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IGNORANCE IS POWER*

Doubt is my birthplace: I do not enjoy writing about things I am a hundred percent sure of. In the words of an old Jew of Galicia, chosen by Czesław Miłosz as the epigraph to his *Captive Mind*, even 75 percent of "right" is already "suspicious." However, the current state of Russian humanities, as they tackle issues related to Ukraine, lends itself all too well to the righteous indignation of a jeremiad. Lest it should happen, I would like to conceptualize the situation as best I can, instead of passing judgment or casting aspersions.

Obviously, on the surface level, the underlying problem of Russian humanities consists in the absence of corresponding structures. A colleague of mine from Saint Petersburg once told me her university was the only one in the country offering a class on Ukrainian history. Another colleague, based in Belgorod, countered that they also had one. Yet, even if we assume there were more, the overall number of universities is not likely to exceed the number of one's fingers.

The scarcity of Russian books on Ukrainian history constitutes another structural drawback. Of course, Ukrainian books could be used in lieu of their Russian counterparts, but it would not solve the problem. I do not know whether any formal restrictions apply to the use of non-Russian textbooks at Russian universities: even if Ukrainian books were allowed, Russian students do not read Ukrainian (or so, at least, my Russian colleagues say). For all the talk about similarities between the two languages, practice proves

* Translated from Ukrainian by Anton Svinarenko.

otherwise, including my own personal experience with Russian experts my age and older (born before 1961). Even those who claim proficiency are unable to sustain a conversation beyond a couple of sentences, whereupon they switch to Russian on the pretext that Ukrainians, after all, understand Russian perfectly well. Not to mention the students, unless their parents or grandparents are Ukrainian so that the language is not entirely foreign to them; but those are, needless to say, few and far between.

The situation in Russia comes into sharp relief when compared to another close neighbor of ours, Poland. After the fall of communism, Ukrainian departments mushroomed all over the country, with little to no connection to the Ukrainian communities in Poland, or to the latest wave of Ukrainian immigration. Kids from Ukrainian families aspire to "normal" careers over there, instead of becoming "professional Ukrainians." I have on numerous occasions met young Poles who spoke Ukrainian fluently; most of them got their degrees in Ukrainian Studies from one Polish university or other.

Another example: in my field, the modern history of Ukraine, I can name off the top of my head at least two or three monographs on each single period, whether it is the early nineteenth century, interwar years, or post-communist era. I dare my Russian colleagues to conduct the same experiment with their respective sources – it is easy to guess who is going to win this game.

All the examples adduced suggest one and the same conclusion: within Russian academia, Ukrainian Studies is not an entirely legitimate scholarly field. It would not be at all surprising if we dealt with the histories and cultures of some remote countries less important to Russia, such as Portugal or New Zealand. In this case, however, we are dealing with Russia's closest neighbor—"closest" in geographical, cultural, and historical terms. People in humanities are prone to metaphorical thinking. As pertains to the subject, I would choose the following metaphor: based on sheer statistics, the number of departments, classes, monographs, and so on would put Ukraine in the vicinity of Mexico or Madagascar on the mental map of Russian humanities.

One can only wonder as to the reasons for this oversight. My own guess comes from experience. I remember a joint session of Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian historians that took place in Lublin in the 1990s. The theme was, Eastern Europe: Past and Future. A Russian academic, whose name shall remain unmentioned for obvious reasons, opened his presentation thus: "Ukraine is not even worth talking about, because its dissolution, and consequent disappearance from the world map, is imminent." Mind you, the thesis was posited not by an amateur like Zhirinovsky or some such, but by a leading theoretician of international relations from Russia, credentials and

all. Furthermore, the assertion was unmarked by a single trace of anxiety: plainly and flatly, he spoke in front of his Polish and Ukrainian colleagues as if stating an indisputable fact. I have heard the same thesis later on, slightly altered, many times: Ukraine as a "failed/nationalized state" has no future; Ukraine is king for a day. The profundity of arguments has varied depending on the speaker's own level of sophistication, but the gist has remained unchanged.

The other day a good friend of mine jokingly suggested that, judging from his behavior, Putin must have read the few books on Ukrainian history written by Russian historians. I do not know who has read what; in my opinion what we are dealing with is correlation rather than causality. The well-matched harmony of Russian politicians and humanists reflects the sentiment that has held sway in Russia for some time now. Aleksandr Tsypko reminisces about the collapse of the Soviet Union: "Yeltsin figured he was kicking Ukraine out of our shared home temporarily. He thought the independent Ukraine would come crawling back once he had ousted Gorbachev from the Kremlin" (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, December 16, 2008) In November 1991, this strategy was proffered by none other than the late Galina Starovoytova. One shudders to think what was going on in the heads of less liberal politicians.

