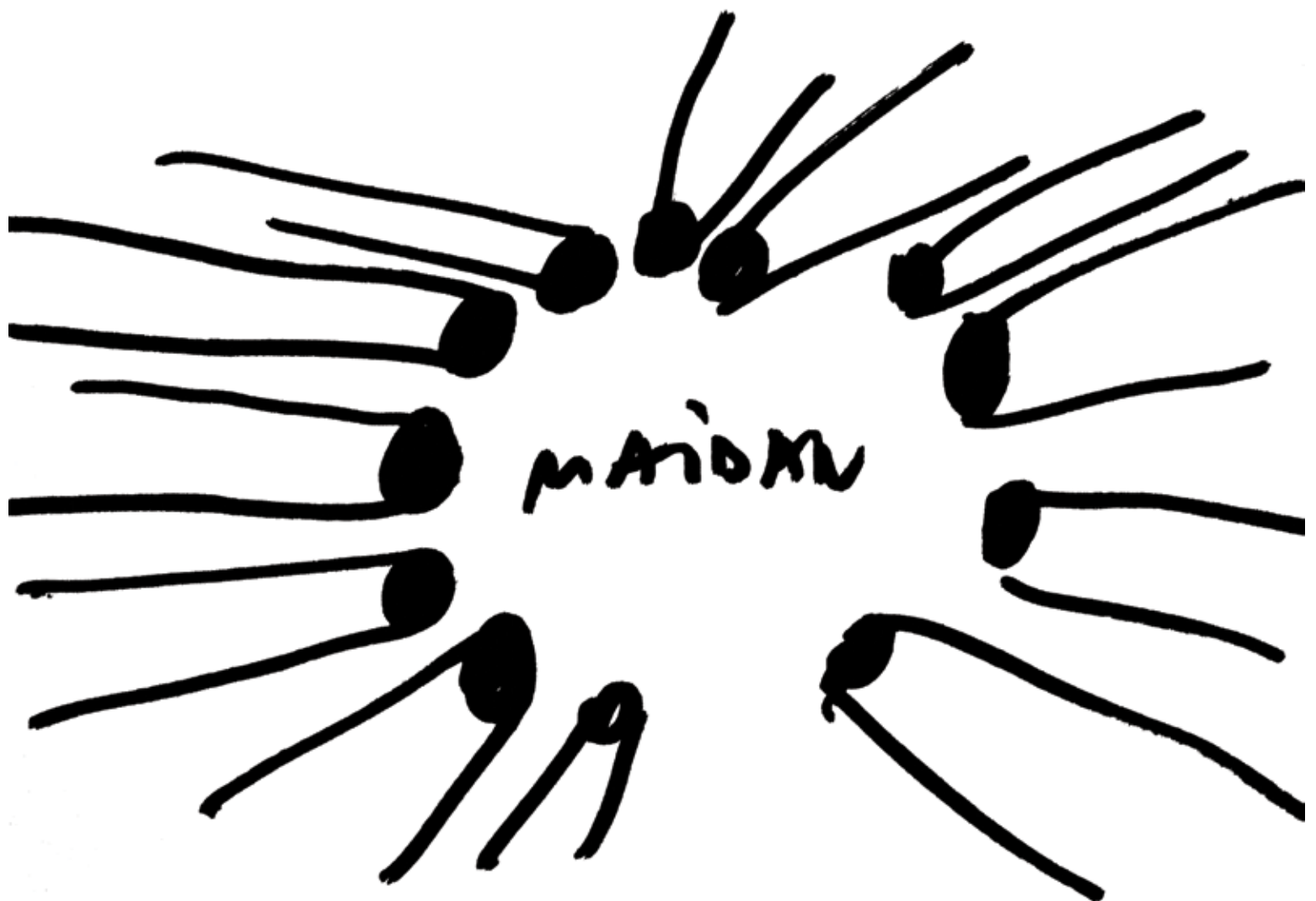


# DOCUMENTING MAIDAN

DECEMBER 2013 / FEBRUARY 2014

POSTORY#8



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DECEMBER 2013 / FEBRUARY 2014

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# EURO

Documenting Maidan

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## From the editors

In Ukraine, astonishing news sets the blistering pace of passing days. In the three months and more since November 2013, we have seen an unceasing sequence of protests and counter-protests, political and even military confrontations, all under the assumed general title of "Euro-Maidan". The task of any publication should be to loosen the fetters of time, to lead us beyond the contours of its prejudices, and to give us some sense of control over what is happening around us, however illusory that sense is.

Transcending the boundaries of current events seemed almost impossible, even at times unthinkable. At every turn, events threatened to overtake us, compelling us to rush after them. A detached, dispassionate point of view is practically absent from this journal.

As editors, we intentionally chose to present a general view of the protest that is fragmented. This manifests itself in genres such as the literary diary or the essay, spaces where documentary practice coexists without separation from art. Nearly every text bears the imprint of the exact date of its production. But we do not want the reader to be deceived by these dates. For the authors, it is not unusual to lose a sense of time altogether, an experience that the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert captured in 1982: I should be exact but I do not know when the invasion began/two hundred years ago in December September/perhaps yesterday at dawn/here everyone is sick with loss of a sense of time.

The editorial conversation, which opens the journal, examines the extreme nature of life during protest, a peculiar, protracted condition, memorialised in acts of state violence or other episodes from Maidan. We are yet to comprehend the scope and consequences of these current events. Attempts to force them into chronological order are bound to be subjective and incomplete. Invariably, the news headlines with their screaming voices are weaving themselves into the fabric of impressions. In "Protesting Protest", English poet and essayist Patrick Mackie writes about the lightness and speed with which disturbing news can cross state borders, about contemplating a stranger's protest and about that transfiguration that the political gesture can undergo when it is transposed into different realities.

German translator and Ukrainian specialist Claudia Dathe keeps stock of the sometimes inexcusable, often deplorable misunderstandings that emerge as a result of such crossings and transposition. Both she and another German author, Tobias Münchmeyer, speak of ideologies that appropriate protest events whilst reporting on them.

It is difficult to find an apt formula for the texts by Ukrainian authors Nataliya Tchermalykh, Taras Fedirko, Boris Khersonsky, Nelia Vakhovska, yet they have something in common. They are antinomial texts, with a sort of "double life", combining a nearly objective clarity of vision with the readiness to subject one's own experiences, decisions, and judgments to a test. The documentary poetics of Vasyl Lozynskyi and the verbatim theatre piece "Blue Bus" by Dmytro Levytsky are infused through and through with the stoic demeanour of direct speech and quotation. Live spoken intonation dilutes the syntax, and appears to scorn literature in favour of an awakening into a real world from a long sleep.

Work by Lada Nakonechna is also an example of the rhythmic qualities of unprocessed speech, with, in her case, accidental photographs serving as a foundation. Her series of drawings "From left to right" tells something about the despair, blindness, and emptiness that we discover in the present, and the movement that we have to make in striving to anticipate the future. Drawings by Dan Perjovschi, Anatoly Belov and Alevtina Kakhidze are seeking a primaevial shape of events. They appear to be pointing to the existence of a simple, "unspoilt" experience, an image that is borrowed from Wordsworth's conceptions of childhood.

There is an almost existential contrast between an ethics of excessive effort and sympathetic action on the one hand, and laughter, warning, regret, on the other. Works by Vlada Ralko have an expressivity about them that may, for a moment, tear those voices apart that assert the movement from the general to the particular, from the funny to the provocative, from one's own experience to that of the Other.

Yevgenia Belorusets

POLITICS

## **Maidan: collected pluralities**

Our editorial conversation came to an end at a time of large-scale transformations - on the 24th of February, 2014. In Kharkiv, eastern Ukraine, people were fearing violent clashes between Maidan activists and paramilitary groups; at the same time the Ministries in Kyiv were seemingly under protesters' control; in one university, students had expelled their corrupt administration and organized a students' self-governing body. And as this journal goes to print, Ukraine's history continues to write itself.

### **How did the protest start for you?**

**Nelja Vakhovska** Our experience of Maidan is of an autonomous political body that expresses distrust of all politicians—both the authorities and the opposition. In terms of party politics, this body, passionate and motley in its social and ideological composition, is apolitical. Its beginning reminded me very much of the Orange Revolution: a peaceful protest, pop culture and the circle dances of the middle classes who wanted to join Europe. But the street clashes revealed something else: the outrage, anger, and despair of various social classes who were tired of the arbitrariness of the authorities. A "revolution" without hope. It sounds banal, but the watershed between dreams of Europe and the dreams of the Ukrainian "here-and-now" ran in blood: first, it was beaten-up students, and then activists were killed. Tipped by the dysfunctionality of the current government, for me what had been an ambiguous nationalist-(dis) oriented protest turned into a real revolution without quotation marks.

**Yevgenia Belorusetz** By December, the peaceful protest had already become unpredictable, as if it was trying to resist interpretation. It seems that from the very first days, the Euromaidan was a field of symbolic struggle. The Maidan is a thought in the process of forming, which has not yet been expressed, a place of hidden political currents that can be perceived physically, but not intellectually. It's also a stage upon which there has been a permanent, plain to see struggle for the appropriation of these political currents, for acquisition of power over them, for intrusion of some rhetoric or other. The authorities made repeated attempts to destroy the protest. Meanwhile, the political "opposition" is still peddling the outdated yet timeless "The heroes are You!" at a very high price.

**Nataliya Tchernalykh** My first Maidan was a virtual one: it began online, on social networks - it was #Euromaidan. The political landscape was changing rapidly, and we couldn't take our eyes off the screens... Early in the morning on February 24th, anarchists from St. Petersburg, working with artist Petr Pavlenskiy, did a performance entitled "Freedom" in front of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow: the activists torched a pile of tyres, creating a smoky landscape in the centre of the northern capital, an image which over the winter had become firmly associated with Kyiv. Whatever the political results of the revolution, Maidan has become a strong visual narrative, a call to political action in the post-Soviet field and even beyond its territory. The reverberations of this dialogue will probably echo for a long time from all sides. The Maidan of these three months is uncharted territory, for which the ideological, political or ethical navigational marks we are used to relying on have turned out to be irrelevant. Maidan dissolved into thousands of different voices that have stubbornly refused to merge into a single harmonious melody. The only common denominator of this complex anthropological and social matter has been the tragic ritual of collective mourning for the people who died from the 18th to the 20th of February, 2014. It still remains for us to create the map of this territory: perhaps we each need to be ready to question all of our beliefs and (pre)judgments.

