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February 3, 2017

Fighting Flares In Avdiivivka



See coverage on pages 2,3,8

Honor guards carry a coffin during the farewell ceremony for seven soldiers killed near the Donetsk Oblast city of Avdiivka. Hundreds gathered at Independence Square on Feb. 1 in Kyiv to pay tribute to the victims of the recent escalation of Russia's war against Ukraine. At least eight soldiers were killed and dozens wounded in fights that started near Avdiivka on Jan. 29, the worst outbreak of violence in several months. The new escalation occurred soon after the first telephone conversation between U.S. President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. The U.S. issued a tepid statement that officials are "deeply concerned." (Volodymyr Petrov)

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Editorial staff: +380 44 591-3344 news@kyivpost.com

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Адреса видавця та засновника

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вул. Пушкінська, 31А, 6-й поверх.

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тел.: 559-9147

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З приводу розміщення реклами

звертайтесь: +380 44 591-77-88

Відповідальність за зміст реклами

несе замовник.

Mailing address:

Kyiv Post,
31A Pushkinska, Suite 600, 6th floor
Kyiv, Ukraine, 01004

Advertising

tel. +380 44 591-7788
fax +380 44 591-3345
advertising@kyivpost.com

Editorial staff

tel. +380 44 591-3344
fax +380 44 591-3345
news@kyivpost.com

Subscriptions & Distribution

tel. +380 44 591-3344
fax +380 44 591-3345
subscribe@kyivpost.com

Employment Advertising

tel. +380 44 591-3408
fax +380 44 591-3345
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Rescue from Avdiyivka: Resident talks about her evacuation under shelling

BY OKSANA GRYTSENKO
GRYTSENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

During nearly three years of war, Olena Polianska never left her spacious house in Avdiyivka, where she lived with her daughter Rita, 13, just one kilometer from the front line.

But the 58-year-old's forbearance finally gave out on Jan. 31. She asked for evacuation after spending three days mostly in the basement of her house, as the impacts of Grad rockets tore dozens of ugly black gouges in the snow-covered field in front of her house.

The house shook from the impact, its doors and windows blasted open by the shockwaves.

"We didn't sleep for three nights, that's why we left," Polianska said. "The bombs were falling down very close, and it was day and night without end."

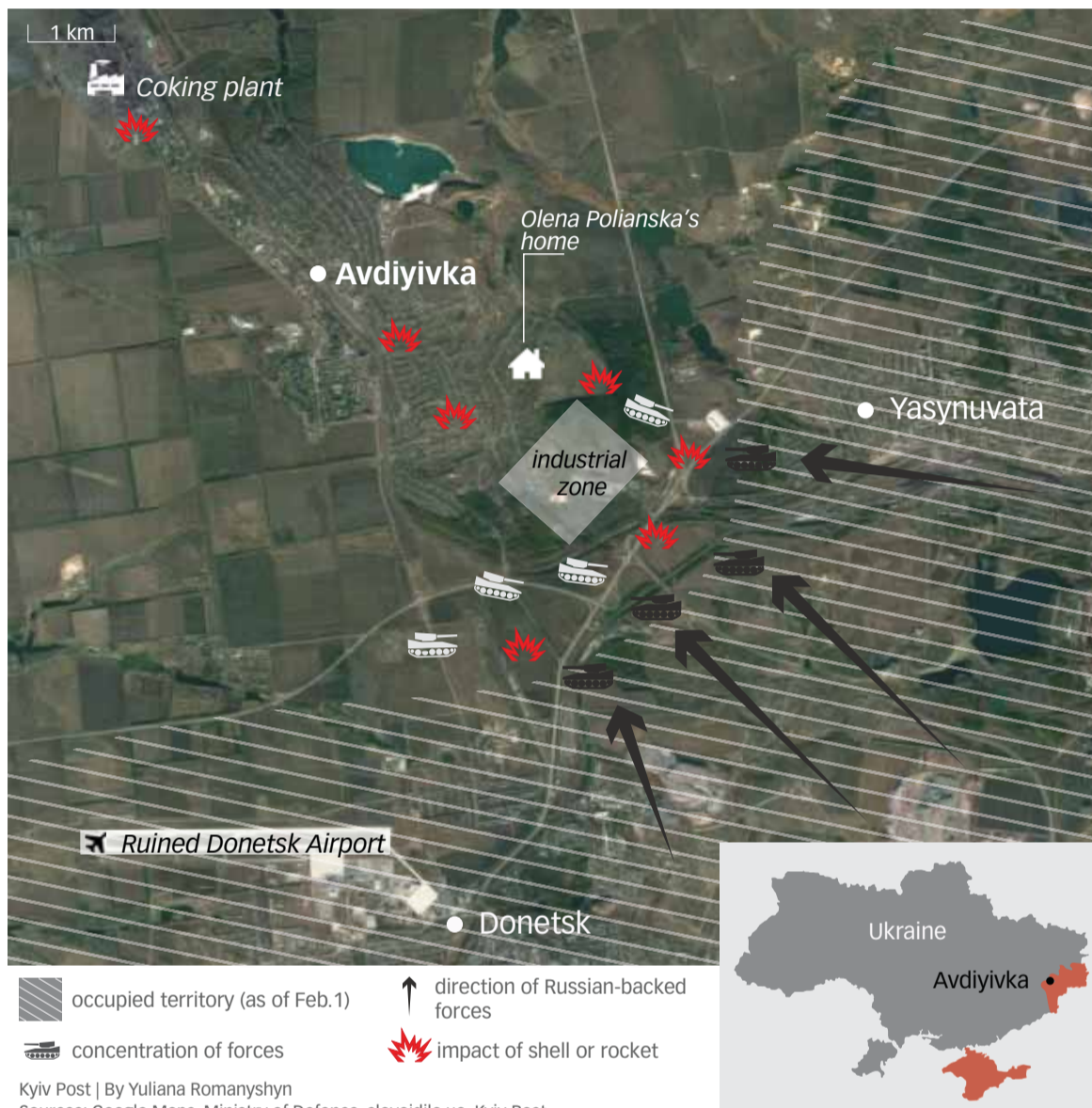
But Polianska was lucky.

Despite having a poor phone connection, she managed to get through to volunteer Olena Rozvadovska, who arranged for an armored military car to bring the woman and her daughter out of the most dangerous area of Old Avdiyivka, where she lived, to the city center.

Passing by houses in the area, Rozvadovska saw smoke from recent shell impacts rising above some of the roofs.

The massive shelling of Avdiyivka, a Donetsk Oblast city of 22,000 peoples some 700 kilometers southeast of Kyiv and 14 kilometers from the separatist stronghold of Donetsk, started early on Jan. 29.

The Russian-backed troops first tried to push the Ukrainian army away from defensive positions on a key highway next to the city.



Kyiv Post | By Yuliana Romanyshyn
Sources: Google Maps, Ministry of Defence, slovaidilo.ua, Kyiv Post

Avdiyivka is 14 kilometers from Donetsk, the separatist stronghold. At least eight Ukrainian soldiers and one civilian have been killed in fighting since Jan. 29. Russia occupies Crimea and part of the Donbas (in red).

The clashes escalated into massive exchanges of artillery fire from both sides, with Grad rockets and tanks being used.

The clashes were the first major escalation of the Russian-instigated war in eastern Ukraine this year, and occurred just months after another flare-up of fighting near the city of Svitlodarsk, some 60 kilometers to the northeast of Avdiyivka.

In its most recent reports, monitors from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine said the number of explosions on Jan. 31 was "the highest yet recorded." In Avdiyivka alone, on Jan. 31 they counted 200 explosions caused by multiple launch rocket systems.

One woman was killed early on Feb. 1 and eight civilians were wounded by shelling in the period of Jan. 29 to Feb. 2, the Donetsk Oblast National Police reported. Dozens of houses were damaged. The shelling also downed power lines, leaving the city without electricity, and disrupted the city's water and heating supplies, with temperatures outside dipping at one point to around -18 degrees Celsius.

The authorities set up heating tents, where residents could heat up and get free tea, bread, and buckwheat porridge, and also charge their mobile phones.

Polianska spent some time in one of these tents before volunteers helped to find a minivan to bring her and her daughter to the city of Sloviansk, along a road pocked by fresh shell craters. She arrived in Sloviansk at dusk and was hosted in a local center for internally displaced people.

"Probably the best thing after this crazy day under fire by Grads is the fact that I remained alive," said Rozvadovska, the volunteer, summing up the trip.

As of Feb. 2, 175 people, including 94 children, had been evacuated from Avdiyivka, the State Emergency Service reported.

But most residents are hesitant to leave the city, fearing to lose their houses and jobs at the Avdiyivka coke plant, the enterprise, belonging to Ukraine's richest oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, that is the lifeblood of the city economy.

Avdiyivka, which was freed from occupation by Russian-backed separatists in late July 2014, has been a hotspot of fighting several times during the war.

Many locals had to leave the embattled city in 2014 and 2015, but later returned and repaired their houses, hoping the worst part of the war was over. "People have just come back and repaired their flats and

here we go again," Polianska said.

Polianska, who also used to work at the local coke plant but who in recent years was largely homebound due to a disability caused by a heart disease, said she had repaired the roof and windows of her house after a massive barrage of shells hit her street in late May.

Those who live in Old Avdiyivka, the part of the city located closest to the frontline, don't want to leave it, and their pets, cattle, and gardens.

"Everybody has dogs and cats as a must," Polianska said. "Plus people have cows, goats, rabbits, chicken, and ducks." She added that her godson had promised to look after her own cat and dog, and keep her house heated.

A cease-fire that was announced on Feb. 1 allowed the emergency workers to start repair work. But as of Feb. 2, renewed shelling was still preventing repair electricians from fixing downed power transmission lines, Donetsk Oblast Governor Pavlo Zhebrivsky reported on his Facebook page.