Likewise, according to Tsypko, "during the Orange Revolution Putin's administration acted on the false premise that the biggest threat to the interests of Russia came from Galicia, from the Western parts of Ukraine." It is now safe to assume that in 2014 Putin extended his concerns all the way from Galicia to Kyiv: in the wake of Euromaidan, Lviv surrendered to the Ukrainian capital its title as the nationalist stronghold. Has Putin, however, changed his mind regarding the rest of Russian-speaking Ukrainian territories, from Kharkiv to Odessa – that is, what he calls "Novorossiia"? Both his commentaries and actions during the Russian Spring in Ukraine point to the contrary.

It barely merits discussion that Putin's project titled "Novorossiia" has little to do with its historical namesake: if Putin had, indeed, read history books, he was not paying close attention. What matters here is not the incongruities between discrete notes, but the unity of the overarching tone, a mainstream timbre I have broken down into three parts: (1) Ukrainian events in general and Euromaidan in particular rest on Ukrainian nationalism (a national, or "nationalistic" project, if you will); (2) Ukrainian nationalism aims to assert its dominance over a symbolic space delineated by language and historical memory; and (3) the Ukrainian project is "a minority faith"

in Ukraine, to borrow Andrew Wilson's book title,[1] so it would not have prevailed had it not been for the support of some third party – the West, or to be exact, the United States.

Let me illustrate this breakdown with an interview that historian Aleksey Miller gave to *Novaya gazeta* (April 16, 2014). From this exchange, sold as a conversation with an expert (which Miller undoubtedly is), the reader could glean that "in order to avoid heckling at the Maidan, people had to begin and end their speeches with 'Glory to Ukraine!'" to be followed by "Glory to the heroes," or that "the infamous Svoboda party had foisted its rhetoric and aesthetic on the Maidan." According to him, "in Ukraine there exist at least two, but actually three major communities. The first one is Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians; the second, Russian-speaking Ukrainians; and the third, Russians." He goes on to argue that "the East and the West have completely different economic interests and different survival models"; that "Ukraine is not a subject but an object in a game" run by "anyone except Ukrainians"; that Putin in this power dynamic is interested in "de-escalation rather than maintaining the present tensions," and that the sole power preventing said de-escalation is the United States, which "benefits from feeding these tensions, because as soon as Ukraine splits up, they will get . . . an ethnically homogeneous Ukrainian state that hates Russia like poison, en masse."

I will refrain from commenting on his assessment of Putin as "warm and fuzzy," and America as "aggressive and intimidating," which betrays the author's prejudice and disqualifies this part of his interview from serious analytical consideration. The thesis, however, gains importance once we disregard its content and focus on the message: Ukraine is not a subject – it is, in fact, an object.

As for the rest of Miller's theses, they all, without a doubt, are reflective of a certain part of reality. Indeed, Euromaidan was rife with nationalist slogans and nationalist rhetoric. The question remains, however, whether this rhetoric was the only, or even the prevalent one. For instance, Euromaidan did adopt the nationalist slogan "Glory to Ukraine – Glory to the heroes!" yet rejected another, of the same ilk: "Glory to the nation – Death to the enemies!" One can assume that the reason lies in the fact that the former, unlike the latter, contained no explicit nationalism or xenophobia: people at the Maidan cried "glory" to themselves, imagining themselves as heroes. As a Russian journalist ironically quipped, if Bandera knew who was re-

[1] Andrew Wilson. Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority. Faith. Cambridge, 1997.

purposing his slogans at the Maidan, he would spin in his grave. Another telling detail: when the Kyiv city hall was seized, the portrait of Bandera had lasted but a couple of hours on the wall before it was replaced by a banner of Taras Shevchenko.

There were many other slogans and images at the Maidan besides nationalist ones. By the entrance closest to the square, where most skirmishes occurred, hung a huge poster with Yuri Shevelev's portrait and a quote, "The world will only accept the modern us." Inside, on a billboard, was emblazoned a Paris '68 motto, "Il est interdit d'interdire!" (It is forbidden to forbid) while the tents and neighboring houses frequently sported Guy Fawkes masks. A young girl carried around a poster that read, "I don't want to be precariat," and one of the Maidan squadrons bore the name "Narnia."