### **Your personal involvement in the protest. What forms have they taken (or not)?**

**N.V.** "Don't shoot, you bastards!" - shouts an activist in the city of Khmelnytsky by the body of a woman shot by a member of the Secret Police. It seems that this has become my formula of the protest. I cannot assent to the misogynist, homophobic, xenophobic, or populist implications of Maidan. During periods of truce, I can't find a place for myself there at all - sometimes because of geographical distance, but mostly because of ideological incongruity with empty discourse about a nation, machismo, paramilitary discipline, the unruliness of radical right-wing groups, the absence of a political or social programme, etc.. But even then I constantly find myself thrown onto Maidan - by Putin's news blinding my family, by the narcissism of the Ukrainian leftists, by the primitiveness of European media reports on Ukraine. I'm tangential to the whole thing. However, on days like today (February 18, 2014), when citizens of Ukraine were declared terrorists, ideological incompatibility goes

out the window and I take the side of citizens in conflict with their state. From this point of impotent rage, I repeat: "Don't shoot, you bastards!" And I go to help at the hospital.

**Y.B.** Politics came knocking at our door, it took over our lives, precluded non-involvement. Yet, at the beginning of this protest, I could not imagine myself as an inseparable part of it. Obstacles for me were right wing rhetoric, the absence of political representation for the majority of protesters, and every variety of populist occupying the microphone.

The participation of others, of people who relocated to the squares of Kyiv as early as December, looked like an enormous sacrifice, a burdensome task. When the peaceful protest began, many had to pay for their participation with the drama of homelessness. I saw shivering, exhausted people sitting for hours near the barricades, taking some rest around burning barrels or inside freezing tents, crossing muddy streets hurriedly, to stay warm. Even at night, they couldn't leave Maidan. There'd be attempts to drive them off the square, and they'd arm themselves with shields and sticks. In the freezing weather, they sprayed water cannons at them, shot at them with rubber bullets, and then, with real ones.

Ukrainian political reality was not content with an opinion; words, signs, shouting - for many years they hadn't meant a thing. Investigative articles by Ukrainian journalists seemed like an unending weak argument for any action on a political level. That which is being formulated is of itself devoid of value.

The order to shoot unarmed people was an assassination attempt on a field which the authorities were gradually taking. An ingress beyond the pale of economics into an existential sphere, where violence and domination assume completely different proportions, no longer an opinion, but instead, a place where the very existence of man is reduced to a formality, which can be ignored.

### **What do you think of the symbolic/mythical field of this protest?**

**N.V.** From the very beginning, Maidan emerged on a see-saw between Europe and Russia, and it quickly slid into the axiological apposition of light and darkness (which the protesters themselves translated into ironic register: Berkut riot police as Ringwraiths<sup>1</sup>, etc.), us and them, typical of a mythological epic poem. In this framework, an archaic gender structure naturally emerged ("the girls sang the national anthem and the boys protected them"), plots

of "love at the barricades" and "love on the opposite sides of the barricades," the rituals of the OUN and UPA<sup>2</sup>; the "them" has expanded into others both external (above all, the Russians) and internal (provocateurs, Eastern Ukraine, etc.). At the same time, suffering was threaded onto a core of "ours" along with the national idea it legitimized and all the monstrosities of radical nationalism as an add-on. But all of this is not new, partly self-ironic and natural; after all, the presence of barricades causes bipolarity.

**N.T.** Yes, there is no doubt that heroic epos will be written about Maidan: nowadays this mythical and poetic language is dominant in Ukrainian culture. The state still speaks to its citizens in the romantic language of the 19th century. I'm interested in another dimension of Maidan - as a political symbol of spontaneous democracy. But this democracy lies rather in an abstract, mythical field. In its structure, it is an oxymoron: it is based on the mutually exclusive logic of state-building and anarchy, the construction of a "New Ukraine" and "Zaporizhian Sich", whose historical significance was that it was an anti-state, one which albeit existed as a separate paramilitary republic. What could be more paradoxical than an anarchic republic within an oligarchic state? The paradox lies in the decision-making system, the democratic basis of the Maidan. It is entertaining to think how people are informed and mobilized via the most advanced Internet technologies, and yet the very decision-making is done by hand, the old-fashioned way: no one counts votes; he who shouts loudest is right. That's of course only if this voice is not immediately drowned out by the stage, that is, by those who speak on behalf of the Maidan, yet who have not been elected.

The paradox is also present in the main moral imperative of Maidan: the ethics of total reciprocity. The micro-politics of the everyday brings happiness from involvement and empathy - but at the same time it completely obscures the necessary social structure, which we need to rebuild for society to function. The moral imperative supplants the social?

**Vasyl Lozynskyi** The most powerful thing was the symbolic field of the protest, but the myth is mostly what remains from the past. Meanwhile a new mythology is being created, one which we'll hear more of in future. I think that not only proven techniques and tactics of protest

<sup>1</sup> Also known variously as Nazgûl, or Black Riders from JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings

<sup>2</sup> OUN – Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists; UPA – Ukrainian Insurgent Army



were implemented, but there have been many discoveries, for example how urban communities can adapt to long-lasting protest, and the public sphere may give birth to new social forms. Therefore grassroots activism is exactly what fed the various myths, both moderate and right-wing ones. It is important that these grassroots currents produce mechanisms of cooperation and do not turn into the legitimization of the myth of power and violence.

**Taras Fedirko** The Maidan borrows its title from the Ukrainian name for Kyiv's main square—Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square). There is less geography than history here. In 2004/5, the "Orange revolution" protests taking place in Independence Square set the precedent for calling any nation-wide protests a "maidan." The word thus became a shorthand term for significant civil attempts of recent Ukrainian history. In 2010, there was the Tax Maidan, and in November 2013 protesters quickly came up with the new name, "Euromaidan."

Now that the Euromaidan has seemingly "won," its root word becomes a warning. As the "Orange" maidan turned into a big political disappointment, it led to affective and social disenfranchisement from the politics of many former protesters. Then, in 2004/5, many channeled their hopes and expectations into personal trust in leaders and their transformative political agency. Now, the "Euro" bit of Euromaidan is often used to refer to a rather indefinite domain that can conveniently be used to deposit political hopes and develop dreams opposing political realities. "Europe" is a long-standing Ukrainian myth, and there is a rich post-Soviet, post-Cold War history of beliefs in the bright European future of Ukraine. Indeed, Western commentators ironically pointed out that Ukrainian protesters seemed to believe in the united Europe more than citizens of the European Union, marginalized by the democratic deficit, economic crisis, and austerity. Others—chiefly the marginal Ukrainian Left and liberals opposed to nationalism—saw their task as reminding people that ethnic nationalism and exclusivist politics of maidan do not pair well with "European values," whatever these could mean. Yet, as the disappointment with the "deep concerns" and inaction of Western leaders accumulated, "maidan" gained popularity as the new name for the protest, as the protest itself became less about "Europe" and more about actual lawlessness and violence.

Finally, it seems that Euromaidan itself can develop into a myth, an encapsulated narrative, through which the future Ukrainian state could

be explained. The protest and its victims are already glorified in street toponyms like the "Heroes of Maidan Square," while the deaths, violence, and suffering become "martyrdom for the country."

### **How did Ukrainian intellectual society react to Maidan?**

**Y.B.** Already during the first days of Maidan, I heard exuberant exclamations, the dazed and jubilant voices of Ukrainian writers and could not understand why they weren't fighting with sphinxes and other mythical creatures, which seemed to be pouring out of this agora as if from a cornucopia. Why weren't Ukrainian intellectuals talking about the anti-democracy of the Right Sector, why were they keeping quiet about internecine violence among protesters, why did they tacitly approve of the victorious struggle with statues when there hadn't yet been a single political victory?

It was obvious that their old dream was coming true and they found it hard to believe in its feasibility. How many times in recent years have I randomly encountered people telling me dejectedly: Life is hard, almost unbearable, but such is our nation. We will suffer to the bitter end, until we die out totally. And I wasn't the only one for whom it seemed that there was a grain of truth amidst this doom.

The exultant voices of writers and poets were not appealing to political logic, instead they appealed to some magic which was supposed to help this protest sustain, make it happen, and develop. The basis of such blind admiration is a strong belief in universal apathy and the impossibility of protest taking place in Ukraine, in its wonderful and unexpected character. The challenge for today's reality is how to give up these miracles and conduct actual politics instead, how to carry out largely boring and routine political, economic, and social work.

**N.V.** I agree with Zhenya. What really surprised me about Euromaidan is the stubbornness with which Ukrainian intellectuals didn't only not deconstruct everyday myths, but themselves created and developed ideological dichotomies: Ukraine vs. an idealized Europe, heroes of the Maidan vs. paid provocateurs, and in the end, Western Ukraine vs. East Ukraine. History, language, socialization, the economy, the ability to sing Christmas carols, and other achievements of sickly national anthropology were made the basis for this (wasn't it inspired by Putin's propaganda?) differentiation of values. Finally, thanks to the perennial efforts of many "intellectuals", the imaginary Ukrainian "Mordor" has been located in the

East, and meanwhile political reality it seems has shattered the pat little design of Right-bank Ukraine's spiritual greatness and Left-bank's baseness. We suddenly learned that the border lies... in our minds as a line between progressive and regressive values. What's more, Maidan as a place of undeniably "progressive" values failed to speak consistently even about human rights.

**Which positions, ideology, and points of view seem to be dominating this process, and which are in the minority, suppressed, or unheard?**

**N.V.** Writing in The Guardian, Timothy Garton Ash calls Maidan "a political Chernobyl." This metaphor works both internally and externally, embodying, on the one hand, the so-called first world's fear of its satellites, and on the other hand, the subversive surprise which the protest was for Ukraine. The essential illegitimacy of structures of political representation was obvious in the past too, at least to Ukrainians, though it was only at the end of 2013, in the context of the crisis of the most recent rosy myth about Europe, that this indignation reached its climax. The prospects for a new political order scare me with their spontaneity and lack of social demands, and the story of its struggle and bloodied victims enshrines the rhetoric of the right wing. As a result, there are lots of unheard voices here – I'm not talking about those that didn't express themselves, but about those who couldn't find their own words and thus joined the chorus of "Glory to Ukraine".