"If it gets at least a little bit better, we will definitely go back," Polianska said. But while the fighting continues, she will try to arrange for her daughter Rita to go to school in Sloviansk, and remain where she is — away from the fighting, away from Avdiyivka. ■

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Avdiyivka becomes the center of a major escalation in Russia's war; at least 10 killed

BY CHRISTOPHER MILLER
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AVDIYIVKA, Ukraine — Nadia Volkova collapses to her knees atop the blood-stained snow and examines the body of her 60-year-old mother, Katya. Bricks keep the winter breeze from blowing a patterned blanket off the shrapnel-riddled corpse.

Volkova, 24, strokes her mother's arm, her body trembling, her blood-shot eyes welling with tears. She waits for a coroner to take the body away.

War returned with a fury four days ago to the eastern Ukrainian city of Avdiyivka, home to the Avdiyivka coke plant and 700 kilometers southeast of Kyiv in Donetsk Oblast.

On Feb. 1, around 7:30 a.m., a salvo of rockets rained down on the city with now just 22,000 people, down from a pre-war high of 35,000 residents.

Katya Volkova, a mother and grandmother, was killed on the road from her house as she walked to the market.

Nearly three years since first erupting, the war here in eastern Ukraine has exploded anew, with deadly fighting between government forces and Russia-backed separatists reported up and down the 450-kilometer front line.

Avdiyivka has been hit the hardest. Since Jan. 28, day and night, outgoing and incoming artillery salvos have been almost ceaseless. The industrial city has been transformed into a place of broken glass and mourning, where armored vehicles clog traffic and soldiers outnumber locals on the streets.

In intensity and bloodshed, the new fighting has echoes of another battle two years ago — for Debaltseve.

That fight, for the strategic railway junction 70 kilometers northeast of here, ended in the deaths of hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers after they were encircled by Russian troops and their separatist proxies.

It led to a peace deal known as the Minsk II agreements that has led to nothing resembling peace.

But Avdiyivka is not that bad, says Petro Ivanovich, who was awoken overnight to the sound of rockets crashing into the schoolyard adjacent to his apartment building.

"It's not Debaltseve. Not yet," says Petro, who like many residents gave only his first and middle names. The dark craters and the shrapnel spray from them easily stand out in the snow.

The empty field looks like a moonscape.

In all, at least 10 civilians and fighters on both the government and Russia-backed separatist sides have been killed since Jan. 29. The Ukrainian military said two more soldiers died in fighting overnight, and

at least two more were wounded. It was unclear if the new casualties were included in the updated death toll.

On the separatists' side, no casualty figures have been announced, though a top commander confirmed the deaths of three fighters, including a fellow commander.

Residents say both sides are to blame.

Nearly two dozen homes were roofless due to the shelling, Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council chief Oleksandr Turchynov told RFE/RL during an impromptu visit on Feb. 1.

But nearly the entire city was without electricity and heat as temperatures plunged to minus 18 degrees Celsius.

The Avdiyivka coke plant, the largest employer in the city, turns coal into coke, but also has a heating unit that keeps much of the city warm.

General Director Musa Magomedov says his 4,000 employees are working overtime trying to keep the city heated. But he says the plant is working at only 20 percent capacity after shelling knocked out the electricity.

If the plant were to shut down, Magomedov says, the city would empty out.

At a pop-up humanitarian-aid station, more than 2,000 people lined up at midday for soup, bread, and rations at field kitchens operated by soldiers. Scores squeezed into a warming tent meant to hold only a couple dozen.

Emergency official Vladislav Husinsky said 175 people, including 88 children, have evacuated to nearby cities since morning. By nightfall, the number will increase as buses from nearby cities of Svyatohirsk and Mariupol arrive.

Not everyone wants to or can afford to leave, however.

As she waves goodbye to a neighbor, pensioner Alla Aleksandrovna says she will stay to look after her daughter and granddaughter. The three of them survive on her \$48-per-month pension and live in her paid-for apartment.

"We have survived, and we will survive," she says.

Others aren't so sure.

Pavlo Zhebrivskyy, the chain-smoking Donetsk regional governor, tells a crowd of mostly elderly women in sheepskin jackets and fur hats that the authorities are working to restore electricity and heating to the city. He is repeatedly heckled.

"But what about the shelling?" one woman shouts.

"Yes, how are we supposed to sleep at night?" another screams.

"What we need is an end to this war," another yells. "We are being slaughtered!" ■



A Ukrainian soldier on Jan. 31 helps a woman carry her belongings to a tent set up to warm residents of the Donetsk Oblast city of Avdiivka, a city of 22,000 people, on Jan. 31, following heavy shelling of civilian areas by Russian-backed forces. Shelling damaged Avdiyivka Coke Plant, a main source of home heating. (AFP)

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Editorials

Europe stiffens spine

Even if Donald J. Trump capitulates to Russia, which is a real danger, it doesn't mean that Europe will follow suit. It is right to distance itself from an American president who spouts praise for Russian dictator Vladimir Putin, a war criminal whose forces and proxies have killed thousands of civilians in Ukraine and Syria alone.

We are encouraged by several recent statements from European politicians about the need to keep tough sanctions on Russia for its war against Ukraine.

One of the most recent came from Martin Schulz, the centrist Social Democratic Party of Germany candidate who will challenge incumbent Chancellor Angela Merkel if his party does well in the Bundestag federal elections on Sept. 24.

Schulz called Trump's policies "un-American" and warned against lifting sanctions imposed against Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis. "If Trump is now driving a wrecking ball through this set of values, then I will tell him as chancellor: That's not the policy of Germany and Europe," Schulz added.

Bravo! He looks perfectly acceptable, along with incumbent Angela Merkel, as German chancellor. They will keep German policy safe from Putin apologists like Gazprom lobbyist Gerhard "Gasbag" Schroeder and ex-Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

Another person we've got our eye on is Emmanuel Macron, a 39-year-old independent candidate for president in France. He looks like the best bet now to replace Francois Hollande in the April 23 election. It would be dangerous for the free world -- and Ukraine especially -- if Putin apologists Marine Le Pen or Francois Fillon got in office.

Trump makes some valid criticisms of NATO as obsolete and the European Union as bureaucratic and dysfunctional.

But NATO is necessary in this dangerous world. The answer is not to disband it but to make it more relevant, agile and better-resourced to respond to modern threats. Those include terrorism and Russian state terror. All NATO members should be spending at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense.

The EU is dysfunctional, certainly, but as United Kingdom residents are learning the hard way as they contemplate a hard exit, the 28 nation political bloc is the continent's best hope for upholding free trade and democratic values. Those values are not going to be upheld by many other nations, China and Russia chief among them.

We're in a globalized world and there's no going back. Nations should make trade and security agreements in their best interests -- and in the best interests of their working-class citizens, which hasn't happened. But Ukraine's example is a stark reminder of how brutal life can be without being part of the EU or NATO.

Stop Putin

The flare-up in the fighting in Avdiyivka, at the Donbas war front, has reminded political leaders and the international public that Europe's only war is still going on after nearly three years.

It should also remind them that now is no time for talk of relaxing sanctions on Russia -- the aggressor state, the state that started the war, and the state that keeps the war going.

Ukraine has announced cease-fires unilaterally several times, only to have them ignored by the Russian forces and their proxies.

Any cease-fire agreed by both sides quickly breaks down -- and it is the Russian-backed forces who fire first. The latest example came on Feb. 1, when a cease-fire agreed between the sides so that urgent repairs could be carried out to restore electricity supplies to the homes of Avdiyivka was broken after only three-and-a-half hours: Russian-backed forces shelled the Ukrainian repair crews, forcing them to flee.

There is no doubt which side is to blame for the war continuing.

None of Ukraine's friends in the West, however, would name that side in their statements of concern following the latest clashes in Avdiyivka. Many called for "both sides" to stop the fighting, when they should have pointed an unwavering finger of blame at the one side that is keeping this war going -- Russia.

Until the West puts the blame for this war where it properly belongs, on Russia, and puts more pressure on the Kremlin to end its aggression, there will be more Avdiyivkas.



NEWS ITEM: Two judges caught with bribes were released by courts earlier this month because the High Council of Justice said they could not be held in custody without its approval. Civic activists say the council is helping corrupt officials and violating the Constitution.



NEWS ITEM: The British government invited U.S. President Donald Trump for a state visit to the U.K. It puts Queen Elizabeth II, who acts as a hostess during state visits, in a difficult position as protests are expected when he visits.



NEWS ITEM: British tabloid The Sun put Kyiv on top of the list of the worst cities for tourism, writing that the city was "partly in ruins" because of the war and anti-government protests. The newspaper later removed the article from their website.



NEWS ITEM: U.S. President Donald Trump had a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Jan. 28. On that same day, the Russian-separatist forces started an assault on Avdiyivka, a frontline city in Donetsk Oblast held by the Ukrainian army. The assault went on for days and was the biggest escalation in months, killing at an estimated 20 people.

KyivPost

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Photographers: Kostyantyn Chernichkin, Volodymyr Petrov, Anastasia Vlasova

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Graphic Artist: Stella Shabliovska

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Reformer of the week

Volodymyr Omelyan

Infrastructure Minister Volodymyr Omelyan has criticized Wojciech Balczun, CEO of railway monopoly Ukrzaliznytsia.

Omelyan and ex-Deputy Infrastructure Minister Volodymyr Shulmeister have accused Balczun of protecting the interests of Yaroslav Dubnevych and Bohdan Dubnevych, lawmakers from President Petro Poroshenko's Bloc, at his firm. Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman, another Poroshenko ally, backed Balczun in the conflict. The Dubnevych brothers and Balczun deny the graft accusations.

Last year Omelyan also supported the cancellation of an allegedly rigged Hr 1 billion tender at Yuzhny Port won by a firm linked to Serhiy Faermark, a lawmaker from the People's Front party.