Of course, everyone saw what they wanted to see: someone's attention was caught by Stepan Bandera, others rejoiced in Fawkes masks and 1968 revolutionary instigations. The bottom line is that Euromaidan was neither uniform nor unanimous: rather, as though onboard Noah's Ark, it took "two of every kind." The question as to which discourse, if any, dominated its space is open to debate. I am most sympathetic to the viewpoint expressed by another Russian journalist: Maidan could not have triumphed without nationalists, but the nationalists lost at Maidan. For evidence, look at the elections of June 25, when both Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of Svoboda, and Dmytro Yarosh of Right Sector came in behind Vadim Rabinovich, head of Ukrainian Jewish Congress (even if you put their polling numbers together). At the parliamentary elections four months later neither party made it to the Rada, losing not only nationwide but in each region individually, including the Lviv Oblast, which they had taken by storm in 2012. A lot of factors contributed to Svoboda's defeat, but one of the pivotal moments came on November 25, at the outset of the revolution, when students booed Yuri Mikhalchishin, one of Svoboda's honchos, off the stage at the Lviv Maidan.

I am citing these facts not in extenuation of Euromaidan, but merely to prove my point: national issues were not the only items on its agenda – in fact, they were not even central. Neither were, for that matter, questions of language or historical memory. Those present at the scene can back me up when I say that it was, indeed, bilingual. One look at the news coverage pouring in from the wartorn Donbas suffices to verify that most soldiers, and especially commanding officers, speak Russian. *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Sergei Lojko confirms this fact in his piece on the Donetsk airport fighting: "Inside the airport, (Ukrainian) military forces use Russian as their operative language. Everyone speaks Russian on walkie-talkies.

Ukrainian is nowhere to be heard. . . . What struck me the most was how pure, cultured, almost literary their Russian was."[2]

The same applies to the issues of historical memory. The Stalingrad battle and the Brest Fortress siege function on both sides, separatist and Ukrainian, as symbols of resilience and resistance. A cab driver in Kyiv, while spewing out derogatory nicknames to refer to the insurgents, still listens to a jingoistic Russian paean about "father commander." The few remaining monuments to Lenin now don Ukrainian embroidered shirts or wear coats of blue and yellow paint.[3]

The most recent polls indicate that the main fault line in Ukraine, at the moment, runs not between Galicia and the rest of the country (as was the case in the early 1990s), nor between Ukrainian and Russian speakers (as was the case in 2004–2014), but between two adjacent Russian-speaking regions, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk oblasts. It is in the former that most people support the antiterrorist operation launched against Donbas. This is the map of Ukraine's new political geography, rebutting the claim that "Russian-speaking Ukrainians" (using Wilson's and Miller's taxonomies) exist as a unified community. Nor is there such thing as a unified Russian-speaking East, or "Novorossiia" in Putin's parlance. The East now has two poles, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk, with the rest of their neighbors tilting in favor of either. A survey organized by Alexei Navalny in Odessa and Kharkiv oblasts in September 2014 shows that both gravitate toward Dnipropetrovsk rather than Donetsk: the majority of the population disapproves of Putin yet supports, or remains neutral to, Poroshenko; the vast majority (87 percent) would like to stay in Ukraine and reject the concept of Novorossiia, although most are Russian speakers (67 percent).[4] This survey, among others, makes it abundantly clear why the Russian Spring in Ukraine has failed so very miserably as the territory of the newly declared Novorossiia has shrunk by now to the size of Donbas, and not even the entire region but its Southeastern portion.

Please do not misconstrue what I say: I am not in denial about the existence of cultural and linguistic divides in Ukraine. All I am saying is that their role in what has been going on over the past few months is grossly exaggerated. Meanwhile, people tend to underrate the new lines across which Ukraine is divided more and more pronouncedly: age, class, and education.

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[2] See http://censor.net.ua/resonance/309821/zapreschennyyi_v_rossii_efir_eha_moskvy_ob_aeroporte_zdes_dobro_srajaetsya_s_orkami.

[3] For example, see http://rian.com.ua/photolents/20141005/357863422.html.

[4] Sotsopros FBK po Khar'kovskoi i Odesskoi oblastiam. Evropa, Rossiia, Novorossiia // https://navalny.com/p/3836/.

If these factors remain ignored, one cannot understand what brought about Euromaidan in the first place and is tempted, indeed, to dismiss it as either a deus ex machina or a product of "American scheming." The opposite is also true: if one focuses on the recent changes in Ukraine, including its transition from the industrial economic model to the postindustrial (service) one, the emergence of a freshly minted middle class, and the "independence" generation's coming to the fore, Euromaidan looks not only understandable but almost foreordained.