I don't know if anyone else will talk about this, but now I have this clear feeling that on the wave of euphoria, the following dictate of victory has emerged: a new round of glorification of our own victimhood will take place; a national cult of dead heroes, the "Heavenly Hundred", will be created with lightning speed, in the context of which critique will be impossible; and those who did not participate in the protest will practically lose their right to speak. Let's not forget that we're talking about a very large part of the Ukrainian population, which the new heroics excludes from the field of ethical legitimacy.

**Y.B.** Almost all "points of view" were unheard. Probably because – to continue what I was saying earlier - the protest has so far been carried out on the same level of confrontation, where opinions, programs, and visions lost their significance. Instead, we had to listen to unintelligible, ersatz commentary on the "right-wing radicals" and "moderates" on Maidan. Bodies, not positions, were presented as an important political argument, but I'm only now realizing the scale of this substitution. I spoke with an activist from the Right Sector and

was surprised to hear his tolerant, democratic opinions, which did not remotely fit notions of "right-wing political positions". We remain to learn to what name his ideas rightfully belong.

**N.T.** I've also thought a lot about this: probably, thanks to the revolutionary situation the logic of the rift between the implied and (political) meaning can be applied here. Political language is constantly changing. How many new lexical items, ironic comparisons, memes and myths did Maidan generate? It was there that I first heard all possible Ukrainian dialects. One often hears that the Maidan is a compound metaphor, a projection, maybe even a resuscitated map of a large country, at the very centre of which it has surrounded itself with barricades.

However, the way the Maidan is described and viewed from the outside prevails over another rhetorical device - metonymy, that is a transfer of the qualities of the plurality onto a singular instance via the principle of contiguity. An infinite number of Maidans were portrayed on the pages of the foreign press, yet they all seemed singular: the Maidan of the European flag, the Maidan of the smoky kitchen, the Maidan of the Molotov cocktail, the Maidan of baseball bats and balaclavas, the burning Maidan, the Maidan of the murdered innocents, the holy Maidan bathed in blood. Through the principle of metonymy, the entire Maidan was shifting to become first naively pro-European, and then ultra-rightist. It really was like this and it remains so, but these episodes do not stop, they do not cause each other - they neither subordinate, nor coordinate each other - they continue to exist, all at the same time, here and now. There is no story-telling on the Maidan. The story-telling is present among journalists, politicians, editors, in the oral tradition. Sometimes it starts to seem like no language but that of Art can describe the Maidan as an intuitive wholeness endowed with the qualities of political subjectivity.

**V.L.** I believe there was a shift in the direction of social and civil protest, where all people were equal and the only thing that was regulated was the right to negotiate with the government and speak on the stage. Meanwhile, the radicalism - which is always present - evokes compassion or fear. Many moderate or superseded positions were not heard because of the devilish circle in which the authoritarianism of government provides ready answers and demonstrates its power.

**T.F.** Behind the actual and potential myths of maidan stands an assumption of (metaphorical) unity: "Maidan" as a single name for many

protests, Maidan as one space for disparate causes and political agendas, Maidan as the only legitimate democratic institution. It is important that this unity should not turn into a myth of purity of nationalist or any other kind. Maidan should not become an exclusionist

narrative for the only acceptable interpretation of Ukrainian politics. It seems to me that this issue of Prostory aims at exactly that. Elaborating on the complexity of the protests, we seek to represent the diversity and fragmentary character of Maidan.

Translated by Ostap Kin; edited by Ali Kinsella

## Short chronology of Maidan

- 21 November Start of "EuroMaidan" - protest on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv
- 28-29 November Vilnius Summit - the Ukrainian government officially opts out of signing an Association Agreement with the European Union
- 30 November Berkut special police brigades move in at night to "clear away" several hundred students and others occupying the square at EuroMaidan, beating dozens of civilians
- 1 December Mass rally in Kyiv and scuffle with police near the Presidential Administration. That evening, Berkut police attack protesters, hundreds are wounded, many imprisoned; protesters occupy buildings including the Kiev City Hall and the Trade Unions Building
- 8 December Activists from the far-right "Svoboda" (Freedom) party pull down a monument to Lenin in Kyiv
- 11 December Berkut police attempt to storm Maidan and remove barricades shortly after midnight in temperatures of -13C. A stand-off ensues, with Berkut retreating in the early hours of the morning
- 11 January Protests against unfair verdicts in front of Kyiv court. A civilian motorized protest initiative – AutoMaidan - blocks buses carrying Berkut police; protesters organize a "Corridor of Shame" for Berkut troops
- 16-17 January In a violation of parliamentary procedure, Ukrainian lawmakers vote in a series of laws restricting civic rights and freedoms, leading to renewed escalation in protests
- 19 January Clashes with police on Hrushevskogo Street in Kyiv. Despite freezing temperatures, Berkut police use water cannons on protesters, also firing rubber bullets
- 21 January Activists Serhiy Lutsenko and Yuriy Verbytsky are kidnapped from hospital. Lutsenko, found later that day, claims to have been tortured. Verbytsky's body is found the following day, also with signs of torture
- 21-27 January Police detain wounded activists in Kyiv hospitals. Unknown persons set protesters' cars on fire. Around Ukraine, thugs reportedly hired by the authorities provoke clashes with protesters. Activists organize night patrols and watches in hospitals to protect the wounded
- 22 January Three people are killed during a police assault on barricades: Mikhail Zhiznevsky, Roman Senik and Serhiy Nigoyan. One of the leaders of AutoMaidan, Dmytro Bulatov, is missing. Protesters occupy local authority buildings in the regions

23/24 January	Parliamentary opposition leaders conduct negotiations with President Yanukovych in an attempt to deescalate the conflict
26 January	Violent dispersal of peaceful protests in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhyya, with alleged participation of thugs hired by the police
29 January	Ukrainian Parliament passes an amnesty law for detained protesters
30 January	Dmytro Bulatov found alive, with signs of torture
6 February	An explosive device detonates in building on Maidan, leaving two people seriously injured
17 February	Amnesty law for detained protesters enters into force. Protesters leave occupied buildings. Some parts of barricades are demolished
18 February	A peaceful march in support of the 2004 Ukrainian Constitution, which would grant greater powers to Parliament, and reduce Presidential power turns into fierce street battles with police, leaving 9 people dead and hundreds injured. Berkut police initiate an assault on the protest camp in Independence Square that evening. The Trade Union House, Maidan's makeshift field hospital, is set on fire
19 February	Continuing violent clashes between protesters and police reportedly leave 30 people dead and many wounded on both sides
20 February	Street clashes resume, with police units using sniper fire against protesters. The death toll rises to 80 people. The President and opposition leaders begin negotiations
21 February	Ukraine's parliament passes an agreement on early presidential elections with the aim of de-escalating the protests. Riot police and special forces leave Kyiv. Protesters across Ukraine pull down monuments to Lenin. Students and cultural activists occupy the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture, demanding reforms
22 February	Parliament reinstates the 2004 Constitution. A date for early presidential elections is set for May. The formation of a temporary government starts

K I E W W A R

## Nelia Vakhovska

They've brought down Lenin

They've brought down Lenin. No, I'm not planning on writing my next opus on the subject of 'The War on Monuments, or the War on Communism'. I am told this dramatic news by my parents. It happened in the district town, a place that is traditionally apolitical, impoverished, confused and spends its time moaning about the fall of the Soviet Union, because ever since it fell, the corruption and despair have been relentless. Young people in this town can earn a maximum of 180 a month – at the sawmill, doing heavy unskilled labour, in unsafe working conditions and paid cash in hand with no guarantees. Most of the local small businesses are damaging to the environment, and the hands of the young workers often get caught in the circular saws. Then there are the stone quarries, where a qualified welder can earn up to 250. Even so, wages gradually drop lower and people get dismissed. Women have it worse. It is not all that difficult to get a job as a checkout assistant in the local supermarket or working on a market stall. The conditions are terrible everywhere and the wages will be lower than for men. Everyone here grows their own vegetables, many people travel abroad to places like Moscow or Italy as migrant workers. The city has plenty of pharmacies, where pensioners try to buy only the bare essentials, and they stand for hours at the bus stops because the shuttle buses only have two seats reserved for concessions. The young people drink a lot, they do all they can to escape to the nearest city, and those left behind often end up joining the Baptist churches. Why am I talking about all this? I feel sick at the violence of victory, at the dramatic rallying cries about fallen heroes and the sacred blood of martyrs, sick at the thought of vigilante justice and the surreal news reports in which a gangster accuses others of gangsterism.

Yesterday I still couldn't feel what my body was, because all my feelings were frozen solid by one fact: snipers in Kiev were shooting people. Right in the centre of town, where there had been no shooting since the Second World, during peacetime people were dying.

The husks of words. Mind paralysed.

Up until then things had been different: the euphoria of news reports, the minute-by-minute updates on Facebook, tearing your hair out because the flight home is only in two weeks, losing your mind from the constant media

presence. In Kiev it all became predictably easier from the moment Khreshchatik Street was hit by the smell of tyre smoke and the chants of the far-right political diva Iryna Farion talking about Bandera, or Christ, or Che Guevara. The ideals filtered through the social networks strengthened into sinews and tilted slightly towards farce.

And then it all got too much. The wave of crazy photographs of fires against the leaden sky with picturesque smoke. The modern explorers in search of dreams, the torture, the police kidnapping people. The first fatalities. The despair and rage at my associates abroad: 'Not enough pretty pictures for you? You want more?' Another flight and heaven-sent everyday life: arrival, fetching things, doing things. In the calm of daily life the horror cools off; the apocalyptic 'What comes now?' vanishes behind the simple 'Go by foot', when the metro is closed and all the other vehicles are suddenly overrun. So you bite your lip and walk ... While they count the disappeared.

I have capitulated. I am a traitor. Despite never having been under fire, I cry my eyes out at home in my apartment – not in mourning for the fallen, but just like that. It must be from the horror.

Let me return to the people who my pure-as-snow friends dubbed the enemies of the revolution.