Meanwhile, Shulmeister exposed pervasive corruption schemes in Ukrainian infrastructure in a Feb. 1 interview with the liga.net online newspaper, saying that \$2 billion was being stolen at Ukrzaliznytsia annually. He accused Poroshenko allies Ihor Kononenko and Mykhailo Beilin; Leonid Yurushev, an associate of ex-Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and tycoons Rinat Akhmetov and Ihor Kolomoisky of having vested interests in infrastructure and trying to influence the Infrastructure Ministry. They deny the accusations.

After ex-Infrastructure Minister Andrei Pivovarsky's team tried to remove an alleged corruption scheme at the Ukrainian Danube Shipping Company and fire its CEO Dmytro Barinov, a protégé of People's Front lawmaker Maxim Burbak, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov heavily criticized them and told them not to do that, Shulmeister said.

— Oleg Sukhov



Anti-reformer of the week

Natalia Korchak

The National Agency for Preventing Corruption, headed by Natalia Korchak, has so far failed to check a single official's electronic asset declaration since the declaration system was launched last September.

Korchak is a protégé of the People's Front party, while her deputy Ruslan Radetzky is a loyalist of President Petro Poroshenko.

One obstacle for the agency's failure to check declarations is that the rules for such checks have not been approved yet. The Justice Ministry on Jan. 19 refused to register the agency's draft rules, saying that they set indefinite terms for inspections and did not include looking into unlawful enrichment and conflicts of interest.

Instead of checking declarations, the National Agency for Preventing Corruption has focused on launching two minor administrative cases against an opponent of Poroshenko, lawmaker Sergii Leshchenko. He believes them to be politically motivated.

Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman lambasted Korchak for her inaction on Feb. 1. He also wondered if the second stage of e-declarations, scheduled to be completed by April 1, would not be derailed similarly to the first one last year. The second stage applies to lower-level officials.

Previously Ukrainian authorities had been dragging their feet on launching the e-declaration system since March 2015, when Korchak's agency was formally set up, until September 2016. Korchak and other top officials were accused of intentionally derailing the process. Korchak denies all the accusations.

— Oleg Sukhov



VOX populi

WITH WILL PONOMARENKO



Can America and Russia reach a deal to end the war in Ukraine?



Oleh Volynets,
airline company manager
"It's hard for me to even imagine Russia and America finding a common language

on any grounds, including war in Ukraine. These two countries are so different that tension between them is inevitable. And if Putin really decided to trade some concessions on Ukrainian matters, he would have nothing to offer Trump, who is a well-known dealmaker."



Olga Mozhukhina,
businesswoman
"I don't think Ukraine even came up in the conversation between Putin

and Trump. We're too tiny to be a good bargaining chip in this worldwide game. If the United States really needed to push Putin aside and found it worth doing this – the war in the Donbas would end in weeks."



Bohdan Tkachiuk,
former military officer
"It seems to me that the ties between the Trump and Putin administrations

are not yet very strong... Even now, with the situation in Avdiivka, there are no reasons for there to be a deal between the United States and Russia over Ukraine."



Halyna Vysotska,
pensioner
"War had been unleashed in the Donbas long before Trump ran for president. The

person in charge of the United States has never been a thing to stop Putin making war. People are very delusional about this – they expect some big guy from abroad to bring peace and quiet to Ukraine. We'd be better off demanding a decent military policy from our own government, which is dragging out the conflict and sacrificing our youth on the frontline in vain."



Olena Spivakova,
pensioner
"I think that in this war, everything is connected. Any factor can be used as leverage during

the negotiations between Moscow and Washington. I strongly believe that the escalation near Avdiivka is a type of blackmailing and threat by Putin against Trump. America does not want to get involved in this war, and Russia is trying to discourage it even more."

Language matters in describing this war



BERMET TALANT
BERMET.TALANT@GMAIL.COM

As propagandists know well, words can be weapons. But the careless or incorrect use of language by a well-meaning journalist can cost lives as well.

For instance, Russia's war on Ukraine has been incorrectly termed a civil war. It is not.

It is a war artificially created by the Kremlin in Ukraine, similar to the ones that have broken out in several states neighboring Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Calling the war in the Donbas a "civil war" ignores the fact that Russia is the aggressor, and an active party in that war – just as the Kremlin wants. It helps the Kremlin continue this war, killing more Ukrainians than the 10,000 who have already lost their lives.

Yet coverage of Ukraine in some international media, almost three years into the war, still incorrectly portrays the war as a civil war between Ukrainian forces and some pro-Russian separatists.

Here are a couple of examples published in January alone:

"Obama first tried out the 'Russia doesn't make anything' line in a 2014 interview with the Economist, as civil war was raging in eastern Ukraine... In just the past few years, (Russia) has managed to enter two wars, in Ukraine and Syria." Joshua Keating, writing in Slate, "How Vladimir Putin engineered Russia's return to global power" published on Jan. 2.

"...in Ukraine to fight against pro-Russian rebels in the European



A Ukrainian border guard talks to a pedestrian at a checkpoint in Hnutove in Donetsk Oblast on Feb. 1. (UNIAN)

country's civil war." Joe Leahy writing in the Financial Times "Brazil neo-Nazi claim challenges myth of nation's racial harmony" published on Jan. 10.

These incorrect characterizations are happening even amid media hand wringing over the "post-truth" world.

Many saw an ominous prophecy by George Orwell come true when the spokeswoman for U.S. President Donald Trump, Kellyanne Conway, described the lies of U.S. White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer about the size of the crowd at Trump's presidential inauguration as "alternative facts."

In response to Conway's comment, New York Times book critic Michiko Kautani on Jan. 26 wrote a comprehensive review on why Orwell's "1984" is a must-read in 2017, quoting the writer's grim description of a reality in which facts and truth are

blurred by a totalitarian propaganda machine, and language becomes one of the primary tools of manipulation.

But only few days later, on Feb. 1, the New York Times ran an article by its Moscow-based correspondent Andrew E. Kramer under the headline "Ukraine Civil War Heats Up as U.S. Seeks Thaw with Russia." The same trope is used by Russian propaganda outlets like RT and Sputnik.

Although the headline was later altered to "fighting," the article spread around the internet with the original headline, and can still be found on other websites.

The language we use in reporting political issues shapes reality, and has a direct effect on how the world reacts to political events.

This is what Orwell highlighted in his 1946 essay "Politics and the English language," where he wrote that "the language can corrupt the thought." He called for simplicity and

clarity in written English.

Phrases like "Ukrainian civil war" or "pro-Russian insurgents" are political language, which, as Orwell wisely noted, is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable.

When we use these phrases, it is as if we remove Russia from the narrative and represent the armed conflict as solely an internal crisis of one country, where some separatist groups have simply demonstrated a wish to join another state.

When we use these phrases we forget that Russia is fully accountable for the occupation of Ukrainian territories not only in the Donbas, but in Crimea, and refuses to implement the peace agreement to which it agreed.

Last November, the International Criminal Court in Hague recognized the fighting in eastern Ukraine as an international armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

NATO has recognized, too, that the Russian government deliberately destabilized eastern Ukraine by providing fighters with ammunition and command structures. There isn't an independent separatist movement in eastern Ukraine, nor there are "Ukrainian-backed forces" or "pro-Russian rebels." The Ukrainian army is fighting for Ukrainians to defend the Ukrainian nation from Russia's invasion. Saying it any other way obscures the truth.

The issue is not merely one of semantics. Correctly describing what is happening shows respect for 10,000 Ukrainians who have lost their lives in the war.

We can't bring them back, but we can accurately describe how they lost their lives, and simply and clearly name who is to blame.

Bermet Talant is a Kyiv Post staff writer. ■

Women in Business in Ukraine

Editor's Note: This is the first of a series of profiles about influential female business leaders in Ukraine

Chemicals player Luba Michailova on business, art, being fearless

BY ISOBEL KOSHIW
KOSHIW@KYIVPOST.COM

Like many big players now in business in Ukraine, Luba Michailova was in her 20s when the Soviet Union collapsed.

Donetsk-born Michailova said she had no choice but to "try something" in business. Her companies would later control more than 10 percent of the global carbon products market.

Michailova's chemical plants, along with her famed Donetsk art platform, Izolyatsia, are now in the hands of the Russian-backed forces. Taking what they could carry, she and 70 Izolyatsia employees relocated to Kyiv's Podil riverside area in 2014. She now dreams of redeveloping the entire stretch of Kyiv's old docklands.

Starting in 1990s

Michailova is one of a relatively small number of women who have made it into Ukraine's business elite. Asked how she survived the bloody gang wars of the 1990s in Donetsk and the subsequent coming of the oligarchic order, she described a mixture of creating a robust business model and childhood connections.

Her father was a well-known Donetsk "red director," a Soviet-era factory manager, and through his connections she started a barter business in the early 1990s. She would exchange byproducts from the major Donbas industrial plants and supply workers with desperately needed consumer goods. Once she had a grasp of how to

export and import goods, she decided to develop her own chemical manufacturers.

"All the boys chose coal or steel because that's what they grew up with. But chemicals required a little bit more imagination and there was less competition, so we chose the chemicals field," Michailova told the Kyiv Post.

First plant

Her first success was with the Kremenchug Carbon Black Plant, which she privatized with a partner using profits from her barter business.

At the plant, Michailova changed the production standards originally designed for Soviet Zhiguli cars and implemented ISO and ASTM systems. The plant became a supplier for Michelin and Pirelli, two of the world's largest tire manufacturers.

The business was valued by Ernst & Young at \$80 million in 2012, but the deal to go public fell through after Michailova's partner pulled out. In total, Michailova redeveloped four plants with around 1,000 employees.

"My specialty was to take over old Soviet industrial places that had not been taken by the big guys, because it was not obviously easy to make a business out of them when it wasn't producing steel or mining ore," she said. "Instead, it required some technological processes, changing the standards."