I was among those who predicted Euromaidan well in advance, in the late winter of 2012. Back then, most people treated my prophesy as wishful thinking. In the spring of 2010, I surmised that Yanukovych's reign, unlike Putin's in Russia or Lukashenko's in Belarus, would not last: his presidency now looks like a "system error" against the backdrop of the processes unfolding in Ukraine during the 2000s. In my predictions I also used the results of two waves of the World Values Survey (WVS), a global appraisal mechanism that added Russia and Ukraine after the fall of communism.[5] The survey's research showed that Russia had been stuck in the so-called survival values during 2000–2010, while in Ukraine there had been a noticeable shift toward "self-expression values." Ronald Inglehart, architect of the WVS, has formulated an important thesis based on the data analysis of his project: in societies leaning toward self-expression, authoritarian power fares much worse.[6] Conversely, these societies stand a much better chance at democratizing themselves in leaps and bounds. Contrary to what proponents of modernization theories used to claim, this transformation was not directly linked to economic growth: if that was the case, Russia would be a much more democratic state than Ukraine. Instead, the change is enacted indirectly, through the values formed over the course of history.

In a way, this thesis overlaps with the conclusions approximated by numerous liberal thinkers and historians from Ukraine: Mikhailo Dragomanov, Vyacheslav Lipinsky, and most of all Ivan Lisyak-Rudnitsky. The fundamental difference between Russia and Ukraine lies not in language or culture but in varying political traditions that have historical origins. In the early 1990s this thesis was being developed by the late historian from Moscow, Dmitry Furman, who contrasted and compared the post-communist paths of Russia and Ukraine. I was introduced to Inglehart's findings, as well as analogous works by Douglass North and Daron Acemoglu, by

[5] See the project's Web site: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

[6] Cf. Christian Welzel, Ronald Inglehart. The Role of Ordinary People in Democratization // Journal of Democracy. 2008. Pp. 126-140.

economist Alexander Auzan of Moscow State University. Between 2010 and 2012, then-president of Russia Dmitry Medvedev hired him to map out a development strategy for Russia – those were the times when people still spoke of modernization in Russia straight-faced (or at least the topic, and the term itself, was central to Medvedev's public speeches, as quantitative studies of his discourse show).

These very same studies show that the presidential discourse in Russia underwent drastic changes once Putin returned to the office in 2012, as "security" superseded "modernization" with all the attendant repercussions. In Ukraine "modernization" and "values" have been *mots du jour* since the late 2000s when the failure of the Orange Revolution became apparent, and a need arose for a third way circumventing both Yushchenko and Yanukovych. A lot of people now see Euromaidan, Poroshenko's victory, and the newly elected parliament as symbols of this "Third Ukraine": especially people in big urban areas (Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Lviv, Odessa, Kharkiv, even Donetsk to an extent), especially middle-class and younger demographics. They are willing to put the issues of language and history on the backburner and to privilege instead political and economic reforms in Ukraine. For them Euromaidan was, indeed, a revolution of values.

Therein lies, in my opinion, the major drama of the contemporary Russian–Ukrainian relationship: the Ukrainians of Euromaidan are preoccupied with modernization and values, whereas Putin's Russia worries about security and identities. Ukrainians win when they play host. Putin, on the other hand, may win if he makes them relapse into identity and security games: it is virtually impossible to reform a country at war, divided, to boot, by language and history.

On a global international scale, this is not so much a fight between Russia and the West as a conflict of two development modes, one of restrictions and one of open accesses, both described and conceptualized by Inglehart, North, Acemoglu, and others. They do so as a revision of the 1950s−1980s modernization theories, transcending the boundaries of the national paradigm. In their work, nation as a concept is largely dethroned, both as an object of study (they all practice global history) and as a centerpiece of modernity (which it still is, for instance, according to Ernest Gellner, one of the most influential modernity theorists).

Euromaidan provided empirical proof for this revision. It is my deep conviction that Euromaidan cannot be viewed solely in the context of Ukrainian or East European history: it belongs in the same category of social phenomena as the Occupy Movement, Bolotnaia Square in Moscow, Taksim Square

in Turkey, and student protests in Bulgaria and Hong Kong, all of which were modeled after the prototypical Paris of 1968. The only difference is that, unlike most of them, Maidan succeeded. One can debate the extent to which the national component contributed to this victory, since revolutions that have this component always have the edge. But while it did include a national component, Maidan cannot be reduced to it. The protest's backbone was composed of the middle class and youth, the latter often demoted to the position of precariat in the global world.

Euromaidan illustrates the depth of changes Ukraine has undergone in the twenty-three years of independence, having followed a trajectory from an industrialized yet highly provincial Soviet republic to a by and large postindustrial state, deeply integrated into the global world with all the perks and dangers that attend globalization. This transformation can only be processed once we have moved beyond the parochial national paradigm.