In the district town. To the people who by Easter need to tidy their houses, whitewash the trees and kerbs, who get dressed up just to pop out to the shops. They don't vote in elections, or if they do, they'll choose the wrong people – the 'handsome-looking guy', the 'industrious-looking' one, the woman who will 'show them what's what' and maybe even 'give it to them good and proper'. And mostly they lose, and once they've lost, they blow on their burnt fingers and try not to fall for it next time. But they do fall for it next time. Because no one has ploughed the fields around their city in the past ten years and the former livestock farms look like postwar ruins. The statue is their personal Lenin, it's where they used to kiss, where they stole roses from the flowerbeds, where they went on pointless parades and equally pointless rallies. Until now, he had been guarding their memories, storing them up all in one spot. Where there was no silent weeping hidden behind the regularity and tidiness. 'They tied him by the

## Taras Fedirko

### Attempt at a Chronology from a Distance

Charting a chronology of Maidan would mean attempting to impose some kind of order on everything that has occurred up until now. Putting together any such sort of timeline would mean having to adhere to a very narrow frame that ascribes to a selective process bent on excising and compressing time. In retrospect, the events that transpired on Maidan might appear at first glance to retain some kind of internal logic of necessity. It's all too easy to fall into the trap of sifting out various turning points in the course of the demonstrations from a seductively deceptive backdrop of peace and "routine", to construct a single narrative of revolution, stability, catastrophe, or development. In fact, a series of turning points is all I can remember.

Separating out those three unprecedented months on Maidan into an ordered chronology would also mean plucking individual events and dates out from a stream that has more than one course, flows around barriers, and washes away its own channels. The linearity of a chronology cannot adequately convey a nonlinear process. Therefore, it cannot capture the ambiguity in all of the moments that make up the overarching horizon of events, the common denominator that does not conform to any unified interpretation.

Chronology, therefore, can only hold water as a metaphor. It can only ever be like the Symbolic that does not make pretense to absolute representation, awkwardly gesturing toward the Real, just as the grammar that orders a text can only ever approximate the lived grammar of the protest it attempts to describe.

Or, perhaps, chronology can be described as a kind of mental map: a grid with distorted coordinates through which a person wanders, grasping for consistency and coherent meaning.

Looking back now, almost three months after those first protests against the government's decision to not sign the E.U. Association Agreement, "Maidan" is an arbitrary name for a multitude of demonstrations - a process that is impossible to split up into units of time. Reading various accounts of the events associated with Maidan online, I've come to realize that the moments in time that I remember as distinct events are far and few between. Actually, what I recall is the constantly evolving stream of news media that kept reflecting everything back at me in video replays.

I found out about the first protest on November 21 through Facebook. It was only one day off from the anniversary of the Orange Revolution on November 22. In the hope attached to signing the Association Agreement, "Europe" has now become an empty signifier - a symbol of the effort to ensure the rule of law and put a stop to the impunity enjoyed by the authorities and police.

Over the following several days, heated debates took place on social media among activists on the Left trying to decide whether or not they should support a protest that appeared, at the time, ideologically very far removed from any kind of leftist democratic agenda. I wrote that "Ukraine needs a liberal bourgeois revolution that would challenge the corporate social structures of the nation and the nuclear family." But Maidan, with its spontaneous organization, and its patriarchal cult of strength, its solidarity and its fears, becomes yet another such structure. Is Maidan the birth of a political nation, of "the great family, a family new and free"? Is it possible to think of Maidan as a nation unto itself, a people working together as a family to oppose The Family<sup>1</sup>? Is Maidan a truly liberal public space instantiated by an autonomous citizenry? What sort of relationship do participants in these demonstrations have to material resources? Perhaps the nationalist rhetoric of the Maidan is only a veneer for other concerns rooted in "real" demands and pragmatic interests. Several days later, after it became clear that Parliament hadn't signed the agreement, a non-partisan protest spontaneously emerged on European Square parallel to the parliamentary opposition rallies gathering on Maidan. All of this news came to me abroad in an unending echo of information. Within days, these two ideologically distinct "Maidans" would come to unite on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square).

On the night of November 30th Berkut riot police units dispersed demonstrators in an attempt to clear Maidan Nezalezhnosti. I remember feeling a sense of déjà-vu in the aftermath as I frantically read over others' attempts to explain the events that had happened that night. In my effort to absorb the facts, I only heard echoes of my own inability to believe the brutality of

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<sup>1</sup> The Family commonly refers to the family of President Viktor Yanukovich and their close allies, who control key political and economic positions

what had occurred. Some commentators stated on November 30th that they had awoken "in Russia or Belarus," others referenced "the Middle Ages," yet what all of these witnesses seemed to testify to is that "the only thing that repeats itself is difference." The denial of civil rights and liberties—narrowly reduced to a brutal crackdown against "our own women and children"—served as a populist justification for street mobilization. That Saturday, while the sound of the bells of St Michael's Monastery rang out in alarm, the demonstrations "for Europe" came to a close as something else, entirely different, began.

Sunday, December 1 marks another node in my set of mental coordinates. That day in Kyiv saw the largest number of people that had gathered by popular assembly since the Orange Revolution in 2004. For nearly the entire day a standoff took place on Bankova Street between protestors and security forces, the latter attempting to guard the main entrance to the building of the Presidential Administration. In the scattered comments on video, apart from the explosions and shouting, you could hear the crowd pushing against the line of security forces, screaming: "The King of the Maidan is naked! There is no King! We are the provocateurs!" One documentary short depicted the events of that day as "leaderless." Shortly Nearly a month and a half later, a representative from the parliamentary opposition, paraphrasing Durkheim, stated: "The people are the leader!" Recalling the idea that "religion is society worshipping itself," the comment reminded me that nationalism, and perhaps also democracy, are forms of the nation worshipping itself. On Sunday night on Bankova Street, scores of Berkut riot police cruelly attacked over a hundred people without recourse to any law.

Between December 1st and the night of December 11th several more clashes took place between protestors and state guards. A group of demonstrators dismantled a statue of Lenin in Kyiv. On the 6th a small fight broke out inside the Shevchenko District Court. For some reason I remember that well, though that barely carried any significance in the larger scheme of things.

In early December, and then again in late January, the Maidan transformed into a background against which the established order of my daily routines lost all sense, for a while. The grammar changed. "While we sit here, far away, people in Kyiv are holding the barricades." The aesthetics of the Maidan – the persuasiveness of its form - begin to overcome, even if only for a short while, your awareness of an inner self and its relation to others.

By contrast, trying to comprehend these events involves a profound and ironic distance from the identities one adopts in the in the tensest moments of the protests.

For me, during the period from mid-December to January 18th, the Maidan mostly consisted in reports by TSN about Cossacks, field kitchens, and everyday solidarity of the protest camp. Had Maidan become a space of lost hope, of protest without any outside reference points, a collective groping for a foothold in a symbolic vacuum? All the focal points of the protest began to revolve around that oddly sacred space surrounded by barricades in the center of Kyiv.

On Thursday, January 16th, an unknown number of hands in Parliament adopted a package of laws restricting the right to peaceful protest.

The space between paragraphs - the empty space, the absence of memory - rupture and discord.

People took to calling Sunday, January 19th the "point of no return." Protesters had attempted to enter the Parliament building to demand that deputies vote down the recently passed laws "supporting dictatorship." Several fights soon broke out on Hrushevskogo Street where protestors' lives would be sacrificed a few days later on Wednesday January 22nd. Since very little was known about the others that had gone missing up until that point, everyone took to calling Sergei Nihoyan "the first." As soon as the death toll rose to three, a powerful wave of fear receded. It was then that I realized that regardless of geographical location I, too, am just as distant an observer as others, which means I'm not alone, which means I have nothing to fear.

I still do not know how to write adequately about the violent deaths of the protestors and police officers on Maidan. I do not know how to separate then from now, or how to write about torture, kidnapping, and burning vehicles. I cannot distinguish others' sense of dread from my own. Unable to comprehend all of these things, I cannot cultivate any distance or approximate a timeline of what has occurred. Reality is always too excessive, even when viewed through the eyes of another.

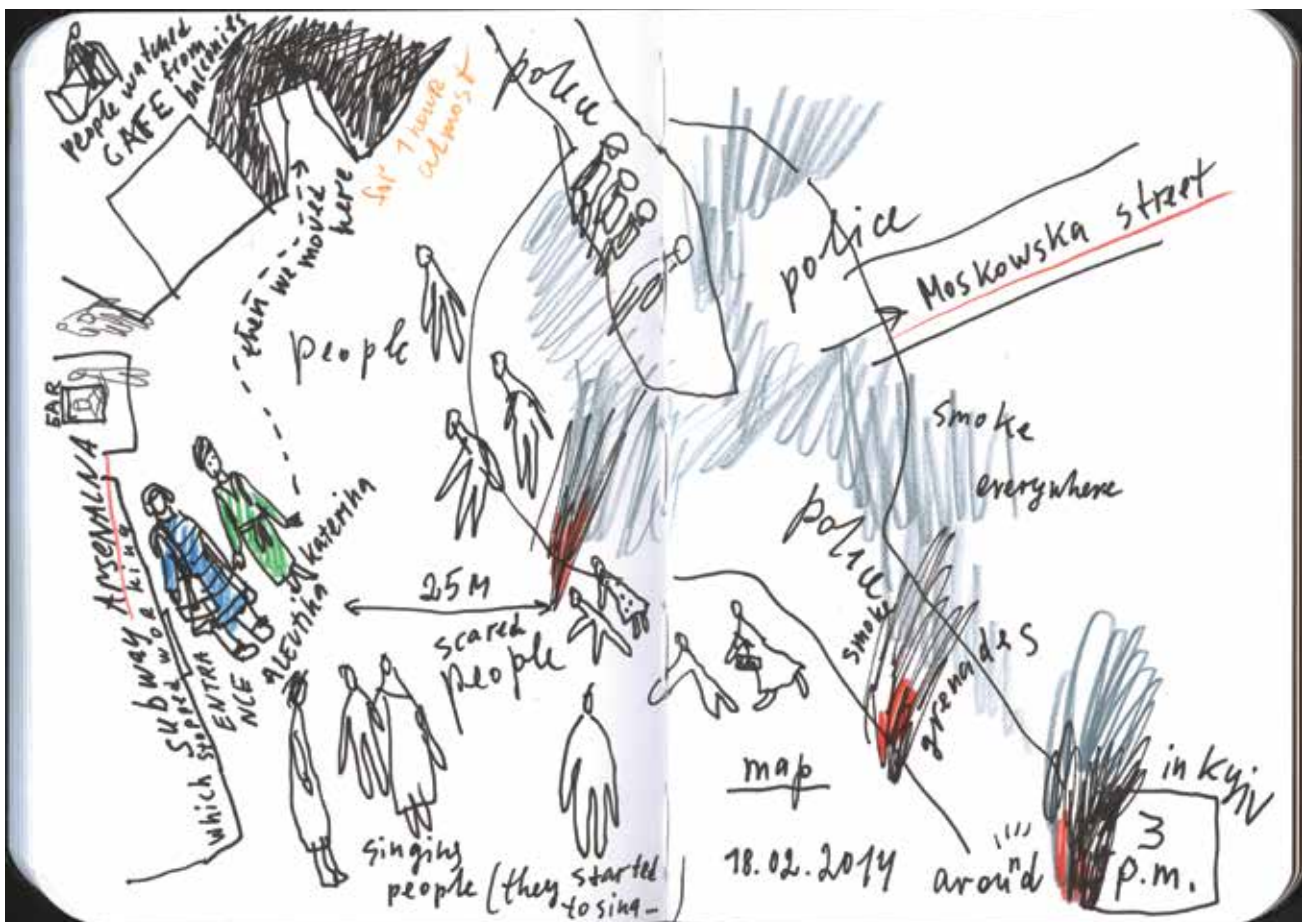
In this chronology, as in the histories of Ukraine I was taught in school, real people are virtually absent - it is a political, not a social, history. Why does my attempt to impose some kind of order on Maidan need to involve violence? Is violence the only reference point that will emerge on Maidan?