Donbas gang wars

In the late 1990s, the violent war for assets in the Donbas peaked. The new Donbas elite were of a



Luba Michailova stands in Izolyatsia's etching workshop in front of works by in-house artist Anna Khodkova on Jan. 27. Michailova founded Izolyatsia, the arts platform, in Donetsk in 2010, along with British investors. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)

different background to the men of her father's generation, according to Michailova: "They came from problem families, and this was reflected in their attitude towards business."

"A lot of young businessmen were killed," she recalled. "And in the end we saw that two or three business empires had been built... Then later these businesses converted with (the help of) some 'McKinsey' into something nice and beautiful with 'social responsibility.' Then they cut this '90s period out as if it never happened."

The issue with the "monopolists" who now controlled the Donbas region, said Michailova, was not that they didn't like women, but that they didn't like the idea of a person not being part of a gang.

Michailova decided she would be better protected by developing a name for herself and contacts in the West. She became a Greek citizen through ancestry in 1999, which

means she is considered a foreign investor under Ukrainian law. She also joined dozens of international trade and chemicals associations. Slowly, the monopolists' need for legitimization overtook their desire for control, she said.

"You (as a woman) have to not be afraid of being threatened. Because you are threatened by the tax authorities, local men, the local State Security Services, the police, the prosecutors," she said. "I went to court against the prosecutor, the tax authorities. My strongest (asset) was that I did it legally and loudly."

Art benefactor

By the time of the Russian-backed separatist takeover of the Donbas in 2014, Michailova had two plants in Ukraine and several international chemicals trading companies. She also had Izolyatsia, which was housed in one part of her father's seven-hectare derelict insulation materials factory.

Michailova started collecting socialist realist art in 1990s, some of which was given to her by Donetsk factory bosses in lieu of cash. If she could have studied anything, she said, it would have been culture, not macroeconomics.

Izolyatsia brought several internationally acclaimed artists to Donetsk and has continued to do so since it moved to Kyiv. It also supports more than 70 active Ukrainian artists who work in house.

The separatists have since destroyed all the art installations in Donetsk, said Michailova, and burnt their books.

Izolyatsia is used by the separtists as a place for keeping prisoners and executions, according to Michailova.

New elites

Michailova laments Ukraine's political elites for their inability to change.

Though she and other businesspeople are forbidden from operating their factories in the Donbas, "a chosen few," namely companies like Rinat Akhmetov's Metinvest, are allowed to continue because they are close to the "king," she said.

If she could write one book,

Michailova said it would be about the post-Soviet Ukrainian elites, told through her experiences of traveling business class from Kyiv.

When a new elite comes to power, she said, they start off in tracksuits and vyshyvanki (traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirts), then they move to Louis Vuitton bags. Next, according to her, is to have three babysitters seated in business class, and finally they upgrade their tennis partner and start to use laptops.

"And flip again, and again there are new elites. And we start again with the tracksuits. And when I fly now... I say poor Ukraine. If we'd stopped with the first elites, their children would have already graduated from Oxford and our elites would know how to behave. And it's like this every time. And I almost cry. Because every next elite is worse than the previous. That's my opinion from (flying) business class."

Women in business

For now, Michailova's operational assets in Ukraine are limited to Izolyatsia and its commercial initiative Izone which she hopes are just the starting point of a larger development and conservation project in the capital's historic Podil district.

But meanwhile a huge part of Kyiv's old shipyard is widely believed to have been privatized by a company close to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and will be used to build a business and shopping complex, according to Ukrainian online newspaper Ukrainska Pravda.

"It's like my business class flight. I don't want to come back and go in a circle again... All my companies failed because the environment was not ready, it was too fast compared to the environment. So I've decided we will do it a different way - we will grow together with the community and people."

Ukrainian women have made some headway in politics, said Michailova, but little in business. Part of the reason, she said, is because men like to promote men who are just like them.

"The women's community is not developed enough. There is almost no movement" ■



World in Ukraine: Switzerland

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PrivatBank's bondholders lose nearly \$600 million

BY JOSH KOVENSKY
KOVENSKY@KYIVPOST.COM

The government's takeover of PrivatBank may have bought a brief period of stability to Ukraine's financial sector, but it also left a \$595 million hole in the pockets of some investors.

The National Bank of Ukraine claims that the investors – who lost that collective sum after the state converted the bank's eurobonds into share capital – are connected to PrivatBank's former owner, the oligarch Igor Kolomoisky.

But the investors themselves say that they are not and that the central bank has treated them “carelessly” and “with disrespect” as they attempt to recoup losses in the hundreds of millions.

Frankfurt-based Commerzbank AG seized 17 million euros from PrivatBank's correspondent accounts in the bank to reclaim the losses, according to a document leaked on Feb. 2. The bank declined to comment.

The question is: are the investors really just fronts for Kolomoisky, set up as a mechanism to support PrivatBank? Or has the national bank screwed over legitimate investors?

Inside buyers?

The \$595 million in five-year bonds came in three issues – two in 2013 and one in 2016.

After the government took over PrivatBank on Dec. 18 in a move to prevent the bank's precarious pecuniary position from endangering the country's financial system, it converted the \$595 million worth of bonds into the bank's share capital.

The NBU argued it had determined that the majority of the buyers were related parties, and that the entire debt issue was a complicated scheme to raise more money to fund the bank.

Suspicion that PrivatBank had rigged the bond sales, which occurred in 2013 and 2016, clouded the deal almost as soon as it



National Bank of Ukraine Governor Valeria Gontareva and Finance Minister Oleksandr Danylyuk announce PrivatBank's nationalization at a Dec. 19 press conference. Gontareva said that the government would defend itself in court against lawsuits stemming from eurobond losses. (UNIAN)

occurred. A UK-based firm, linked to PrivatBank according to its disclosures to the British government, issued the bonds.

At the time, many saw the bank as being a giant vacuum cleaner of money, sucking up Ukrainians' deposits to finance Kolomoisky's operations in ferroalloys, media, and oil.

“There was a lot of skepticism to how the deal was done, because there were a lot of inside buyers,” said Nick Piazza, the CEO of Kyiv-based investment banking firm SP Advisors.

But the eurobond holders themselves deny that they were Kolomoisky's pawns.

Who got nothing

After the government took over PrivatBank, the bondholders formed

a committee, hiring international law firm Dechert to represent them.

Not all of the debt holders are known. But some names have already emerged.

Funds Pala assets, Pioneer Investments, and First Geneva Capital Partners are all on the committee.

All of the above declined to comment on the record for this story.

The firms argue that they are legitimate foreign investors who lost hundreds of millions after the nationalization, without the NBU even attempting to negotiate the issue.

Alexander Paraschiy, an analyst at Concorde Capital, wrote that the independent bondholders “appeared to be the only creditors that got zero from their contribution to the bank.”

“All the other creditors will recover 100 percent, including the bank's depositors, or even more, as related parties took in much more in the form of loans from the bank than they lost during the bail-in,” he wrote.

Oleksandr Zavadetsky, a former NBU official who was the first chief of the bank's related-party monitoring unit, criticized the bank's handling of the situation.

“There should be an opportunity to appeal against any decision on who is a related party,” Zavadetsky said, adding that the bank went ahead with nationalization while “limiting” that opportunity.

Cargill cuts deal?

Further aggravating many of the eurobond holders is the case of American agricultural and financial services conglomerate Cargill.

The Minnesota-based trader – America's largest private corporation – has been making and selling



Billionaire Ihor Kolomoisky bankrupted PrivatBank, Ukraine's largest bank, which now belongs to the state. (UNIAN)

sunflower seed oil in Ukraine since 1991. In recent years, the company's financial services division has expanded into the Ukrainian banking sector.

After PrivatBank was nationalized, Cargill found itself in a similar situation as the eurobond holders – the government had bailed in PrivatBank's debts to Cargill, causing the company to lose around \$70 million.

But Cargill managed to squeeze itself out of the loss. On Jan. 13, the company sent a letter to PrivatBank CEO Oleksandr Shlapak, the NBU, and the U.S. Ambassador, requesting “clarification” on whether the bank would return the money.

By that point, since the debts had been bailed-in already, Cargill's letter appears to have been more of a shot

across the bow than a straightforward inquiry.

Journalist Oleksandr Dubinsky, of the Kolomoisky-owned 1+1 Media Group, published a leaked copy of Cargill's letter Jan. 25. On Jan. 26, PrivatBank issued a statement saying it had “restored” \$70 million in the bank's accounts, attributing the conflict to a “technical issue.”

Cargill did not reply to an emailed request and a telephoned request for comment.

The eurobond holders, however, are using Cargill's case to argue that the NBU should pay them back as well.

“Without the leaked letter we wouldn't have known about this,” said one eurobond holder, who wished to remain anonymous, citing a lack of authorization to speak publicly about the matter.

“We demand our bonds as well.”

Bad assets

The eurobond holders have threatened to file an arbitration lawsuit against the NBU in London, though they say that they will not pursue other paths of litigation.

A lawyer for the bondholders, Oleksandr Moroz, told the Kyiv Post on Jan. 26 that he would seek to freeze PrivatBank's correspondent accounts over the matter. Commerzbank in Germany froze Euro 17 million in PrivatBank cash on Feb. 2.

In response to the case, NBU Governor Valeriya Gontareva said the bank would defend its position in court.

“They should ask Mr. Kolomoisky where the money came from,” she said on Jan. 26.

The NBU has also said that the government was forced to bail-in the bonds by Ukrainian law.

Oleksandr Savchenko, a former EBRD Ukraine country director and the current rector of the Kyiv International Institute of Business, pointed out that the country's history of eurobond issues leaves a lot of be desired.

“In the past, there have been eurobond issues where top officials were most of the holders,” Savchenko said. “It's possible that all this is some sort of political strategy.”

Dechert, the law firm representing the bondholders, recently sent a letter to the Ukrainian government. The lawyers argue that since the government recognizes the Cargill bail-in as “invalid... there is and can be no reason in law for a different and unequal treatment” of the eurobonds.