It stands to reason that going beyond the national paradigm depends not only on academic but also on sociopolitical circumstances. While not predetermined, it is contingent upon personal choices made by historians, sociologists, economists, and so forth. These choices do not have a specifically Russian or Ukrainian aspect: some humanists and social scientists from Ukraine and Russia are ready to transition (Dmytro Furman or Alexander Auzan); some pay lip service, all the while resisting it (Aleksey Miller). Except that circumstances differ: in Russia modernization has failed and is put on hold; in Ukraine, however, it has once again been granted a window of opportunity.

I believe that this difference impacts the dominant academic discourse in Russia regarding Ukraine as it strives to prove that Ukraine, incapable of modernizing itself, is bound to get mired in historical legacies such as the national question, internal partitions, and the like. What it implies, however, is that the only seat of power to rule the fates of post-Soviet countries is located in the Kremlin. That is why Ukraine does not deserve serious consideration: sooner or later, after another failed attempt, it will come crawling back.

In a soft veil, this discourse coats nationalists and liberals alike, envelops graduate students and academics. Powerful though it may be, it is also a limiting one, for which we, the people of Ukraine, should thank those who have fashioned and disseminated it. Their ignorance of what Ukraine is and Euromaidan was anticipated, to a degree, the defeat of the Russian Spring and the Novorossiia scenario. In this sense, Russia's ignorance became Ukraine's power.

SUMMARY

Yaroslav Hrytsak begins by confirming that within Russian academia, Ukrainian Studies is not an entirely legitimate scholarly field. The explanation is a widespread belief that Ukraine as a "failed/nationalized state" has no future and no modern subjectivity. He summarizes the views of historians and politicians in the following sequence: (1) Ukrainian events in general and Euromaidan in particular are based on Ukrainian nationalism; (2) Ukrainian nationalism aims to assert its dominance over a symbolic space delineated by language and historical memory; and (3) The Ukrainian project is "a minority faith" in Ukraine, so it would not have prevailed had it not been for the support of some third party − the West, or to be exact, the United States. Hrytsak then analyzes the experience of Euromaidan, the elections of June 25, 2014, which revealed the actual low popularity of the nationalist parties, and the changing and narrowing internal dividing lines within Ukrainian society in the light of these false stereotypes. His own understanding of the situation is based on the results of two waves of the World Values Survey (under the academic supervision of Ronald Inglehart), which show that Russia was stuck in "survival values" during the aughts, while in Ukraine there was a noticeable shift toward "values of self-expression." Therein lies, in Hrytsak's opinion, the major drama of the contemporary Russian–Ukrainian relationship: the Ukrainians of Euromaidan are preoccupied with modernization and values, whereas Putin's Russia worries about security and identities. It is this difference that affects the dominant academic discourse in Russia regarding Ukraine – a discourse that strives to prove that Ukraine, incapable of modernizing itself, is bound to become mired in historical legacies such as the national question, internal partitions, and so on.

Резюме

Грыцак открывает свое эссе обзором российской украинистики, которая сегодня является не вполне легитимной дисциплиной. Причину он видит в широко распространенном взгляде на Украину как на "несостоявшееся/национализированное государство" без будущего и модерной субъектности. Автор обобщает взгляды российских историков и политиков в следующей трехступенчатой формуле: 1) украинские события в целом и Евромайдан в частности основаны на украинском национализме; 2) украинский национализм стремится

установить контроль над символическим пространством, разделенным по линиям исторической памяти и языка; 3) украинский проект – “вера меньшинства”, поэтому он не мог бы добиться успеха без поддержки третьей стороны – Запада, а точнее США. Автор анализирует опыт Евромайдана, июньских выборов 2014 г. (выявивших низкую популярность националистических партий), изменяющиеся и сокращающиеся внутренние разделения в украинском обществе в свете лживых стереотипов. Его собственное понимание ситуации основано на результатах двух волн Всемирного исследования ценностей под руководством Роналда Инглхарта, которое показало, что Россия застряла в так называемых “ценностях сохранения”, в то время как Украина демонстрирует заметный сдвиг в сторону “ценностей самовыражения”. В этом, по мнению Грыцака, состоит драма современных российско-украинских отношений: украинцы Евромайдана думают о модернизации и ценностях; путинская Россия беспокоится о безопасности и идентичности. В России эта разница влияет на доминирующий академический дискурс относительно Украины, которая предстает в нем как неспособная модернизироваться и обреченная на зависимость от исторического наследия, национального вопроса, внутренних разделений и т.д.