I do not know names of those participating in the protests, or the names of the deceased. I certainly know no one among the people I've become habituated to thinking about as standing "on the other side" of an imaginary barricade. As I write these words, the other barricades around Maidan are ablaze in flames. The reports continue to flicker across my screen in a steady ribbon of text and image: "On

February 18 nine police officers and at least fourteen protesters have been killed so far." The chronicle evaporates slowly into arithmetic. A series of repeating sequences and simple calculations takes over everything: "The death toll has risen to 20."

Durham, England  
Evening, February 18, 2014

Translated by Jessica Zychowicz





World Spirit on Foot

A rampart of snow, ice-bags, planks and car-tyres, bristling with blue and yellow flags, four metres high, right in front of the house I used to live in. A barricade separating Prorizna Street from Kreshchatik, Kyiv's grand boulevard. A narrow passageway is open. When I pass by, two cold eyes watch me through the holes in a knitted balaclava. Broad shoulders, brown puffa jacket and a baseball bat in his hand. He nods. Early February. I look down Kreshchatik. Green and brown tents are lined up, decorated with brightly coloured flags, crests and shields, on which the region of their inhabitants are proudly displayed. Behind them a children's merry-go-round turning wearily.

Walking in the direction of Maidan, babushkas, elegant ladies with shopping bags, young couples, demonstrators with blue and yellow arm-bands pass by. Then, right opposite the imposing post office, is the second barricade, even higher and more massive, reinforced with wooden beams and steel joists. Here the passageway is controlled by Cossacks with their long moustaches, daggy lambskin caps, harem trousers and riding boots. Men with sooty faces who look exhausted warm themselves by a burning barrel and draw casually on a pipe. Are those just 'costumes'? Some ironic play with folklore? What is mask, what is real? These questions are hard to answer in this context.

Behind the Cossack camp a broad view opens up of the Maidan, an enormous square, perhaps twice as big as Alexanderplatz in Berlin, but with its architecture broken up by a crazed collection of arches, pillars, fountains and sculptures. In the middle stands the stage, and in front of it, in the middle of the Maidan, it says "Maidan".

Maidan, that is the subject, the unknown quantity, that has had Ukraine holding its breath for three months. According to the time of day and the occasion, within a few hours it can swell to a crowd of several hundred thousand, before shrinking again to a few thousand. Often you hear: "The opposition parties don't represent Maidan." Or "Maidan is shocked." Or "Maidan demands this." Or "We ask Maidan to ensure that..." Or "Maidan doesn't accept that."

Maidan is a social body, like Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, with sword and crozier – but without a crowned head. It embodies a democratic or even an anarchist utopia, far more strongly than the Orange Revolution at which the name of the president elect "Yush-shen-ko" was chanted

with such passion. The historian Vadim Skuratovsky, a friend of my parents-in-law, was allowed to speak on the stage at one of the biggest demonstrations, in front of a million people. Vadim quoted Hegel, who wrote enthusiastically after seeing Napoleon Bonaparte on the streets of Jena that he had seen 'the World Spirit on horseback'. 'Now you, Maidan, are the World Spirit,' cried Vadim. And Maidan cheered.

But that was a few weeks ago, in the old days, before the dictatorial laws, before the blood flowed for the first time, before the atmosphere was poisoned by torture and death. Since then a very particular item of clothing has come into fashion: the balaclava. More and more I come across men wearing them. They scare me. I feel I can't trust a person, won't trust anyone, who wears one. I can't believe that a person who is seriously fighting for a democratic future can wear a balaclava. Men in balaclavas repel me.

Through another barricade I leave the big main area of Maidan, which has always been peaceful. I climb the steps to the conference hall, the "Ukrainian House", the former Lenin Museum stormed by the demonstrators two weeks ago. From there, 300 meters away, you can see the front line in Hrushevskogo Street with the burnt-out buses.

Outside the entrance there is a large group of fighters with chest protectors, balaclavas, helmets and truncheons, who size me up suspiciously. I have to show my ID. After that I'm allowed through. What these men are guarding in such a martial fashion is not their command headquarters or a secret arsenal but – what a lovely surprise – a poetry reading. In the atrium of the Ukrainian House a Poetry Marathon is taking place, at which revolutionary poems are being recited around the clock: classics, contemporary texts and crude home-made verses. Intellectuals and students make their appearance. And a rough-and-ready young man in camouflage who wants to recite his favourite poem.

In the middle of the second verse his mates call to him, "Alyosha, we've got to go!" and Alyosha apologises, promises to continue his recital later on and runs to the exit with the others. Why? Where to? Who knows?

Behind the atrium is the makeshift "Maidan Library". Here, donated books are collected and

put on loan to anyone who wants them. But as the huge piles of books assembled are too big, they are being sent in big parcels as a "present from Maidan" to impoverished rural libraries. Next to the bookshelves a camp of mattresses for the "Afghans".

A student plays jazz on the piano.

Artists paint soldiers' helmets with doves of peace and Ukrainian ornaments. Academic lectures are delivered. It's called the "Open University". A utopia. Everything is open, only one flight of stairs to the second floor is closed off. A bored man with a long truncheon stands there. So perhaps it is command headquarters and a weapons store after all – and the Open University is just the soft disguise for a hard core, and all the people are its painting, singing, poetry-reading human shields?

A crisis is always also a festival for heroes and martyrs, for metaphors and daring historical comparisons. The naked Cossack mocked by the special forces unit like Christ before his crucifixion, and Bulatov, the man who was actually crucified – their pictures are everywhere, their videos run on a loop on the screens and in people's brains. Historically some people are reminded of the fall of the Berlin Wall, others of the run-up to the wars in Yugoslavia, yet others to the Kapp Putsch or the Arab revolutions. Then it's said that Maidan is the bulwark of European values, or on the contrary the bridge between Europe and Asia. This, it is argued, expresses Ukraine's desire to join Europe. Or the fact that Ukraine is half European and half un-European. The people in the Kyiv square are crushed under the weight of all these metaphors.

Ukraine doesn't want to go "to Europe", or "to Russia". Ultimately, "Ukraine" is nothing more than the description of a state territory clearly

defined by its boundaries, and one which will not be moved. It's a banal truth, but a significant one. That is one of the few certainties in this uncertain time: Ukraine is going to stay in its place. Even in future, the Dnieper will flow into the Black Sea and not into the North Sea.

Often, most specifically in the German media, it is said that on Maidan, Ukrainians are standing up for "European values". And in Ukraine and Russia this notion of "European values" has existed for decades, if not centuries. As familiar, unambiguous and harmless as the term may seem, it is misleading and dangerous today. European values – usually used as a synonym for democratic values, even though in most European countries the democratic tradition is only a few decades old – are explicitly or implicitly distinguished from non-European, usually Asiatic, Russian or – also very popular – Islamic or Arab values. But what do those Russian values – for example – actually consist of? Do authoritarian rule, human rights violations and abuse of the legal system constitute Russian values? Should I say to my friends in Moscow: Bad luck, you're living in the country of despotic Russian values? They'd thank me from the bottom of their hearts. No, it's dangerous nonsense to define values with a geographical adjective. Maidan is fighting not for European values, but for the values of democracy and human rights, and they're not European, they're universal.

If everything wasn't so complicated, it could all be so nice and simple: the majority of the Ukrainian population has been wanting to liberate itself from a corrupt and authoritarian government. That government is clinging to its remaining power, supported by an equally authoritarian and far more powerful government in Russia. And on the Western side? There lies the border with the European Union, which was for a long time preoccupied chiefly with itself. Until a lot more blood flowed.

Translated by Shaun Whiteside



Translating the Euromaidan  
A translator's view of reasoning strategies

I have been translating literary, academic and journalistic texts from Ukrainian into German for more than nine years. I translate in order to give a German-speaking audience the opportunity to hear original voices from Ukraine which would otherwise not be able to reach them. These voices can contribute to moving Ukraine from its often peripheral situation more firmly into the centre of the European maps of public perception. Accordingly, I have understandably stepped up my efforts to gain an impression of the situation in the country during the past few weeks and to capture a wide array of opinions on the events as have been voiced both in the Ukraine itself and in the German-speaking realm. In this text, I will present some of my observations, which are based in particular on new media sources.

There are fundamental differences in how the current events surrounding the Euromaidan 2013/2014 are evaluated by Europeans in Western Europe on the one hand and in Ukraine on the other. The protesting Ukrainians are absolutely certain that they are engaged in a broad civil society movement with the aim of toppling a dictator, erecting new institutions in accordance with the rule of law and hence re-establishing the validity of fundamental human rights like the right to human dignity and personal freedom in order to join the European community of values by dint of having enforced these values. Many Western Europeans, by contrast, have reservations or are even hostile towards the movement in Ukraine. Their position is based on three convictions: firstly, that this protest movement is not a broad popular movement but was made up largely of supporters of the right-wing sector with radical anti-democratic views; secondly, that the protest movement has been engineered by outside forces, be that Brussels or the USA; thirdly, that President Yanukovich was lawfully elected into his current position and thus enjoys a legal status that legitimates him to rule the country.