But Eavex Capital analyst Dmitry Churin, argue that there's no reason to feel sorry for the bondholders, who had every opportunity for months before the bank's nationalization to pull out. Information about insider lending at the bank had been known on the Ukrainian market for years before the nationalization.

“I do not see how the bondholders can blame regulators,” Churin told the Kyiv Post. “It's the bondholders who invested in bad assets.” ■



Kyivans wait in line at a PrivatBank ATM on Dec. 19, one day after nationalization. The government says the bank collapsed because of rampant insider lending to borrowers close to former owner Ihor Kolomoisky. The bailout may cost taxpayers \$5.6 billion. (Volodymyr Petrov)

Key facts about escalation in Russia's war on Ukraine

BY EUROMAIDAN PRESS

A serious escalation in Russia's long-running war on Ukraine started on Jan. 29 in Avdiivka, a city with a pre-war population of 35,000 people on the edge of Ukrainian government-controlled territory in the eastern Donbas.

The city, located 700 kilometers southeast of Kyiv, is close to the demarcation line and just 6 kilometers to the north of the city of Donetsk – a stronghold of Russian-backed forces in the Donbas.

According to official reports, eight Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and dozens wounded since the fighting intensified in the war that has claimed at least 10,000 lives. Media have also reported the deaths of two civilians due to heavy shelling of residential areas in Avdiivka.

The fighting has also badly disrupted services in the city, with electricity first being cut, and then heating and water supplies being shut down.

Here are key facts about the escalation:

Strategic importance

Avdiivka is of strategic importance for both sides. Anastasia Magazova, a correspondent for German broadcaster Deutsche Welle who is currently reporting from Avdiivka, writes that the city is home to the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical Plant, which is one of the biggest coke producers in Europe and an important supplier of coke for Ukraine's steel industry. Avdiivka is also a major transport hub in Donetsk Oblast. According to the Minsk agreements, Avdiivka should be government-controlled territory. The city has been shelled by Russian-backed armed groups on numerous occasions, and has been a flashpoint for fighting ever since the Minsk peace agreements, which were supposed to impose a ceasefire, were first signed in September 2014.

Civilians attacked

Russian-backed fighters started launching infantry attacks near



Rescue workers give food to local residents in the Ukrainian town of Avdiivka on Feb. 1 as government forces and Russian-backed separatists exchanged mortar and rocket fire for a fourth day around the flashpoint eastern city of Avdiivka just north of the Kremlin-separatist controlled city of Donetsk. (AFP)

Avdiivka on Jan. 29. Over the next day, the fighting escalated to shelling by Grad rockets, with residential districts in Avdiivka coming under fire. There have also been reports of increased fighting near the southern Azov Sea port city of Mariupol in Donetsk Oblast, and along parts of the front line in Luhansk Oblast. Social media users in Donetsk have posted several videos of Grad rockets being launched from within residential districts in Donetsk, presumably in the direction of Avdiivka. There is also evidence that residential districts in Donetsk itself have been hit by return fire from Ukrainian forces.

Humanitarian crisis

The humanitarian situation in Avdiivka has deteriorated rapidly.

As a result of the shelling, critical infrastructure in the city was destroyed, resulting in a humanitarian crisis: many civilians have no water, electricity, or heating – a result of damage to the Donetsk water filtration station and the shutting down of the coke plant after it was shelled (the plant generates much of the heat supply for the city.) At the same time, temperatures plunged overnight on Jan. 29 to -18 degrees Celsius. The Ukrainian government has since brought in field kitchens and heated tents to provide food and shelter to city residents affected by the fighting. The delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Ukraine has expressed concern over the situation and

is sending humanitarian help. Meanwhile, Ukraine prepared to evacuate up to 12,000 people from the city, according to Ukrainian official sources. Reporters on the ground say that some inhabitants are already leaving the city.

Reason for attacks

The attacks on Avdiivka by the Russian-backed armed groups could be a response to Ukrainian advances into new positions in the "gray zone" between the two sides, some observers say. Christopher Miller, a correspondent for RFE/RL, writes that "since mid-December Ukraine's armed forces have edged further into parts of the gray zone in or near the war-torn cities of Avdiivka, Debalzeve, Dokuchaievsk, Horlivka and Mariupol, shrinking the space between them and the (Russian-backed) fighters." Alexander Hug, the principal deputy chief monitor of the OSCE SMM to Ukraine, quoted in RFE/RL article, said that "the direct result of forward moves is an escalation in tensions." Ukraine, however, responded that troops were not violating the Minsk agreements as they were not crossing the demarcation line and were moving inside territory that was designated as government-controlled under the Minsk agreements. The Ukrainian regional administrations in the war zone also say that it is vital to exert government control over towns in the gray zone in order to stop large-scale smuggling.

15 minute cease-fire

Cease-fire guarantees given by Donetsk-based forces and the Russian military did not last. There were several attempts to establish a cease-fire, but they were broken after 15 minutes or less, according to Hromadske journalists reporting from Avdiivka. This was also report-

ed by Pavlo Zhebrivsky, the head of Ukraine's military and civil administration in the government-controlled part of Donetsk oblast. A video by Anastasia Magazova documented ceasefire violations during the daytime on Jan. 31.

Timing of escalation

Both sides blame each other for the escalation. The surge in fighting took place during an official visit by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to Germany, one of the "Normandy Four" countries (Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia). Poroshenko cut his official visit to Berlin short and held a briefing with military representatives to direct the government's response. Ukraine's foreign ministry issued a statement saying that "the current escalation in Donbas is a clear indication of Russia's continued disregard of its commitments under the Minsk agreements." In turn, Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesman, accused Ukrainian soldiers of launching an attack on Russian-backed fighters across the Avdiivka frontline. Paradoxically, Russian media like TV channel Zvezda also blamed Ukraine for shelling Avdiivka itself, implying that Ukraine was attacking a city in its own territory. Russian media also continues to produce fake news reports: the same TV channel Zvezda, for example, published a photo of Avdiivka by Kostiantyn Reutskyi, a Ukrainian activist, and falsely claimed it showed damage to a town controlled by Russian-backed forces.

Source: The summary was prepared by Vitaliy Rybak, Volodymyr Yermolenko and Alya Shandra of Euromaidan Press, using material from Internews Ukraine, and first published online by EuroMaidan Press on Feb. 1. ■



Avdiivka residents are being evacuated on Feb. 1 as Ukrainian government forces and Russian-backed separatists exchanged mortar and rocket fire for a fourth day around the city of 22,000 people, located just north of the separatist stronghold of Donetsk. (AFP)

Stanford University offers 3 fellowships to build Ukraine

BY RAHIM RAHEMTULLA
RAHIMKYIVPOST@GMAIL.COM

Stanford University is joining in the efforts to transform Ukraine into a modern European democracy.

Through its newly launched "Ukrainian Emerging Leaders Program," it will give three successful applicants from Ukraine the chance to undertake a 10-month fellowship starting in fall 2018. All expenses are paid and a \$7,000 monthly stipend is provided. The program is aimed at "mid-career practitioners working actively as policy-makers, legal professionals, entrepreneurs, and leaders of civil society organizations."

Outside assistance

One of the program's chief architects is Michael McFaul, the U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014, who is now a senior fellow at Stanford. He has long been an advocate of more Western support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's war.

Oleksandr Akymenko, a Ukrainian media entrepreneur and former Stanford fellow who helped initiate the program, told the Kyiv Post that McFaul had been very supportive.

"We went to a public meeting with McFaul. He wanted to know how we could help Ukraine," Akymenko said. "He wanted us to be successful. He strongly believes in change in the post-Soviet space."

Akymenko and his wife drew up a concept before handing it over to McFaul, who developed the idea further and enlisted the help of university colleagues. Among the faculty on the program is Francis Fukuyama, a political scientist who, in his celebrated 1989 essay "The End of History?" suggested Western liberal democracy had triumphed as the world's supreme ideology.

In a video address released to mark the start of the fellowship, Fukuyama says: "It is particularly important that we launch this fellowship at this moment of Ukraine's national development... Ukraine is an emerging democracy that needs leadership."



Students at Stanford University take part in an experiment. A new program at the university aims to recruit three emerging leaders from Ukraine to take part in a 10-month fellowship in 2018. (stanford.edu)

Public dissatisfaction

Such words ring all too true with many Ukrainians. A recent survey conducted nationwide by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology shows just 9.5 percent of respondents trust the government. The corresponding figure for the opposition is 13 percent, a trust level roughly equal to that of President Petro Poroshenko, the man who emerged as the country's leader following the 2013–2014 EuroMaidan Revolution that toppled kleptocratic former president and Kremlin ally Viktor Yanukovich.

For many Ukrainians the promises of the EuroMaidan – closer integration to the European Union and an end to corruption – have yet to be fulfilled.

Poroshenko's record on enacting reform, meanwhile, has been patchy. The 51-year-old, who is one of Ukraine's richest men, is often classed among the oligarchs who have dominated politics and business since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

One of the few major anti-corruption achievements on his watch has been the establishment of a publicly available electronic register of officials' assets. On his own "e-declaration" filed earlier this year, Poroshenko said he has some \$26.3 million in the bank and an income in 2015 of \$2.5 million.

Looking ahead

It is against this backdrop of an incomplete European project and the continued dominance of a wealthy elite that the Stanford "Emerging Leaders" program has appeared. Fukuyama's professional interest in seeing which forces ultimately prevail in Ukraine seems to have played an important role in its formulation.

"Ukraine is a country that has been seeking to establish viable democratic institutions and to fight corruption," he is quoted as saying in a press release. "It is also at the center of a geopolitical struggle. Stanford can play a very important

role in helping to build intellectual capital there."

The fellowship envisions students spending time with entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. It is hoped that upon graduation they will emerge ready "to make a greater contribution to democratic, political and social development in Ukraine and the broader region."