One Ukrainian blog responded to these arguments by stating "Europe doesn't understand us". Another entry says: "I don't want the Europeans to get this the wrong way, because European civil society is giving us great support and we are very grateful for that, but political Europe is showing us nothing but great concern and is calling out for reconciliation."

Beyond these examples, Ukrainian Europeans

have written many open letters to Western Europeans during the past weeks in order to explain the situation in their country. These efforts to directly address an initially anonymous Western European public demonstrate that Ukrainians are aware of the Western European reservations towards the Maidan movement and that they are attempting to respond to these. Ukrainians feel that they are not being heard and that they are misunderstood; at the same time their direct addresses demonstrate that they do not believe that the current situation in Ukraine is a purely domestic issue, but rather that it is a process that constitutes a step towards European integration.

Let us turn to reactions by contributors to blogs published on large German newspaper websites such as Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung or spiegel.online. Many entries criticise the right-wing camp and its influence on the opposition movement, they criticise the escalating violence. Do they, however, really address the pressing problems which Ukrainians are naming as the cause of their protest?

I am not aware of an open letter by German intellectuals in answer. Let us take a look at two further statements. A commentary on one publication project says: "I would really like the German readers to understand that the current resistance in Ukraine is not about historical traumas. It is an uprising against injustice, corruption, the lack of rule of law and the violation of human dignity."

What responses were elicited by this statement? A blog entry in answer to the contribution "Euromajdan. Keine extremistische, sondern freiheitliche Massenbewegung" [Euromaidan. Not extremist, but a mass movement in support of liberty] asks: "I hear terms like freedom, no corruption, human dignity: that is all well and good and important, but how and by whom are these ideas to be put into practice? Of course Yanukovich has to go, but who will follow?"

This reaction shows that there are voices out there that subordinate the issues that are central to this protest for Ukrainians in favour of addressing issues that are not yet on the agenda.

Nobody asks questions such as: Why does corruption have to be addressed at all? Why

is it progress when people recognize that they cannot live with corruption? This is understandably irritating for the other side.

The opinion cited above implies a lack of reflection on the fact that the conditions for political action are very different in these two different countries. It is true that corruption, a lack of the rule of law and violation of human dignity are luckily not issues that need to be addressed on a daily basis in Germany.

In Ukraine, however, it is a different matter. There, the country has been brought to the brink of destruction by corruption, a lack of the rule of law and crimes committed against humanity. People have been humiliated and denied any possibility of claiming their rights. Unfortunately, the voices heard in Germany do not express an understanding for this fundamentally different situation.

This is particularly disconcerting in view of the transcultural entanglement that has been developing for approximately the past twenty years. Doris Bachmann-Medick, a cultural studies scholar whose research has focussed in particular on transcultural entanglement in the context of political constellations, wrote on this topic in her article *Translational turn*. "The politics of difference, identity and exclusion on the one hand and overlap and contact zones on the other hand combine more than ever into the challenge to find processes of mediation that can either help design strategies for conflict resolution or foster efforts of integration qua translation." Such a search for strategies of conflict resolution with regard to issues of understanding (or lack thereof) as above is hindered by the fact that this search is made impossible by the lack of reflection on the differing conditions for political action in state and society.

Among further differences in perception are the characteristics attributed to the term Europe in Ukraine and in Germany respectively. Many Ukrainian blogs proclaim "We are Europeans!, We belong to Europe!"

The Historian Andriy Portnov writes: "The pro-European rhetoric on the Maidan is reminiscent of the myth of Europe as a space marked by the rule of law, social justice, freedom of movement and freedom of opinion; [...] it not only inflates the content of the association agreement that the Ukraine failed to sign, but also embellishes the current state of the European Union. The myth has nothing in common with current European reality." For many EU-Europeans, it is this very different European reality that forms

a part of the image they have of themselves; hence they are hard-pressed to be able to relate to the Ukrainian myth of Europe.

The statement that "Europe does not understand us" largely takes issue with the lack of sympathy towards the Maidan movement. Astonishingly, however, this statement has not led on to the question: Why does Europe not understand the Ukrainians? Ukrainians are right to claim their right to the rule of law, human dignity and institutional security, but they ought to also be asking EU-Europeans: How did you get there?

The answer to this question implies a long path ahead: Trust for institutions has to be gained, and there has to be a desire to build the institutions in the first place. Viewed in this light, the blogger cited above was perfectly right to ask his question: But how and by whom are European values to be put into practice?

Another problem within both parties' perception of each other is their attitude towards differentiation and criticism. There is a consensus in Western Europe that all occurrences, events and processes are to be critically questioned as a matter of principle. Ukrainian Europeans are thus expected to present their protest movement as it is, including all its potentially problematic aspects.

The essay volume "Majdan! Ukraine, Europa" [Maidan! Ukraine, Europe] contains contemporary analyses as well as a series of opinion pieces by Ukrainian intellectuals. It is evident in all its contributions that a blind eye is being turned to the questionable aspects of the protest movement. Asked for a text that would also address the problematic aspects of the Maidan, the operator and editor of the Blog Eurovolution, which provides information materials on the Maidan protests in many languages, answered:

"Do you want us, my authors and myself, to criticise the Maidan now that we are at war? If you want criticism, you have to read the critics of the Maidan, there's more than enough of them. Borderline situations don't allow for scales of grey. Where sheer survival is at stake, the world is black and white."

Another blog entry on Facebook addresses this point: "It's time for a national epic. These aspects must be included: [...] 5. The missing transition into a legal phase, i.e., the creation of institutions led by the people, the discussion and analysis of questions such as Would Klitschko be able to rule the country? Why did Lutsenko give orders that drove the people into a corner when he was in office? The protest is

still lacking such a transition towards a rational phase."

We are dealing here with fundamentally different strategies of communication. While the Ukrainian side is convinced that the Maidan movement will be better legitimated when questionable elements are ignored, it is this very lack of a confrontation of these questionable issues that calls the entire movement's credibility into question for Western Europe. The failure to open up to criticism is considered blind ideologisation. Returning to Doris Bachmann-Medick's question on finding strategies to solve a conflict of understanding, the answer (as above) once again lies in a demand for reflective negotiation. It is only possible for both sides to reach transcultural

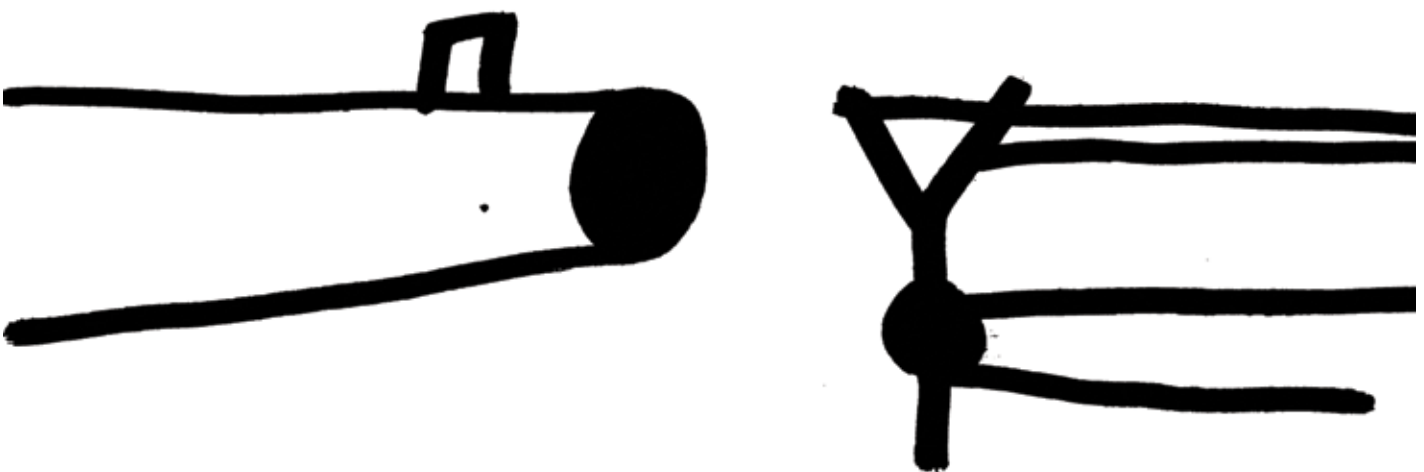
comprehension when both sides have recognised the other's strategies and each side's motivations have been discussed together.

Again, what is needed is not so much an evaluation as a reciprocal inquiry: Why don't you want to depict the questionable aspects of your movement? on the one hand and Why do you need to know all the details, why is it not enough to support the overall aims? on the other hand, to name but one example each.

The problems of understanding that exist on both sides with reference to the Euromaidan movement could be solved with a strategy of posing questions to the other side and establishing a joint field of communication via the answers thus received.

February 22, 2014

Translated by Nadezda Kinsky



## **Yevgenia Belorusets**

Euromaidan – occupied spaces is collection of photographs depicting everyday life at the epicentre of a mass protest, focussing on the Maidan protest movement in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Maidan is a unified protest containing multiple, often contradictory beliefs: dreams of a just Europe, formed outside the EU's borders; Far-Right, ultra-nationalist values; hatred of the current system of governance and naming of 'enemies'; demands for radical, democratic transformation – all these meet in one protest space and try to coexist.

Yevgenia Belorusets' photos show people spending night after night standing in protest on freezing streets, sleeping in occupied government buildings. In the darkness of this night, they can come under attack from riot police, and must stand shoulder to shoulder to defend the hard-won main square of the city from the State. Winter's day is also spent on this square, or warming up in underpasses and cafes.

Belorusets' photographs talk about the existence and the blurring of borders, but also about solidarity, and its ability to overcome these borders.











Protesting Protest

England's countryside in all its merciless prettiness provides maybe as good a vantage point as any from which to survey the changing of political worlds. No one denies that it must be hard to know how to respond from outside to the reports of violent unrest across the globe that swarm on our television sets and our computer screens and across our airwaves, and yet easy and readily available possibilities of response in some ways abound. It is easy enough to be outraged by state violence or by the co-opting of what might otherwise have been peaceful demonstrations by factions bent on disorder. It is easy to be saddened or horrified by the suffering of victims. It is easy to take a sort of connoisseur's interest in the geopolitical ramifications of the events, and easy to become something of an instant expert on the issues and personalities involved, abetted by the Internet and the eager thoroughness of news reporters and current affairs analysts. So too it is easy enough to shrug the shoulders in moods that can be variously disdainful or resigned or impatient or wary or captious, and that normally involve claims either that nothing can be changed by such events, or that nothing can be changed by any interest that might be taken in them from outside. One of the odd advantages of our era of multimedia reporting and opinion is that so many different bad ideas are in circulation on the subject of a given issue that they can at least seem to cancel one another out, or occasionally to bounce off one another at sufficiently strange angles to make new efforts of reflection possible. Anyone immersed in these reports will be liable to have spun through the different points in this repertoire of easy reactions quickly enough and thoroughly enough to be able to play them off against one another. The result is the sort of kaleidoscopic paralysis that characterises the ideational landscape within our media and inside our heads. It is not unrelated to the oddly merged qualities of supersaturation and vacancy that characterise the political scene of our mass democracies and make them seem at once densely fixed and deeply flimsy. The cunning hidden inside our stupidity may be one of our enemies, but so too is the wry love of incomprehension that our intelligence secretes.

The truths gained by distance can be fine and productive, but our societies have glutted on them by now, and what we need instead is to invent new sorts of nearness and contact and hunger for thinking to work by. But on the other hand no one should be confident by now

that such bearings are easily enough found that thought should want to throw itself into as much reality as possible straightaway. It may be that the reality of a single word will have to be enough to start with for now. One word that springs to mind for such an effort at least to get some practice on is 'protest', crammed as it has become with many bleakly uneasy combinations of fact and value.

It is the first word that news reporters and media analysts reach for when they are describing any groups or campaigns or movements wishing to dispute some given arrangement or holding of power. No doubt it is neutral enough in parts of its suggestions, and we should disclaim in advance any attempt to provide a vocabulary that would be more fully neutral instead. But there is gain to be had from unpacking any word that has become so unquestioningly deployed while also containing such large associations and slanting presuppositions as this one. Sometimes a word is particularly misleading in particularly consequential ways precisely because it does indeed strike close to some important truths about any number of such events, and so keeps on being used. The word 'protest' in fact turns out to bring together some longstanding myths about our political identities with some short-term but urgent demands within the discourse of our politics, and it does so in ways that we need to learn to live without.

Now this is not meant to suggest that we can learn to live without myths, and calling protest a myth does not mean saying that the word has always been used falsely. Rather, the point is to realise what a distinctive epoch of history the age of protest once formed, and how rapidly it has gone away from us. A first and highly schematic stab might say that it lasted from sometime in the middle or late eighteenth century to sometime in the very last decade of the twentieth century. The first dating would find its origins in the process by which complaints about the tax burdens of the British state on its American subjects took on the momentum and fierceness that founded the United States and inspired a second revolution in France. So then the second would place its conclusion in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet empire and of the eastern European states that it dominated or threatened, and more particularly in the failure of the political classes in both east and west to think through that collapse as anything other than the

triumph of certain preferred brands of neoliberalism.

But the terms of this latter failure are more deeply related to the specific engines of the first triumphs of the era of protest than may appear immediately, because what we are dealing with when we speak of the myth of protest and of the successes of that myth is nothing less than the inner machinery of liberalism in the first place. The liberal idea as a basis for democracy is one of a free consensus emerging out of the interplay of rational individuals, but at every turn what it relies on is the willingness of some such individuals to organise themselves more fully and obstreperously into pressure groups or action committees or indeed protest movements and to push for further versions of justice than their societies have thus far been capable of. No liberal society can keep its momentum or its balance or indeed its juices if it is not constantly testing itself and revising itself by means of more radical and unsettling visions, and this requires some or many of its members to put their bodies as well as their minds on the line in insisting that it so test itself. Liberal politics keeps its clearest love and its highest allegiance for the clear and high air of policy debates and committees of inquiry and the Whiggish career moves of fine public speakers. But a world of insulting placards and improvised barricades and cracked skulls and teargas canisters has always also been amongst its deep needs and perhaps its deep passions. It has needed to protect itself from that world, of course, and this is where the cracked skulls come in. But it has also needed to refresh itself by it, in order to stay honest, let alone fruitful.

If this makes liberalism sound more radical than it deserves, it may also make radicalism sound more liberal than it has wanted to claim to be. We have not even come close yet in our historical accounts to a full understanding of how serpentine, multifarious and absorbent liberalism in fact has turned out to be. The history of totalitarianism was in some ways the history of how devastatingly strenuous political efforts to avoid liberalism found that they needed to be, and how murderously disoriented they became in the process. So too identity politics in all its amiable hysteria stemmed from the attempt to disclaim liberalism by loading more weight than they could bear on certain of its own loosely contradictory premises, so that freedom suddenly had to prove itself by newly inflated rubrics of antiessentialism, while solidarity constrained itself by ever more cramped accounts of group loyalty. But these observations bring us close to the crux of our account. It lies in the process whereby liberalism found that it was capable of a

hysteria all its own, and that it had exhausted its capacity to answer or even to endure the demands of others, and even the demands of the more opaque aspects of its own purview.

It is this combination of listlessly screechy excitement with deep exhaustion of the spirit that has characterised the world of neoliberalism ever since it thus hove into existence. No one who has ever watched a televised awards ceremony can fail to recognise its effects and even its odd, convulsive allure. Neoliberalism is the process by which the liberal world has lost its confidence and gained an arrogance incapable of replacing it. One way in which we can try to understand this is by picturing it in generational terms. The secret, gaudy thrill that powered the first generation of neoliberals was the realisation that it afforded a way of claiming to be at the same time more traditional and more radical than the worldview of their parents or professors. The first neoliberals could thus at once pride themselves on guarding the deep essences of the western world, and seem to themselves as ardent and audacious and innovative as any campus demonstrator or psychedelic rock singer. Since a raging disappointment with both tradition and radicalism cannot fail to have informed this realisation too, we can perhaps be grateful that its consequences have not been even more irrevocably destructive. One of its largest results though has been to empty out the idea and indeed the very practice of protest. Protest loses the distinctive texture of its position on the furthest and brightest edges of the liberal world, defining and pushing away at its possibilities of movement and progress. Either it becomes instead too easily amenable to the conceptions of the neoliberal worldview, and hence coloured and even swamped as if in advance by its precepts, or it assumes shapes too violently distant and rebarbative to be recognisable within that worldview at all.

Protest always spoke directly to the brilliant compromises with the facts of power that lay at the heart of the liberal world, including notably the compromises of liberals with the facts of their own power. But these compromises are broken apart by the neoliberal movement that took hold of our world somewhere in the progress between the Allende coup in Chile in 1973 and the second terms of Thatcher and Reagan a decade or so later. Neoliberalism claims to eschew power altogether in favour of a newly absolute vision of economic freedom, but in so doing it ignores too many basic facts about how societies really operate, and so ends up having to exert power with newly inordinate if often stealthy types of force instead. It empties the centres of power of their authority in

ways that mean that protest finally has nothing solid to address itself to. At the same time, it spreads and intensifies the impacts of power across the social body in ways that mean that there is all the more stuff to protest about. So protest itself becomes at once exaggerated and empty, capable of galvanising massive efforts of social goodwill and incapable of either deploying them or understanding their inevitable impotence. It cries out to masters who no longer exist and feeds the new structures whose daily bread consists of insecurity and spectacle.

The loss of credible and comprehensive visions of what protest amounts to is thus not just incidental to neoliberalism, but amongst its central features. Protest under neoliberalism streams out into anodyne technicalities, or it vaporises into narcissistic gestures and sprawling spectacles, or it hardens into consequences that neoliberalism can only recognise by claiming that it has been derailed by violent hardliners. One of the grand subplots within this process is the way in which the first entrances of the neoliberal mind were propelled by the critical intensity that protest took on during the 1960s in cities like Chicago and Paris. All the comprehensiveness with which some of the movements of that time believed themselves to be on the point of a final break with the liberal worldview was genuine enough, and resulted in a spectacular failure to achieve effects at the level of formal political authority that was only matched by the spectacular success with which these movements instead redefined the era's public sensibility. It was hard to want to be a liberal after these shifts, but hard too for many to see a future in a radicalism that had burned both its accesses of retreat and its narratives of advance, for their societies or for themselves. Neoliberalism was the phoenix that proceeded to rise up, the sort of ingenious compromise that extrapolates from the extremes of positions that it can no longer weld or yoke together.

Of course, 'neoconservatism' has also sometimes seemed to be the name for this new worldview, or for some aspect of it. But since conservatism has so massively failed to be more than remotely conservative in the first place, its further claims to contradict itself even more extensively by renovating its own premises are doubtless best ignored. Instead, the interest of these more extreme elements within the neoliberal alliance is in the realisation that protest has in some ways been absorbed deep into its heart, as much as it has been rejected or effaced. It might be better in fact to go back to the term 'movement conservatism' with which

these elements used to identify themselves during the period of Ronald Reagan's grinning ascent, since it may remind us of the aspect of all but countercultural insurgency on which they have always and often accurately enough prided themselves. A certain spirit of insistent protest, often threatening to turn into some complete and wild outrage at what are perceived as the powers that be, likewise pounds away within the heart of the tabloid conservatism that can seem to be so dominant in England. Finally what besets our culture may be a sort of sprawling, chattering generalisation of the act of protest, as much as any lack of it.