Stanford has, in fact, already played a role in Ukraine's transition to democracy. Two men who have spent time at the institution, Mustafa Nayyem and Sergii Leshchenko, are among a small group of young reformers who entered parliament for the first time after the EuroMaidan Revolution.

A future Ukrainian leader could emerge from among this new generation of politicians. For now, they must content themselves with spearheading efforts to overcome the old system and bring Ukraine closer to the West.

The time horizon for their work is likely to be long. But it's not clear if, after the first year of the "Ukrainian Emerging Leaders" program, Stanford's interest will persist. The university fellowship, though backed financially by high profile donors, including rock star-turned civil activist Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, has yet to secure long-term funding. ■



Russia, get out!

Ukrainian activists on Feb. 2 protest the presence of Russia's Sberbank in Ukraine. The protesters urged depositors to withdraw their money from the bank as part of a national protest against Russian-owned banks in Ukraine. Russia has been waging war against Ukraine for nearly three years, after invading and illegally annexing the Crimean peninsula. At least 10,000 Ukrainians, mostly civilians, have been killed in the fighting. (Volodymyr Petrov)

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TV host says Macron best choice for France, Ukraine

BY BRIAN BONNER
BONNER@KYIVPOST.COM

Olivier Vedrine, a French political scientist who hosts a weekly English-language current affairs TV program in Ukraine, said Ukrainians have a big interest in seeing that Emmanuel Macron is elected as the next president of France.

"I support Macron because he's pro-European; he's for a close relationship with Germany," Vedrine said in an interview on Jan. 30. He likens Macron, 39, a centrist independent who worked as a civil servant before becoming an investment banker, to John F. Kennedy — "brilliant, young, dynamic."

"He knows what's happening in the world. He speaks English well — for a French man, it's very difficult," he said. Vedrine said Macron would take pro-US, pro-Ukraine, pro-NATO and pro-European Union positions.

The first round of the French presidential election is on April 23. If no one wins a majority of votes, the top two candidates face each

other in a May 7 runoff election. The winner replaces Francois Hollande, the Socialist Party president who became so deeply unpopular that he decided not to seek re-election.

Vedrine considers Hollande an historical accident "who was not supposed to be president." Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the former International Monetary Fund chief, was favored until a hotel maid accused him of sexual assault. Despite being cleared of the charge, Strauss-Kahn sank his political career with the scandal.

Vedrine said the three other major candidates in the race are scary for Ukraine: Two of them, Marine Le Pen and Francois Fillon, hold openly pro-Kremlin views while the Socialist Party candidate, Benoit Hamon, is so left-wing that he has no chance.

Ironically, Vedrine thinks the ascension of Donald J. Trump as U.S. president will turn French voters away from the American leader's political soulmate in France — Le Pen — an ultra-nationalist who has praised the Kremlin's illegal annexation of Crimea and criticized NATO and the EU. She has triggered scandal by accepting a loan from a Russian bank with ties to President Vladimir Putin. He thinks most in France are watching Trump with horror and saying "we don't want that in Europe."

As for Le Pen, Vedrine thinks her support will peak at 35 percent. "She won't win," he said. "Nobody in France wants to do an alliance with Marine Le Pen."

While Fillon has been polling with Le Pen in the top two positions,

Vedrine said that support for Fillon is falling because he is embroiled in a scandal over the use of public funds to hire relatives for do-nothing jobs. Ukrainians should hope he doesn't win, Vedrine said. Members of Fillon's political party have traveled to Russian-occupied Crimea for friendly visits with Kremlin-backed leaders.

Vedrine, 47, hosts the "This Week With Olivier Vedrine," a current affairs show on UA.TV. It airs Sundays at 9:05 p.m. with rebroadcasts on Mondays at 8 a.m.

It can also be viewed on YouTube. Previously, he and Ukrainian Sergiy Velichansky co-hosted "Tea Time" for a year on First National Channel.

Vedrine has made his home in Ukraine for the last four years, coming just before the EuroMaidan Revolution that drove President Viktor Yanukovich from power on Feb. 22, 2014.

Vedrine thinks the West under Hollande and former U.S. President Barack Obama made key mistakes by not standing up to Russia from the start of its invasion of the Crimean peninsula. The time to act, he said, was when the Kremlin initially denied that the "little green men" deployed were actually invading Russian soldiers.

Vedrine thinks that the West should have "sent troops to help Russia with the 'little green men.' Nobody did that. Why didn't the Ukrainian army fight? They didn't have the instruments to fight. Why didn't we send some troops to stop Putin in Crimea, to see what's going on. That's quite a shame. If we had done that, there wouldn't



French citizen Olivier Vedrine, who hosts a weekly English-language current affairs TV show on UA.TV, is strongly backing Emmanuel Macron in the French presidential election on April 23. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)



Emmanuel Macron (AFP)

The Kyiv Post's Business Focus in its Feb. 17 edition will be dedicated to Transport & Logistics

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Authentic Vietnamese cuisine comes to Kyiv!



My favorite new place for lunch in Kyiv

Everyone's got their own indices for quality of life in Ukraine.

The World Bank has its Ease of Doing Business rating. Transparency International has its Corruption Perceptions Index.

My index measures the availability of Vietnamese cuisine in Kyiv. Until recently, life was miserable.

I challenged Maud Joseph, who writes restaurant reviews for the Kyiv Post, to find Vietnamese restaurants because I could find none. She found two – but both are far from the center where I live and work; one is in Troyeshchyna and the other is in Borshigivka. I was looking for one in the center when, lo and behold, I recently ducked into the Bite & Go cafe, a hole in the wall establishment just around the corner from the Kyiv Post.

There I was pleasantly surprised to find the newest items on the menu included Vietnamese beef pho soup and fresh shrimp spring rolls. Even more pleasing, the chef working the kitchen is Vietnamese. So I ordered the beef pho soup for Hr 89 (\$3.17) and a spring roll for Hr 49 (\$1.75).

The pho tasted authentic. As for the spring rolls, I've had better, but their version is delicious also.

Until last month, the Bite & Go served only typical deli fare – turkey, pastrami and other types of sandwiches – with salads, french fries and other items.

I hope the Vietnamese addition is the start of a trend.

Bite & Go has only 18 seats, but it has a prime location on 1 Tarasa Shevchenko Blvd. near the intersection with Khreshchatyk Street, now with the red neon "pho" sign out front.

What's in pho? It's a bit like borsch in that everyone's got a different recipe. But these ingredients are common:

- rice noodles
- lean beef
- beef broth
- green onion
- ginger
- cilantro
- jalapeno peppers, red and green
- bean sprouts
- star anise
- basil
- fish sauce
- red chili sauce ■



Vietnamese native Hien Phan prepares beef pho soup at Bite & Go restaurant at 1 Tarasa Shevchenko Blvd. on Jan. 25. Bite & Go, opened by Vladyslav Maksymov in 2015, specializes in deli food from various countries but recently became a fan of Vietnamese cuisine. (Volodymyr Petrov)

BY ANNA YAKUTENKO
YAKUTENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

Some good news for fans of Vietnamese cuisine: Finally, there's a place in the heart of Kyiv where one can find a bowl of traditional pho soup and fresh spring rolls.

Bite & Go, a tiny café on Tarasa Shevchenko Boulevard near Khreshchatyk Street, decided in December to start serving up two of

the most popular Vietnamese dishes.

The café's owner, Vladyslav Maksymov, told the Kyiv Post that he added Vietnamese dishes sampling the cuisine in France and Germany. With more than 20 years in the business, he's sure that Vietnamese cuisine will soon be a hit in Ukraine.

"This trend will catch on in Kyiv, because the food is healthy, nourishing, but light and affordable," Maksymov said.

Bite & Go, which opened almost two years ago, tries to stay on top of the latest trends. The café is has only about a dozen small tables and an open kitchen at the end of a single room. But food is king: Bite & Go also specializes in street food delicatessens from various countries.

Maksymov hired Vietnamese cook Hien Phan. Maksymov said that he reached out Kyiv-based Vietnamese diaspora and even went to local

markets to ask people who makes the best pho they know. Then he visited families and sampled the soup consisting of broth, rice noodles, herbs and meat.

It took him a month to find Phan, who does not have specialized training but who has cooked for her family since childhood. Born in Hai Phong, a port city in northeastern

more **soup** on page 13

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'Fight Rules' brings action of boxing ring to movie theaters



Film Critic

WITH MARIA ROMANENKO
MRO@UKR.NET

Ukrainian boxers have boosted the nation's image, from Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko, the champion brothers, to rising stars like Vasyl Lomachenko and Oleksandr Usyk. Now, Ukrainian boxers are helping another area: Ukrainian cinema.

The first ever Ukrainian sports action film "Fight Rules," which hit Ukrainian screens on Jan. 26, is the acting debut for Usyk.

"Even though my role in the film is small, it's just the beginning," Usyk said, adding that he'd like to do more films if he has time. "In Hollywood, of course!"

"Fight Rules," with a reported budget of \$500,000, tells the story of

boxer Taras (played by Vlad Nikitiuk), who earns a living with street fights. When his mother is struck by a serious disease and needs money for surgery, Taras decides to go into illegal fighting without rules, where he quickly rises to stardom.

Taras is then forced to substitute his sparring partner Oleg (played by Ievhen Halych, the lead singer of popular Ukrainian rock band O. Torvald) in a fight against a strong boxer, Deser (played by Serhiy Zhitnikovsky).

Inviting Usyk to star in the film was a spontaneous decision, according to film director Oleksiy Shaparev. "In the film script we had 'a famous boxer' written," Shaparev said at the premiere. "The film executive producer suggested we ask Usyk as he recently shot an ad with him."

Usyk liked the offer immediately.

Zhitnikovsky, who played Deser in the film and who reportedly stages boxing scenes in Hollywood films,

says he even got a chance to take some tips from the boxer in training at Bukovel, just days before Usyk's September fight against Krzysztof Glowacki.