But this brings us finally to the continuing allure that the myth of protest so intensely exerts over our political imagination, to the extent that we insist on trying to see the world ever more addictively through its prism even as its actual purchase on events loses focus. A protester is someone who charges another with guilt and arbitrates on injustice, so finally he is someone who himself must be innocent. He is someone who places himself outside the institutions of the political process, in order to judge or to arraign them from without. In the absence of a really resonant and textured culture of protest, complete with some efficacious grasp on possibilities of change or progress, it is this movement to a position of innocence outside all institutions that continues to fascinate. The protester at once provides an endless spectacle for the news media and the cockerels of opinion, and resonates with their deepest fantasy that some position of innocence or exemption outside the institutions of power is possible, the very fantasy that structures their status as viewers of the spectacle in the first place. No one should be surprised at the extent of their grief and indignation then whenever such events turn out to harbour other possibilities, or to produce outcomes of which they disapprove, or to bring to power figures of authority who prove all too effective. Protest has become at once too easy and too hard within our current politics, and we need to learn to look for what is being constructed within a sequence of events, rather than what is being protested about. We need to learn to construct new political objects and truths ourselves, and this will involve learning to think new thoughts and to use different words.

## Vasyl Lozynskyi

### Face Control

a poem written in complete darkness

I'm writing this poem in complete darkness  
for I had an urge... in the train car  
only the outline of my notebook is visible and  
the soft paper and pencil are palpable.  
but this doesn't change the essence. it's  
unknown  
how much will be decipherable.  
the poem also needs an editor. let's  
call it face control.  
like the one at the entrance to clubs  
and that one time I wasn't let in.  
something taken all the way to automatism.  
a metaphor in time. a metaphor  
which I hope won't be evanesced  
from the face of the poem, although it looks like  
make-up or face-paint in the movies or theater.

### Olivier Salad at the Maidan

On New Year's Eve at the Maidan,  
we're passing out Olivier salad under  
the gravestone, and there wouldn't be this  
culinary  
festival, but we all brought our own  
not to sell, but out of an obligation.  
The salad appeared in Moscow as  
the invention of French chef, Olivier.  
But the Russian salad on the EuroMaidan  
had its contextual purpose: Lesia,  
the artist, constructed a social  
sculpture: everyone fed salad to  
anyone in the crowd who wanted it.  
She corked a bottle of sparkling  
wine and poured the first the one  
who guarded the safety "entrance"  
to the kitchen and we greeted  
each other amid the effervescence  
of the dazzling, nonviolent crowd.

### the Maidan after hours

it's impossible to write about what's  
happening. everything like for the first time  
since our grandfathers and great-grandfathers.  
the troops guard their king, and we're going  
to the revolution as if to our jobs. it's almost  
impossible to work, or do anything else.

but we actually haven't stopped  
working, and the fact is that we all need  
to come up with a new statue  
for the place where Lenin stood, or to write  
a letter to a German publishing house  
about a copyright for Erich Fried.

there's nothing ambiguous or efficient  
that would work in the sphere of culture and  
humanitarian aid. the head of the EU Commission  
says that Ukrainians know what to do.  
Europe is now like those packages of old things  
whose contents are cheaper than the shipping.

it's time to start publishing, not just  
sending stuff to our sweethearts, or posting it  
online  
someone will probably read it outside the ghetto  
after or even during the night or day watch, or  
during a state of emergency, will we be still able  
to  
describe it after our work in this revolutionary  
time?

January 22, 2014

Translated by Ostap Kin and Ali Kinsella

## Nataliya Tchermarykh

### The Warm Cold Winter

The winter of 2013 was unexpectedly warm. In Kyiv, people sometimes refer to this kind of winter as "European".

In autumn 2004, I wore an orange ribbon and voted for President Yushchenko. For the next ten years, I felt a bit ashamed; somehow I didn't want to remember that I'd done that. We preferred not to think about politics, especially not domestic politics in the Ukrainian understanding of the word. We argued a lot about the necessity of mobilisation, nationalism, about global social protests and about the general trend towards conservatism in Ukraine, Europe, and the world. Quite possibly, there weren't any young people more politicised than we were then. Today, after the deaths on Maidan, our politicisation seems to have been another form of escapism. Since the protests began, even more pieces of coloured fabric have appeared. Occasionally they would even dispute with each other: the orange in Ukraine, the white and the St. George's ribbon in Russia...

In December 2013, another one appeared: a snippet of acetate silk with an enigmatic pattern - one half is yellow and blue like the Ukrainian national flag, and the other, navy blue with a scattering of stars. I should admit I've never held it in my hands. My refusal to do so was no flare-up of intellectual snobbism or left-wing euro scepticism. It is simply that this combination always seemed to me to be oxymoronic. You must agree it is rather strange when, in combination with the flag of one of the world's biggest political unions the flag of a huge and very poor country becomes a symbol of a civil protest on its own territory, especially when the relationship between these two entities has always been rather vague.

With each passing year, this constellation of stars has been becoming increasingly alien to outsiders; the points of the stars prick sharply, not permitting anyone inside the ring. It's as if by remaining distantly loyal to faraway neighbours, those inside the ring can conceal their contempt for a poverty which is close enough to touch. Meanwhile their delight in the burning glow of Ukraine only confirms their confidence that nothing of this sort ever happen at home.

Nevertheless, throughout this winter, Ukraine has been all over the front pages of the

European press. The most popular image has been "the face of Maidan". We can all call to mind the high resolution colour pictures of its inhabitants: warmly dressed, exhausted, and lightly dusted in bonfire-ash. In the daytime, they stand on the square wrapping themselves in yellow-and-blue flags, singing the national anthem. Several times a day, they conduct collective prayers for the victory of their small medieval republic. At night, they light bonfires and make porridge on Kyiv's equivalent of the Champs-Élysées. And so it goes on, night after night, for many months. Is this really about joining Europe? A rhetorical question... Thank God for the cross in the top right corner which closes the window of your browser!

In December 2013, the people of the Maidan raised their hands rhythmically, clutching lit torches, in accompaniment to songs by popular Ukrainian performers. Glory to Ukraine? I shall lay my hand on my heart and confess that this Ukrainian culture was never mine – or more precisely, I have never known joy in in collective fits) of passionate emotion. And yet among the people of the Maidan, there were a few who attracted me like a magnet.

I remember how I wrote down a name on a scrap of paper: Serhiy Nigoyan. A son of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, he had lived his entire life in southeastern Ukraine, and thought and spoke in Armenian, Ukrainian and Russian. I wanted to interview him. Or just to talk to him about the multilingual generation of 20 year-olds to which he belonged, about their perception of 20th century history, about the Armenian community and the Russian language, and specifically about Ukrainian Russian which now, and for many years has functioned as a lingua franca between various ethnic groups.

Later, I repeatedly watched footage which a group of young filmmakers had managed to shoot with Serhiy. In the edited version, he could be seen quoting Shevchenko's poems. But, as often happens, the most interesting bits were left out of the film. One of the most memorable scenes showed him standing clutching his wrists in a gesture which should have symbolised determination and unswervability. But the camera lingered on his thin, tensed-up shoulders for far too long, long enough to destroy the prior impression. A show of strength became a sign of weakness. On the night of the 22nd of January he was killed by a precisely aimed shot to his neck. Glory to the heroes?

I don't consider him a hero. He was a boy who grew a beard to look older: as he stood at the beginning of a long journey, he wanted to look strong. His journey was abruptly cut short - and everyone memorised his name, not yet knowing how many deaths would follow.

Last winter at the Dom Kino cinema, I saw a different documentary entitled "Stages of Democracy"<sup>1</sup>, by Georgiy Shklyarevskiy. In 1992, chestnut trees still flowered on Maidan, while on Khreshchatik<sup>2</sup>, which at the time was still cobbled, groups of people stood around and excitedly discussed every decision made by the Supreme Soviet. It was a black and white documentary, shot on Soviet-era film stock. I don't remember those events; I was in the third form of junior school. But for some reason, I do remember the tense expression of a fellow passenger on the tram, who through the hiss of interference was listening to an extraordinary session of the Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, holding a tiny radio with an aerial to his ear. I wanted one too. Just last year, all of this still seemed so long ago; then it still appeared that the post-Soviet world had lost the capacity to find itself in immediate, skin-to-skin contact with politics. And suddenly, it was back again. Today is the 21st of February 2014: I can't tear my eyes from Twitter and on-line broadcasting on the Internet: for the first time in many years, there's a new majority in the Rada and for the first time for many years, it interests me.

The 21st of February 2014: out on the Maidan, the sun is shining brightly, but people are filled with gloom. They crave politics, to participate personally in it, and some time ago now this desire moved from being purely intellectual to something physical. I'm convinced I can sense it in the same visceral way as those standing around me. It's true that this entire time, the number of social and economic demands has not increased. But at the same time, several months of direct collaboration have proved that an alternative economy works: any social imperative can be solved by the improvised distribution of the goods, speeded up a hundredfold by social networks, mobile phones and the mobilisation of volunteers: warm clothes, hot food, legal advice, medical supplies and a difficult operation.

Three months of Maidan is a demonstration of the victory of a spontaneous micro-economy over macro-corruption. And you get the feeling, just a little bit more, and we'll have done it! It was probably then that I began to associate myself with the protests.

And what is the upshot of all this? An economy based on grassroots collaboration and policy, as a prerequisite for everyday life. For this, and not for the tragic-farce which has been going on for years, people turned out to be ready to give up their lives. The performance has dragged on, with its own puppeteers, Quakers, changing performers... And the stage.

In a matter of just a few days in December 2013, stocks of earplugs were exhausted in chemists in the centre of Kyiv. Twenty-four hour music blasting from the Maidan stage prevented people from sleeping in the tents set up nearby. They say loud music was used as torture at the prison in Guantanamo Bay, together with torture by sleep deprivation. In many Muslim countries, sharia law prohibits loud music: the prisoners were going out of their minds. Somebody even had the idea of producing Guantanamo's Greatest Hits. Meanwhile in Kyiv, opposition leaders appeared on the stage from time to time. I think that over time, for inhabitants of this medieval republic, communication with them turned into a kind of torture.

During the apocalyptic night of the 19th of February not one of them was here - only priests, desperately singing liturgies and cursing to the seventh generation the riot police encircling Maidan.

A shadow was cast between Maidan and the stage. As twilight descends, the day grows colder: this winter has long since ceased being "European". In the Rada, they're voting to release several politicians from prison, yet tomorrow perhaps there will be others in their place. The performance on stage dragged on, smoke eats away at the eyes, and it is already impossible to tell whether these explosions are fake grenades, fireworks or gunshots, but people are not dispersing. They are not dispersing.

Translated by Natalia Bukia-Peters and Victoria Field

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=382nH901XtE>

<sup>2</sup>The main street leading from Maidan Nezalezhnosti, or Independence Square, in the centre of Kyiv