"Usyk gave me some advice that I later used in the film," Zhitnikovsky said at the premiere in Kyiv on Jan. 20. "I wanted to show the Ukrainian school of boxing, some techniques used here have become well-known across the globe."

The slogan of the film, "Your spirit is your weapon," promotes the idea that human values should be higher than physical and material things.

"The protagonist has the rules of friends and fairness. He chooses friends over his own life," Shaparev said. "We wanted to create 'a hero of our times,' a hero that's not just one color, because everyone has black, white and every other color in them."

A four-series TV version of "Fight Rules" will appear on Ukrainian



The film "Fight Rules" tells the story of Taras, an amateur boxer, who gets a match against a powerful opponent. (Hanna Beshkenadze)

TV channel ICTV in mid-summer 2017. The TV version will cover some of the areas that were not explained in the film and answer some questions.

The soundtracks of the film "Fight Rules" were all made by Ukrainian artists, something that the movie production team feels proud about. Bands O. Torvald, Boombox, The Hardkiss, Detach and rapper Yarmak were among the artists to feature their songs.

O. Torvald's Halych highlighted the importance of creating an entirely Ukrainian product.

"In my opinion, it is the first film worthy wide release in Ukraine," he said at the premiere. "Fight Rules" is also set to appear in a number of other countries in the world soon. Some 15 countries were interested in bringing the film to their theaters. The producers are now working on dubbing and subtitles.

Global distribution of "Fight Rules" will open new horizons

for Ukrainian cinema industry, according to Shaparev, the director.

"If we don't open up global markets for Ukrainian cinema it will simply not survive," he said. "International market is not very fond of newcomers but we try to attract them with our professional team."

The film's team feels good about its international perspectives.

"Ukrainian cinema is in good hands," one of "Fight Rules" stars, a prominent Ukrainian actor Stanislav Boklan said. "Maybe we don't show or talk about this enough, but we have very talented people in Ukraine." ■

To watch "Fight Rules" in Ukrainian:
Oscar Cinema in Gulliver Mall (1 Sportyvna Square). 10 p.m. Hr 120
Planeta Kino in Blockbuster Center (34 Moskovsky Ave.). 6:45 p.m. 8:45 p.m. Hr 50

Wladimir Klitschko fights in London on April 29

British boxer Anthony Joshua (L) and Wladimir Klitschko of Ukraine meet during a news conference Jan. 31 in Madison Square Garden in New York. Joshua and Klitschko are scheduled to meet at Wembley Stadium in London on April 29. (AFP)



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Bite & Go in the heart of Kyiv now serves two of the most popular Vietnamese dishes – beef pho soup and fresh spring rolls with shrimp. (Volodymyr Petrov)

Bite & Go's owner expands on typical deli fare with real Vietnamese cuisine

Soup from page 11

Vietnam, she moved to Ukraine 12 years ago with her husband. Phan received Ukrainian citizenship and staff gave her a Slavic name - Sveta.

Maksymov said pho soup has many variations. Phan cooks pho bo according her family recipe, makes her own sauces and cultivates soybean sprouts that are usually served with the soup.

For those who never tried pho bo, it's served with noodle sticks and a special spoon. It comes with sprouts, lemon, a red and tangy sauce and red spicy pepper on the side. It costs only Hr 89.

Another Vietnamese must-try dish is fresh spring roll called nem song – shrimp, lettuce, vegetables and rice noodles wrapped in rice paper. The roll sells for Hr 49. There are also fried spring rolls

with meat and vegetables (nem ran) for Hr 25.

Maksymov said that the vegetarian option of pho soup will be available soon along with a chicken option. But for now, Bite & Go serves pho only with beef. He also plans to include bo ban salad to the menu.

It's worth a visit, especially in a city starved of Vietnamese dishes at affordable prices. ■

Bite & Go

1 Taras Shevchenko Blvd.
9 a.m. – 11 p.m.

Other places with Vietnamese cuisine in Kyiv:

Kitaika. 16 Zlatoustivska St.
12 p.m. – 11 p.m.

BMT. 44A Zodchykh St. 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Sapa. 61/2 Mykoly Zakrevskoho St. 11 a.m. – 12 a.m.

Ukraine's 'David Copperfield' talks about world of illusion

BY NATALIYA TRACH
TRACH@KYIVPOST.COM

Roman Bondarchuk, a 30-year-old Kyivan, can mesmerize.

It's not only because of his graceful movements and impeccable manners, but because of his skills as an illusionist. His performances and captivating tricks have made him Ukraine's most famous magician.

"To be a successful illusionist, you have to be artistic and always ready to learn something new," Bondarchuk says.

He has been performing illusions for 20 years now. At the age of 11, he saw a performance by David Copperfield, one of the most famous magicians in the world. "Copperfield was performing flying and metamorphosis tricks. I was so deeply impressed by his performance that I decided to become an illusionist," Bondarchuk recalls.

But his parents wanted him to study for a more traditional profession. So Bondarchuk enrolled in the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute for an engineering course. His studies there lasted a year, before he gave them up to pursue his passion. He entered the Kyiv Circus Academy, graduating in 2008 with a master's degree in "Illusion and Manipulation."

"My parents began to support my professional choice only when I started winning some illusionists' competitions and began making my first money by showing tricks," he recalls.

Success at home has brought Bondarchuk international recognition as well in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

He now conducts workshops on illusions, which enable beginners to master the simplest tricks.

In recent years, Bondarchuk has been working as a TV presenter dedicated to illusionism and tricks. "There's a lot of rivalry among illusionists. You can't relax, and have to constantly improve your skills, look for new ideas, show new trick and



Illusionist Roman Bondarchuk of Kyiv performs one of his magic tricks. (Courtesy)

invent more complicated illusions than your colleagues," he says.

Bondarchuk knows how to perform several thousand tricks, while his current repertoire includes nearly 1,000 tricks. His favorite tricks include pretending to be guessing someone's thoughts as well as big illusions – when people and objects "appear" and "disappear."

Bondarchuk performs internationally frequently enough to pick up on moods. "Europeans are restrained and calm. Americans are very open and emotional, while Oriental people might be very restrained, but when they like the tricks they might be very generous," he says. By contrast, Ukrainian VIPs frequently sit with poker faces during his performances.

It takes up to a year to create a new illusion – to buy props, choose music, stage it and rehearse. It's not cheap. "For big illusions like making a 15-ton tractor disappear in a stadium, the cost is really impressive."

Bondarchuk won't disclose the

secrets of a profession in which he's grown confident about his abilities, compared to his start 11 years ago. "During my first performance at a New Year's party I was scared that the audience would work out my tricks, or that my tricks would fail. But everything went well," he says.

Illusionists are often invited to corporate and private parties. Bondarchuk's performances start at \$500.

Bondarchuk discusses his illusions with his wife, whom he calls his muse and adviser. "She constantly inspires me," he says.

Besides Copperfield, he admires Derren Brown and Uri Geller.

To improve his skills, Bondarchuk takes master classes abroad and goes to shows of other illusionists as a simple spectator.

His "Stand Up Magic Show" is on Feb. 18 in Freedom concert hall. Tickets are Hr 500 – 150. To attend Bondarchuk's classes, go <http://romanbondarchuk.com>. The price for an individual workshop is Hr 1,600. ■

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Kyiv Saxophone Quartet

At its concert, the Kyiv Saxophone Quartet will play the music of both classical composers like Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, and popular bands such as The Beatles.



Kyiv Saxophone Quartet. Feb. 9. 7 p.m. The House of Actors (7 Yaroslaviv Val St.). Hr 50-150

Feb. 9



Feb. 4

National contest for Eurovision

Two dozen Ukrainian bands and singers will compete for the right to represent Ukraine at the international Eurovision Song Contest, which will take place in Kyiv in May. The selection process consists of three semi-finals (on Feb. 4, 11, and 18), and a final on Feb. 25.

Eurovision National Selection. Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25. 6 p.m. KPI Palace of Culture (37 Peremohy Ave.). Hr 170-890 for semi-finals, Hr 690-1,490 for final



Feb. 6

Kizomba Monday (party)

For those who like to start the week with a nightclub outing, Kyiv Caribbean Club will hold a master class in Kizomba, a dance originating in Angola, accompanied by a Kizomba-style DJ set.

Kizomba Monday. Feb. 6. 7 p.m. Caribbean Club (4 Symona Petliury St.). Hr 100-260

Drum'n'bass party

Feb. 4



Electronic music lovers are looking forward to a show by Tim Eliot, a music producer from Berlin who performs under the name Current Value. Eliot's musical background is in classical piano, but he has been into Drum'n'bass since the early 1990s.

Current Value (drum'n'bass). Feb. 4.

11 p.m. Atlas (37-41 Sichovykh Striltsiv St.). Hr 220-400



Feb. 3

Alina Orlova (pop)

Popular Lithuanian singer Alina Orlova returns to Ukraine after a year's break to give an acoustic performance. Orlova sings in Russian.

Alina Orlova (acoustic concert). Feb. 3. 8 p.m. Atlas (37-41 Sichovykh Striltsiv St.). Hr 250-750

'Inner Japan' art exhibition

Ukrainian artists will present 30 painting and installations dedicated to Japan. The artists will present their view on Japan-Ukraine relations and the influence of Japanese culture on the everyday lives of Ukrainians.

"Inner Japan" (exhibition) Feb. 1-15. Kyiv History Museum (7 Bohdana Khmelnytskoho St.)



Jan. 30

Compiled by Anna Yakutenko

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The closing date for applications is February 15, 2017

Please send a cover letter and resume to jobs@eurasia.org with "eProcurement" in the subject line.

For more detailed information on job description and qualifications please visit web-site:

<http://tapas.org.ua/en/vacancy-eprocurement-team-lead/>

USAID

ЛЕНТА КОМЕРЦІЙНОГО ПРАВА

The Commercial Law Center (Ukrainian NGO implementing USAID technical assistance program) is seeking candidates to fill the position of **Commercial Law Expert**

Responsibilities:
Conduct consultancy work (provide services) as part of the Commercial Law Center's activities under international technical assistance programs.

Requirements:

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- Good working record in the sphere of commercial law;
- Skills in legislative analysis and legislation drafting techniques;
- Availability of scientific published works on legal issues;
- Experience in public speaking;
- Good command of Ukrainian and English;
- Advanced user of different computer applications.

The consultant is also expected to:

- have good analytical skills and organizational capabilities;
- be a proactive team-player;
- be responsible and creative in communicating in different ways.

Please, send your CV and copies of published works (Internet links) to: clc@clc.com.ua or fax them at: +380 44 4906574 by **COB February 20, 2017**. Please, note that only short-listed candidates will be invited to interview.



POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Chemionics International Inc., an international development consulting firm headquartered in Washington, D.C., is seeking key personnel for USAID's anticipated "SAFE, AFFORDABLE, AND EFFECTIVE MEDICINES FOR UKRAINIANS" (SAFEMED) project. The purpose of this project is to strengthen the pharmaceutical system in Ukraine to ensure transparency and cost-effectiveness for desired health outcomes. The five-year, \$10-15 million program aims to address policy and legislative barriers and offer technical solutions to create secure pharmaceutical financing and procurement systems and efficient supply chain management practices. We are looking for individuals who have a passion for helping people lead healthy lives around the world.

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Application Instructions: Please send a CV and a brief cover letter in English in the email body to UkraineSAFEMedRecruit@gmail.com. Please submit one application per candidate, and include the name of the position in the subject line. Candidates will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled. No telephone inquiries, please. Finalists will be contacted.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 17, 2017 at 6 P.M. Kyiv Time

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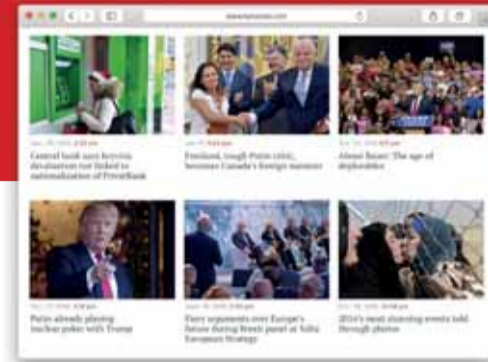
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The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a non-profit organization working to strengthen democracy worldwide.

NDI-Ukraine is currently seeking two **Regional Program Coordinators** for its Women's Political Participation Program, who will be based in Dnipro and Ternopil.

Interested applicants should submit CVs and motivation letters in English by email to the following email address: ukraine@ndi.org.

Deadline:

The deadline for the submission of the required documents is by COB on **February 16, 2017**. Only selected candidates will be invited for written and oral **tests and an interview**.

Full text of the advertisement can be viewed

<https://www.kyivpost.com/classifieds/jobs/womens-political-participation-program-coordinator>



The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a non-profit organization working to strengthen democracy worldwide.

The Equal Opportunities Caucus (EOC) is an inter-faction union of MPs in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine working to promote gender equality.

NDI-Ukraine in partnership with the EOC is currently seeking

Assistant for the Secretariat of the EOC. The Assistant is hired by NDI through a consultancy contract and reports to the EOC coordinator and co-chairs and to NDI. This is a full time position, which will be based in Kyiv (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine).

Interested applicants should submit CVs and motivation letters in English and Ukrainian by email to: ukraine@ndi.org.

Deadline:

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The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a non-profit organization working to strengthen democracy worldwide.

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NDI-Ukraine in partnership with the EOC is currently seeking

Coordinator for the Secretariat of the EOC. The Coordinator is hired by NDI through a consultancy contract and reports to the EOC co-chairs and NDI. This is a full time position, which will be based in Kyiv (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine).

Interested applicants should submit CVs and motivation letters in English and Ukrainian by email to: ukraine@ndi.org.

Deadline:

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With Eurovision starting on May 9, Kyiv picks up pace

BY NATALIYA TRACH
TRACH@KYIVPOST.COM

The organizers of the international Eurovision Song Contest that will take place in Kyiv starting on May 9 have unveiled this year's logo and slogan.

Celebrating Diversity

Since the moment Ukrainian singer Jamala won the Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden in May, bringing Ukraine the right to host the Eurovision 2017, the public's attention has been focused on preparations to host the event.

The theme is respect for European values: tolerance, diversity and individuality, reflected in this year's slogan "Celebrate Diversity." The idea of celebrating diversity continues last year's Eurovision theme, "Come Together."

"It is all inclusive and all about countries around Europe, and beyond, joining together to celebrate our common ground and our unique differences as well as some great music," Executive Supervisor of the Eurovision Song Contest Jon Ola Sand said.

Eurovision's logo is a creative interpretation of the traditional Ukrainian female necklace, namysto,

made of different beads to reflect the topic of diversity. In Ukrainian culture, namysto served both as jewelry and amulet.

"The logo cleverly combines traditional and modern elements, reflecting Ukrainian society and the main leitmotif of Eurovision 2017 in Kyiv," executive producer for the Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine Victoria Romanova said.

Not everyone's happy

The choice of the logo caused ambiguous feelings among Ukrainians. Some Facebook users mocked the logo comparing it with a sausage ring, a croissant or even with the trademark hairdo of ex-Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko, a braid that went around her head.

Others said that couldn't recognize a Ukrainian namysto in the logo. Some didn't like the colors.

"It's awful. It's interesting to find out if this abstraction has any meaning," Ukrainian Victoria Boyko wrote on Jan. 31 on the Eurovision Ukraine official Facebook page.

Another user, Victoria Stan, also did not like the logo.

"You can't be serious. It looks like crap," she wrote, while another user mentioned that the red color was "too aggressive."



The Eurovision Song Contest shows the official logo of the Eurovision Song Contest 2017 to be hosted in Kyiv starting on May 9. The logo depicts a traditional Ukrainian necklace with the slogan "Celebrate Diversity." (Ukrafoto)

But there are many who liked the logo, too.

Rakhmon M. Boltaev wrote that "it has the excellent design with a deep meaning. The logo is creative and interactive. It will go down the history as the best one."

Ukrainian designers also praised it.

"The idea with the beads is an interesting alternative to a kitschy folk style, but in addition to that it is on the edge of ethnic and

modernity," Vladyslav Volochay, creative director and partner of Sabai Creative Hub, said in an interview to the Ukrainian fashion magazine Pink on Jan. 31.

How it was done

Ukraine's two creative agencies Republique and Banda united to produce this year's slogan and design. It took them two weeks to come up with four versions of the Eurovision logo and slogan.

"We presented them for the contest. Among them was Namysto version that won," said Ivan Symonovsky, the art director with Republique agency.

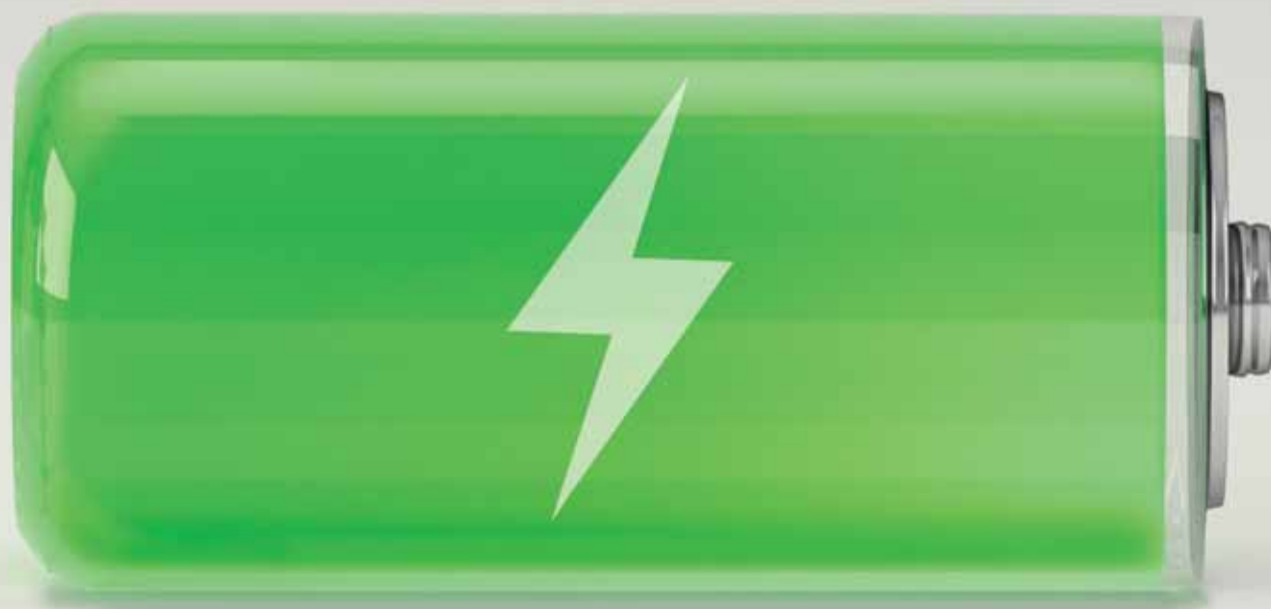
The design of the Eurovision's logo, brand book and souvenir production cost Hr 420,000. According to the Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine, 11 Ukrainian creative agencies took part in the competition for Eurovision's logo.

Still the way the logo and slogan were approved was deemed controversial. The public procurement system ProZorro which was used for the bidding, lists only one bidder: a firm called Re Design Group, leaving it unclear how Republique and Banda relate to it.

Republique's Denis Gerasko told the Kyiv Post that the Re Design Group is the legal entity of Republique agency, adding that Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine which ordered the design should provide further explanations. The Public Broadcasting Company could not be immediately reached for comment.

Eurovision 2017 semi-finals will be held on May 9 and May 11 in Kyiv. The final will take place on May 13 at the International Exhibition Center. The tickets aren't on sale yet. ■

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